

IUPAC Within and Without



by Bryan Henry

In this brief column I want to touch on a number of issues and events that I believe are important or of interest to the IUPAC community.

A recurring concern of IUPAC officers and member organizations is how to allow everyone to get their issues "on the table." To address this problem, the

Executive Committee approved a proposal at its April 2006 meeting to hold a series of round table discussions at the next General Assembly (GA) in Torino, Italy, in August 2007. These discussions are intended to allow small groups of Council delegates to discuss subjects of mutual interest in a setting conducive to the easy exchange of ideas. National Adhering Organizations and Bureau members were invited to propose topics, and during the most recent Bureau meeting in Madrid on 7 October 2006, the following topics were identified:

- How can we attract more students to chemistry? Do we need to modify the curriculum? Can IUPAC play a role?
- How can we help regions and small countries to have a more effective voice within IUPAC?
- How can we interact more effectively with governments and other decision makers? How can we improve our interactions with industry, other unions, ICSU, UNESCO, etc.?
- How can we increase the global visibility of chemistry, enhance public understanding of chemistry, and improve its public image? How can we improve the visibility and image of IUPAC?

In each case, a couple of members of the Bureau will mediate the discussions. These discussions shall interest varied groups, including smaller countries within IUPAC who have needs and legitimate concerns that might be difficult to articulate and convey to the wider IUPAC community. For practical reasons, each round table will be limited to 40 participants. When registering for the Council, delegates will be asked to prioritize their interest in the discussion topics. Assignments to the various round tables will be based as much as possible on these priority interests. Hopefully, attendance

will be good and lively discussions will ensue at Torino. The results of these forums will be considered at future meetings of the Bureau and Executive.

Previous Council debates were concerned with the operational structure of IUPAC. After the last debate in Beijing, it was decided not to change the current structure, and instead to develop measures to streamline IUPAC operations and to make them more efficient. For this reason I have created a committee to examine such a possibility. The members of the Committee on Streamlining IUPAC Operations (CSIO) are Michael Jaffe (USA), Anders Kallner, (Sweden), Venceslav Kaucic (Slovenia), Kook Joe Shin (Korea), Fabienne Meyers (IUPAC Secretariat), and myself as chair. A second committee chaired by Secretary General David StC. Black will examine any changes needed in our statutes and bylaws to accomplish the recommendations of the CSIO, and make revisions that inevitably are needed periodically in such documents.

In order for the committee to have as wide a perspective as possible, we need input from all segments of the IUPAC community. Thus, we are requesting that you send us your suggestions. We consider this a matter of very high priority. The CSIO cannot possibly come up with a plan that reflects IUPAC's diverse community without your help.

One criticism of IUPAC that is germane to the streamlining initiative is that often IUPAC does not respond quickly enough to fast moving events. Perhaps this is not surprising for an organization that is so diverse in both membership and activities. Moreover, it is probably not reasonable to expect the same kind of response times in a volunteer organization—which needs to keep its members informed and motivated—as one would find in an organization with a hierarchical, top-down management structure and strict financial motivations. There is a price to be paid for democracy and universal involvement! Nevertheless, it is of interest that recently IUPAC had to respond to the unfortunate resignation of our vice president and president elect. The executive group responded to the situation in a timely and effective fashion. Of course, given that we are IUPAC, the decisions were taken to the Bureau meeting in Madrid for ratification.

One of our highest priorities within IUPAC is to involve young people in the excitement of chemistry. In that regard, I am pleased to announce that plans are now in place that will allow young chemists to participate in the 41st IUPAC Congress in Torino in August

2006 (see page 20). In addition, IUPAC renewed its commitment to invite a few young chemists to also participate in the debates of the GA, which are held concurrently. It is likewise rewarding to see that some National Adhering Organizations, such as those from the USA and the UK, continue their programs that offer grant support to young chemists to attend the GA.

A different way to expose young chemists to the international scene is presented in this issue of *CI* (see page 16). The Travel Awards Program of the Canadian National

Committee for IUPAC allows awardees to attend IUPAC-sponsored scientific conferences and present their research. Over its 25 years of existence, this nationwide competition has gained prestigious status within the Canadian scientific community. Small or large, all these programs are important to ensure the future of IUPAC. Might I invite all member countries to consider developing their own programs.

In that regard, it is regrettable that IUPAC has never been directly involved in the International Chemistry Olympiad. This is a competition with all the excitement and camaraderie that characterizes the Olympics. In July 2006, thanks to a gracious invitation from the organizing committee, I had the great privilege of participating in this event, which included speaking about IUPAC at the closing ceremonies, and, most importantly, presenting IUPAC Gold Books to the 28 gold medalists in a competition that involved more than 70 countries (read more on page 22).


The International Council for Science (ICSU) recently opened regional offices for Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. IUPAC participated in the opening conferences at all three sites: Pretoria (Piet Steyn), Kuala Lumpur (David StC. Black), and Panama (Bryan Henry). Chemistry has played an important role in ICSU from its founding in 1931, with IUPAC being one of its original members. Our hope is to use the contacts within these regional offices to help IUPAC become more involved with emerging countries and to extend our programs more effectively to these regions.

ICSU is attempting to revise and rationalize its dues structure for the more than 100 National Members and

approximately 30 Union members. They have invited our Executive Director John Jost to the first meeting of this Dues Committee to present a solution based on the IUPAC dues system.

In late August, the European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences organized the 1st European Chemical Congress. This historic meeting was a great success and IUPAC was invited to present a brief address at the opening ceremony. In this talk, I had an opportunity to inform the more than 2 000 conferees about the

breadth of IUPAC activities. Too often we are viewed as a body whose sole function is nomenclature-related issues and critically evaluated data. Of course, these core activities continue to be very valuable and important, but IUPAC is much more diverse and far reaching. While IUPAC has close cooperation with regional chemistry organizations, it is worth noting that one of IUPAC's priorities should be to nurture the relationships it has, in principle, with more than 30 Associated Organizations. There is room to improve and cultivate relations with these international organizations. As the IUPAC Statutes underline, these organizations' "aims and activities are in harmony with those of the Union."

This column began with a description of measures to improve both the involvement of the smaller countries within IUPAC and our internal operational activities. The following paragraphs described outreach activities to other organizations. If there is a conclusion it is that IUPAC continues to evolve and to search for new opportunities to make the world a better place through chemistry. 

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