

President's Column

IUPAC—An Optimistic Future



by Bryan R. Henry

As I begin my term as President of IUPAC, I would like to share with you a few personal reflections on some aspects of our 2005 General Assembly (GA), and on the corresponding ICSU (International Council for Science) General Assembly held two months later in October.

I am very optimistic about the prospects for IUPAC. We have both the abilities and resources to serve the international chemistry community, and to use chemistry to contribute to solutions for the many problems facing our planet. We can and should help the world to meet the Millennium Development Goals.*

Our principal strengths lie in the talent, knowledge, and commitment of the more than 1000 scientists worldwide who are involved in the IUPAC project system.

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The reports and presentations at the GA of the division presidents and standing committee chairs were both impressive and inspirational, as they detailed their accomplishments over the last two years. My *Vice President's Critical Assessment* provides an overview of the project system as we near the conclusion of the second biennium of its full operation. In summary, the project system is a success. In financial terms alone there has been a 65 percent increase in project commitments from the transition years of 2000–2001 to the first years of the project mode. The financial state of the Union is strong with no significant problems on the horizon. This is particularly true when we compare ourselves with other Unions.

As was the case in 2001, the most controversial topic at our GA in August was the proposal to eliminate the Bureau in an attempt to streamline IUPAC governance. The vote to proceed with that process

failed by a substantial margin, primarily because of the perception that it would lead to less direct influence by division presidents and standing committee chairs. However, many delegates expressed the view that we should be investigating further efficiencies in governance. I made the commitment that one of my first acts as IUPAC president would be to set up two small committees. The first, chaired by the secretary general, would examine revisions to our statutes and bylaws. The second, that I will chair, will attempt to find more efficient ways to govern IUPAC within its current structure. Hopefully by the time you read this article both committees will have begun their work.

Past President Piet Steyn and I represented IUPAC at the ICSU General Assembly in October. ICSU was founded in 1931 and is a nongovernmental organization with a membership that includes over 100 countries, about 30 scientific unions, and about 25 scientific associates. (For an overview of the International Council for Science, see Nov.-Dec. 2004 *CI*, p. 4.) Its stated mission is to strengthen international science for the benefit of society, and it deals directly with national governments and international organizations, several of which are associated with the

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The United Nations Millennium Development Goals

- Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
- Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
- Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
- Goal 5: Improve maternal health
- Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
- Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development


*For details on the eight UN Millennium Development Goals, see <www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>.

United Nations. Highlights of its Assembly included final plans for the establishment of the International Polar Year (2007–2008), a report on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, a review of Science and its Interactions with Society, and a discussion of the newly accepted ICSU Strategic Plan (see also IUPAC Wire, p. 21).

One interesting recent development is the plan to establish four ICSU regional offices. The African office was opened last September in Pretoria, South Africa, an office for Asia and the Pacific is currently being set up in Kuala Lumpur, and offices are being planned for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Arab world.

In my view almost all of the scientific programs of ICSU involve chemistry, yet IUPAC has not been fully involved over the last few years. Increasingly many of our own programs have a worldwide outreach. If we are to maximize our global opportunities, the IUPAC Executive believes that we need to work more closely with ICSU. As a first step, we became involved with the ICSU strategic planning process by providing input to many of their planning documents.

ICSU functions through a Secretariat in Paris that serves an Executive Board. The latter oversees the operations of ICSU, and is made up of seven officers and eight additional members, four each elected as representatives of the Scientific Unions and the National Members. At their General Assembly, I was elected as a Scientific Union member of the ICSU Executive for the next three years. I am hopeful that an IUPAC officer as a member of the ICSU Executive will provide an exciting opportunity to enhance the global aspects of IUPAC's programs.

I very much look forward to the privilege of serving as your president over the coming two years, and hope that together we can truly make the world a better place through chemistry. 

Bryan Henry <chmhenry@uoguelph.ca> starts his IUPAC presidency this January 2006. He is a professor of chemistry in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the University of Guelph, Canada. He has been a member of the Canadian National Committee for IUPAC since 1995, and served as chair from 1998–2003.

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