

Toward Global Leadership in Knowledge Sharing

—A Goal of Celebrating IUPAC's Centennial with 100 Member Countries

by Jung-Il Jin

After attending the IUPAC General Assembly and Congress in Torino, Italy, I felt, once again, that the number of attendees from so-called economically disadvantaged countries or emerging regions was far less than I had hoped to see. Every time I experience this disappointment at our GAs, I wonder what IUPAC should do to improve the situation.

At this point, I would like to remind readers what I mentioned in my candidate statement* for the recent presidential election held in Torino. In particular, I noted that "more opportunity and support for increased participation of the representatives of the economically disadvantaged countries should be

*To read Jung-Il Jin's full candidate statement, see <www.iupac.org/news/archives/2007/44th_council/bios_070718.pdf>, page 26.

sought, and many different methods for achieving this goal will be explored."

In about 10 years, IUPAC is going to celebrate its centennial. Wouldn't it be great if 100 National Adhering Organizations (NAOs) and Associate National Adhering Organizations (ANAOs) could join together in the celebration of IUPAC's centennial? I propose that NAOs of "advanced" countries, together with IUPAC leaders, launch a new drive to dramatically increase the number of member countries. We now have only about 50 NAOs and 20 ANAOs, which amounts to slightly more than 35 percent of world nations. In order for IUPAC to truly be called an international union, there should be at least 100 NAOs and ANAOs. This drive to increase membership will also result in better and broader knowledge-sharing and partnership-building in the world chemistry community.

There have been many discussions about how to help more nations, scientists, and students participate in various IUPAC activities. Various IUPAC bodies have seriously discussed supporting the annual subscriptions of economically disadvantaged countries. In spite of IUPAC's strong desire to attract more participation among scientists from these countries, no practical action has been taken in this direction.

Knowledge sharing and partnership building are becoming ever more important in the knowledge-based society of the 21st century. IUPAC, without any doubt or prejudice, should try to become the global leader in fulfilling this international duty and responsibility. Improvements in the dissemination of chemical

knowledge, something IUPAC has been working hard at lately, relies mostly on developing better electronic communications, mainly through the internet. There is no doubt that the internet is a powerful tool in knowledge sharing and partnership building, but one has to remember that presently only 18 percent of the world's population has access to this communication mode. More widespread e-communication will require significant investments in modern communication technology. This situation demands that we also utilize the classical, analog mode of communications, to a significant extent, when building global knowledge-sharing partnerships.

IUPAC has realized for some time that providing opportunities for chemists from economically disadvantaged countries,



IUPAC leadership for 2008–2009 (from left): Secretary General David StC. Black, Past President Bryan Henry, Vice President Nicole Moreau, President Jung-Il Jin, and Treasurer John Corish.

especially younger chemists, to participate in various IUPAC activities provides a long-lasting influence in their scientific careers and helps the Union build partnerships. One may wonder why IUPAC has not been doing more along this line. In fact, IUPAC has been trying hard to do more to help NAOs and ANAOs from economically emerging countries, but only to a limited extent due to budget limitations. The same has been the case in attracting new NAOs and ANAOs. Many chemical societies or associations are so financially fragile that they are unable to pay their annual subscriptions. Moreover, providing support for their scientists to travel to the IUPAC GA is almost unthinkable. I believe that we have a strong will to drastically improve the situation, but we have to find a way to achieve this goal. Not surprisingly, financing has been the most critical obstacle.

IUPAC has decided to formally request that the United Nations proclaim the year 2011 as the International Year of Chemistry. The year 2011 marks the one-hundredth anniversary of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry that was awarded to Marie S. Curie. IUPAC's role in proclaiming the Year of Chemistry and its participation in activities throughout the year will increase its visibility in the chemistry community and in the world. The event should provide us with a golden opportunity to convey our will to become the true global leader in knowledge sharing and partnership building.

Among the many possible approaches to broadening our membership, I propose that we start two feasible campaigns this year: a drive to raise a Special Fund and a partnership-building movement between the NAOs of so-called advanced countries and economically disadvantaged nations' chemical societies or associations. Let's try to enter IUPAC's second century by pursuing these worthy projects. Won't you all join me in this drive?

Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to Bryan Henry and Leiv Sydnes, and also to earlier presidents, for their dedication and contributions to the prosperity of this Union. I wish you all the best. 🏆

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