

## CHAPTER III

# TWENTY NINETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY CLOSING CEREMONY

Friday, 14 August 2015, 16:30-18:00

Hawai'i Convention Center, Honolulu, HI

### 1. Welcome by Silvia Torres-Peimbert, IAU President

The incoming IAU President, Silvia Torres-Peimbert, welcomed the participants to the Closing Ceremony of the XXIXth General Assembly.

### 2. Invitation to the XXXth General Assembly, Vienna, Austria, August 2018

A video movie was shown on the screens, presenting the venue and attractions of the next General Assembly, and welcomed the participants in advance.

### 3. Address by the Retiring President

*Prof. Norio Kaifu*

The 29th IAU General Assembly has now finished, and the newly re-organized IAU started quite successfully here in Honolulu. It was regrettable that one of the important activities planned during this General Assembly, visits to the Maunakea telescopes by worldwide astronomers, could not be realized because of the local conflicts on Maunakea. However, I believe that all of you will agree, the 29th General Assembly was very active and very successful.

I express millions of thanks to Meg Urry, Kevin Marvel, and all those associated with the American Astronomical Society, who hosted and executed this General Assembly in Honolulu so nicely. Thanks also to Guenther Hasinger, Roy Gal, Doug Simon, and the Local Organizing Committee, including all of the Maunakea Observatories, for wonderful social events and tremendous efforts behind the scenes that resulted so well. I thank all Divisions, Commissions, and organizers for such rich and fruitful scientific meetings. My thanks are also extended to the Hawaiian Convention Center and all Local Communities of Hawaii for their work toward the success of the IAU General Assembly.

As we saw in the Business Sessions, the IAU welcomed one new National Member, Colombia, and nearly 1,200 new Individual Members. The rapid increase in Individual Members is a prominent Characteristic of the IAU, demonstrating that the IAU is a

growing International Scientific Union, with more and more members of the younger generation. However, I would also draw your attention to the National Membership. The number of IAU National Members is currently 74, whereas it was 61 in 1994, twenty years ago. Therefore, the National Membership has increased 21% within the past 20 years. But if we compare it with the increase in Individual Members of 44% during the same period, the increase in National Membership is considerably slower. This means that the rapid growth of astronomy is happening mostly in the economically developed countries, and less in the developing world. This fact clearly shows how important the recent IAU activities, OAD, OAO, and newly started OYA, are to develop astronomy worldwide toward its future. Also, the promotion of regional coordination, like the newly established East Asian Observatory, organization of South-East Asian coordination, and worldwide efforts to develop the SKA, will give the IAU and world astronomy a new perspective for the global growth of astronomy.

Through the past 6 years as President-Elect and President, I have learned a great deal about the truly rich activities of the IAU. I feel strongly that an important base that enabled the IAU to promote such diverse activities was the introduction of Individual Membership, formally started in 1961, and this system made the IAU an extremely active International Scientific Union. We deeply thank those previous great leaders of the IAU, and wish that the new scientific organization started here in Honolulu will provide a solid platform for a new leap toward the future of the IAU.

Finally, I express many thanks to Thierry Montmerle for his passion and tremendous work as General Secretary, a well-known position of extremely hard work. I thank Silvia Torres-Peimbert and Piero Benvenuti for working together as a wonderful team of Officers of the IAU. My deep thanks are also extended to advisors Robert Williams and Ian Corbett for their continuous support and helpful advice on many difficult occasions during the past three years. I feel very happy to remain on the next Executive Committee as an advisor, together with Thierry, to support the new officers for the coming three years.

Aloha, and Mahalo, thank you.

#### **4. Address by the Retiring General Secretary**

*Dr. Thierry Montmerle*

Aloha !

Dear colleagues, Dear Guests, Dear friends,

As this triennium draws to a close, my term as General Secretary will end very soon. When I took over from Ian Corbett in Beijing, I had no idea of how much the IAU would accomplish in three years . . .

There were many adventures. Most of them started in the US, and are ending (in the present phase) in the US again.

Let me briefly explain. At my first EC meeting after Beijing as freshly elected Assistant General Secretary, that took place at STScI in Baltimore at the invitation of Bob Williams, I presented a few slides explaining why I, as an IAU member, was not happy with the Division structure, and boldly started inventing new Divisions and assigning Commissions to them. Bob was taken aback, and after some discussion with the EC, offered me a challenge: "Well, Thierry, OK, come back to us next time with a project".

This early trust from the EC to undertake a restructuring of the Divisions and the Commissions, followed by other initiatives taken by various people, played a key role in my term as General Secretary.

This is a story that deserves to be told, even briefly, because it illustrates what I now, here, like to call “the Aloha spirit of the IAU”, and that can be summarized in three buzzwords: “We dare, We care, We share”.

### 1. WE DARE

You have all lived the various episodes of the Division Restructuring (approved in Beijing) and the Commission Reform (approved here by the EC and the Division Presidents), so I will not repeat them here. I just want to say that it is the result of a long (6 years) and trusty collaboration between two successive ECs and two “generations” of Division Presidents (and one generation of Commission Presidents), and, ultimately, of the will of the IAU membership to adapt to a constantly evolving astronomical world. I’m proud to be able to say today: “Mission Accomplished”.

The new Commissions, with their new or updated topics, with a renewed, more focussed demography, and the exceptionally large participation rate for the election of their new Organizing Committees (from 60% up to nearly 90%), demonstrate that the IAU is ready for the future, and that it is really composed of what I like to call “IAU Citizens”, not just “IAU members”.

The new Commissions will be in place in a couple of weeks on the IAU web site, but you can already start thinking about establishing new Working Groups. The procedure is easy, and the fact that the Division Steering Committees now incorporate ex-officio Commission Presidents should facilitate selecting the best scientific structure between Commission Working Groups and Division Working Groups.

### 2. WE CARE

The mission of the IAU is to be not only a forum for professional astronomers, but is also to go out to society and participate in education and development worldwide, using astronomy as a tool for fostering interest in science and technology, even in less developed countries.

The IAU has now three offices, developed in partnership with institutions from several countries.

- The Office of Astronomy for Development in Cape Town, in partnership with the South African National Research Foundation, has seen a spectacular development of its activities initiated during the previous triennium. It now has several “Regional Nodes” and “Language Centers” across the five continents, and with its revised structure will be even more efficient at selecting and helping educational projects from all over the world to thrive.

- The Office of Astronomy Outreach in Tokyo, in partnership with the National Observatory of Japan and other Asian countries, was developed and plays a key role in the projects specific to 2015 that I will briefly describe in a minute.

- The Office for Young Astronomers in Oslo, in partnership with the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, to continue and broaden the decade-long “International School for Young Astronomers” worldwide.

### 3. WE SHARE

The IAU must also go towards the public. The year 2015, and in particular this General Assembly, is seeing the culmination of two projects initiated by the Executive Committee and implemented by the Office of Astronomy Outreach: the so-called “Cosmic Light” cornerstone of the UNESCO “International Year of Light and Light Technologies”, also

know as “IYL2015”, and the “NameExoWorlds” contest to call for the public naming of selected exoplanets and their host stars.

The “Cosmic Light” project draws heavily on the legacy of the International Year of Astronomy “IYA2009”, which gave an enormous advantage in starting early IYL2015, far earlier than our physicists colleagues ! Actually, the IAU, although not in the drivers’ seat in IYL2015, which was run essentially by physicists and the lighting industry, was setting the standards for many IYL2015 Cornerstones. Here, you may have seen “Cosmic Light” in action, at Stargazing parties in Ala Moana Parks, or in conferences and displays at the Bishop Museum?

The “NameExoWorlds” contest is about engaging the public worldwide to attribute names for 20 exoplanetary systems and their host stars, selected by astronomy clubs and similar non-profit organizations interested in astronomy. The launch of the vote took place in this very room last Tuesday, and I’m pleased to report that, at the time of writing this address, the number of votes received by the IAU is close to 125,000 in only three days !

Last but not least, the IAU continues to develop a very fruitful collaboration with UNESCO on “Astronomy and World Heritage” issues, more precisely in the process of nomination of astronomical sites (past or present) to the list of the World Heritage. One such project, for example, concerns “High-Altitude Observatories” across the world.

In summary, this has been a fantastically rich and exciting experience, which many, or perhaps all, of us in the Executive Committee or among Division Presidents, will remember, and is formally (but perhaps not in reality) ending here at this extra-ordinary General Assembly. I have been helped and supported by wonderful people, and I am most grateful to them.

I’m proud to be an IAU member.

I’m proud to be an “IAU citizen”.

Mahalo !

## 5. Address by the Incoming President

*Prof. Silvia Torres-Peimbert*

It is a great honor to be President of the International Astronomical Union, traditionally one of the most active international scientific organizations. From 2000 to 2006 I participated as vicepresident of this Union. During that period I met IAU presidents Bob Kraft, Franco Pacini, Ronald Eckers and Catherine Cesarsky as well as with the General Secretaries Johannes Andersen, Hans Rickman, Oddbjorn Engvold and Karel van der Hucht; from them I learned some of the multiple tasks and complexities of this society. For last three years, in my role as President-Elect, I have had the privilege of working directly with Bob Williams, Norio Kaifu, Thierry Montmerle, Piero Benvenuti and Ian Corbett, as well as with 6 vicepresidents that were part of the Executive Committee. All of us have worked with enthusiasm for the same goal, the well being of the society.

I am specially grateful to Norio Kaifu for his strength and serenity and to Thierry Montmerle for his energy and enthusiasm. Both of them have decidedly lead the Union through its restructuring process which has been implemented.

The Division Presidents during this period worked outstandingly in establishing the new structure. It is now firmly in place and we are confident that it will indeed fulfill the IAU mission ?to promote and safeguard the science of astronomy in all its aspects through international cooperation?. There are now a set of very active Divisions, Commissions

and Working Groups that will continue to promote the unifying tasks that our discipline requires.

My main concern as President is to involve each of the members in understanding that this organization does have an impact in our professional lives. It helps us to maintain contact with our international colleagues, and to keep us informed of the different activities and developments carried out by the astronomical community. The General Assemblies, Symposia and Regional Meetings are the backbone of the union. They play a central role in fostering astronomy around the world, as well as in attaining consensus on important decisions that affect our science. In other words, I invite all of you to participate more actively in this society.

It is our intention to strengthen the ties between the governing bodies and the membership of the union. To this end we plan to use more intensively the webpage as a means of communication, and to start a new epoch of the Information Bulletin series, probably mainly in an electronic version to all the community. In parallel we request that you keep in contact with us.

For several decades IAU has been committed to education projects, mainly through the International School for Young Astronomers. In 2009 in Rio de Janeiro, the General Assembly approved the “Astronomy for Development. Strategic Plan” which led to the creation of the Office for Astronomy Development, OAD. This office has become an important driver of astronomy education and outreach in several parts of the world. As you have heard already, through the OAD there have been 68 funded projects and 9 regional nodes or language centers across the globe. We expect for this activity to continue with increasing success.

Similarly the Office for Astronomy Outreach, OAO, based in Tokyo has extended the action of the Union to the general public and in general to amateur astronomers around the world. This initiative recognizes the importance that the union gives to these groups of friends and their activities, that until now have been disconnected from the community of professional astronomers.

At this General Assembly, more than 3000 astronomers and exhibitors from 63 countries have come to share with us their work. It has been a very rich program. There were 6 symposia, 22 focus meetings and many splinter meetings. We had the opportunity to listen to very inspiring invited and plenary talks. Moreover there were teaching and public activities. And the exhibits were very informative and attractive.

Keep in mind that in three years the next General Assembly will take place in Vienna, where we will meet again old and new friends. We will have the opportunity to communicate to each other the new results and the exciting discoveries that continue to amaze and enlighten us. We will celebrate the first centennial of this great organization!

Finally let me thank our hosts: the Hawaii Astronomers and the American Astronomical Society for their hospitality, their generosity and all the support given to us. Many thanks also to the many organizations that sponsored this meeting. We will remember this general assembly for many years to come.

Thank you all!

## **6. Address by the Incoming General Secretary**

*Prof. Piero Benvenuti*

Aloha!

Dear colleagues and friends, distinguished guests:

It is a great honour for me to start holding office as General Secretary of the International Astronomical Union and I feel especially privileged to take up duty at this particular moment in time, at the XXIX General Assembly in Honolulu. There are several reasons for that. First of all, thanks to the fine and dedicated work of the previous Presidents and General Secretaries, I am inheriting a completely renewed Union: three years ago, in Beijing, the new Divisions, today here the new Commissions and the Working Groups that soon will follow suit. New energy has been injected in the activities of the Union, and we had a tangible and vivid example of them during these two weeks. At this point I cannot but commit myself to continue supporting the renewal process, offering to the Divisions and Commissions those tools - e.g. dedicated interactive web services - that will facilitate their collaborative work. Tomorrow, during the first Executive Meeting of the new triennium, I will ask the Division Presidents to indicate to me their priority requirements that we will then try to implement to the best possible extent. Talking about Divisions, in the past triennium I enjoyed their very fruitful interaction with the Executive Committee and I am convinced that it is essential for an efficient operation of the Union. Financially, we cannot afford to continue supporting directly their participation in every EC meeting, but, with the help of the ever evolving technology, we will find the way to keep them virtually present as interactive participants.

The second reason that makes me feel a privileged General Secretary, is the renewed Agreement with NRF on the Office of Astronomy for Development. I do hope each of you had a chance recently to have a look at the OAD web pages and check the great job that a small group of dedicated people, together with hundredths of volunteers have achieved: if not, do it soon and feel proud of it. Because - you see - if the IAU were just to be concerned with the development of Astronomy and with fostering international scientific collaboration, it would just do what any Scientific Union is supposed to do. But our Strategic Plan of Astronomy for Development makes the difference: it recognizes the deep root of our Science with humanity, a unique characteristics that singles it out of any other discipline. And using the natural appeal of Astronomy for promoting the human progress, brings it back to its classical function, so beautifully expressed by Plato in his dialogue "The Republic". What has been achieved so far is indeed impressive, as it was also highlighted by the recent external review Report. Just consider the 5 new OAD Regional Nodes that have been started during this General Assembly: all of them are strategically located and have great potential. But the growth alone is not enough: as Khotso Mokhele was warning us yesterday, the real work starts now. The OAD needs to consolidate its achievements and maintain the control and coordination in its expanding international network. All this requires additional resources that are well beyond the modest investment that IAU can provide annually. I am committed to pursue an aggressive fundraising campaign that would allow us to prepare, in time for the next GA in Vienna, an affordable and credible plan that goes beyond 2021, as requested by the Resolution B1 that was approved yesterday. Let me add that the fundraising campaign starts now, by asking each National Member to assure a timely payment of the dues! I am fully aware of the intervening difficulties that various Countries may encounter, but it is obvious that without that basic income, all activities of the Union will suffer and start starving. On a related subject, I repeat here my full commitment to follow strictly the Union financial Working Rules, in particular by restarting the annual audit of the accounts and increasing transparency, regularly forwarding the annual reports of the Finance Committee to the National Members.

Let me now come to a more personal reason for feeling privileged. Before coming here, I was scanning through the long list of past General Secretaries - a spine-chilling exercise - and I discovered that I am the first Italian astronomer to hold that position: an

honour that I wish to dedicate to my glorious University of Padova, that, with its motto “*Universa Universis Patavina Libertas*” reminds all of us that Science is tantamount to Freedom. And if the motto weren’t enough, you just have to glance at the original Galileo’s chair, when entering its Aula Magna. That is not however the only “first” of the next triennium: for the first time in the history of the Union, the majority of the Officers is composed of women. One Italian and three women: you may start wondering if it is just a statistical fluctuation or if there are some hidden astrological connections... well, start pondering: you have three years to solve the conundrum! Now, seriously: I believe our Union is giving a great example and I wish to consider it not just a simple attempt to reach gender equality. As I believe Astronomy - so deeply rooted as it is in the grain of humanity and culture - is not just a Science as many others, similarly I believe a woman scientist is not just another scientist. Women have a special natural gift for caring and educating - and I underline the etymo of the word: e-duco, I pull out the best of someone - therefore a woman who is also an astronomer can have a greater impact on the society than a simple scientist. It is not a case that our Working Group Women in Astronomy, in the report that they have prepared at this Assembly, has indicated the desire to closely collaborate with the OAD and in particular with the Regional Nodes for contributing to a better and more just society. I am looking forward to working pleasantly and efficiently with my colleagues women Officers!

Coming to the conclusion of my address, I like to invite you all to Vienna in 2018, for the XXX General Assembly. We will be celebrating there the first 100 years of the IAU and we should mark that important anniversary with some special and significant event. We are already planning to prepare a book about the history of the Union and, given the location of the Assembly, we may consider some additional project on the relation between Astronomy and Philosophy, in particular the Philosophy of Science. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Norio and Thierry who, friendly and patiently, accompanied me during the past triennium.

Mahalo... und Aufwiedersehen in Wien in 2018!

## 7. Handing out the IAU flag

The AAS Executive Officer Kevin Marvel thanked everyone for coming to the XXIX General Assembly and introduced Gerhard Hensler of the University of Vienna, who invited all there for the XXX GA in 2018. Then Roy Gal of the University of Hawai‘i officiated as the IAU flag was ceremonially transferred from the USA to Austria.

## 8. Closing

The festivities were brought to a close with an oli (chant) by Kumu Pattye Wright, who then played her ipu (a type of drum) while six dancers performed a mesmerizing hula. Afterward, filing out of the ballroom and onto the 4th-floor patio for a group photo, attendees were greeted by a spectacular rainbow, as if the sky itself wanted to participate in the celebration!

## 9. Image Archive

Images taken during the General Assembly can be viewed and downloaded from the IAU web site:

[https://www.iau.org/public/images/archive/category/general\\_assembly\\_2015/](https://www.iau.org/public/images/archive/category/general_assembly_2015/)