

PRESIDENT'S INAUGURAL STATEMENT

There is no doubt that it is a considerable honour to be entrusted with the Presidency of IUVSTA, and a particular pleasure for me to take over this role in my home country. I am acutely aware, however, that it is also a considerable responsibility, and hope that you will continue to support me in my efforts to lead the Union during the next three years.

During the period of my own involvement in the Union over the last 12 years I have seen major advances in both the range and effectiveness of its activities, and I am keen to maintain this momentum. Much of this development has involved the scientific activities, and especially the programme of IUVSTA Workshops, which is now a highly successful and visible activity of the Union. This is an area of the Union's activities with which I have had a particularly strong association myself (although the programme was initiated by the late Tony van Oostrom), and I am certainly keen to support the Scientific Director to ensure that this continues to flourish. Another area of activity which has blossomed in the last few years has been the educational role of the Union, with the visual aids programme being totally revitalised, while a second string here has been the collaboration with the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Trieste, Italy, in running schools, especially for students in less-developed countries. The introduction of an IUVSTA site on the World Wide Web has also started to transform the publication activities of the Union.

All of these past developments are excellent, and must be maintained and built upon. I am sure, however, that there are other ways in which the Union can be made more effective and more efficient. With this in mind I am keen to seek ways to streamline the way in which the Union conducts its business. The modified format of this General Meeting is a small step in this direction; while doubtless still too time-consuming, I am keen to find ways of making such meetings more effective in transmitting information as well as shorter in time; I do not believe these two objectives are incompatible. I believe similar improvements can be made to Executive Council Meetings. The Executive Council itself remains the final decision-making body in conducting the business of the Union during each triennium, but more work is already being conducted in Committees, and these can be streamlined to reduce repetition and to use our time more effectively. In this regard, I plan to reorganise the way we deal with Liaison and Developing Countries activities. These two (related) activities are of great potential importance and the Union's activities in this area remain much weaker than many of us would wish; my hope is that by asking key individuals to take on special responsibility for these activities within an expanded Education Committee, we can have a greater impact than is possible in the present fragmented structure and thus initiate new educational activities.

Of course, an important constraint in the level of activity of the Union is its finances. The decision some years ago to spend some of the investment income of the Union on scientific workshops was the key to the expansion of these activities, and further expansion will require further income. With this in mind we are moving to a modified investment policy but certainly intend to retain a significant element of caution to ensure the continued strength of the Union.

Another aspect of the Union's development which needs careful consideration is its Scientific Divisions. These are a great source of strength and provide the driving force for the scientific workshops and the programme of the triennial congress, as well as feeding into the organisation of other international conferences. Currently, however, we only have a mechanism for (slowly) creating new Divisions, and no clear mechanism for reviewing the

remits of different Divisions and disbanding or combining as well as creating them. Some discussion of this problem has occurred in the Long-Range Planning Committee in the past triennium of this topic, and I am keen to see this discussion produce some clear strategies for future flexibility. The Union serves a constantly-changing community, and it is important to have a flexible structure which can respond to these changes.

The next three years will present a fascinating challenge for me, and I trust it will prove a fruitful period for IUVSTA.

D.P.Woodruff