

Changement à l'IUPAC

L'Union Internationale de Chimie Pure et Appliquée (IUPAC) a mis à l'étude une réforme importante de son fonctionnement. Son bureau l'a adoptée et l'Assemblée générale d'août 99 (Berlin) devra se prononcer.

Le Comité Nationale de la Chimie, sous l'égide de l'Académie des sciences (qui supervise aussi l'appartenance aux autres unions internationales) se compose de dix membres de cette Académie, dix membres du milieu universitaire, dix membres de l'industrie, et des présidents de la SFC (Société Française de Chimie), la SCI (Société de Chimie Industrielle), la SHT (Société des Hautes Températures), la SF2M (Société Française de Métallurgie et Matériaux), la SFBBM (Société Française de Biochimie et de Biologie Moléculaire), la SCT (Société de Chimie Thérapeutique) et du Cefracor (Centre François de l'Anticorrosion). Son siège est à la Maison de la Chimie. Il représente la France auprès de l'IUPAC.

Les modifications envisagées paraissent assez importantes pour les porter à la connaissance de l'ensemble de la communauté chimique française. Elles figurent ci-après.

Les remarques et opinions de tous sont les bienvenues. En particulier, les suggestions sur les questions dont cette IUPAC devrait se saisir, les actions désirées, etc., au niveau international.

Adresser la correspondance au Dr Annick Percheron-Guégan*, secrétaire général du CNC.

Marc Julia
Président du CNC

To IUPAC's National Adhering Organizations (NAO)

Letter from IUPAC President

Changes in organization and management of IUPAC's scientific work

As you know, the Union has given intensive consideration during the last few years to ways that we can meet the challenges occurring worldwide in chemistry and the chemical industry. IUPAC must respond to the globalization of science, to the expansion of the borders of chemistry in a wide range of scientific fields, to the interdisciplinary nature of modern chemistry, and to the service of chemistry to society. The first step was to develop a strategic plan to redefine the Union's role as the international organization principally responsible for the promotion of the chemical sciences. The strategic plan articulates the policy of the Union and provides general guidance to our operating arms, the divisions and the standing

committees. This plan has elicited many positive responses from NAOs and other major scientific and industrial organizations. At the general Assembly in Berlin we look forward to discussion with the NAOs of possibilities for updating the strategic thrusts for the following two years.

The present structure of the Union precludes the fulfillment of many of its central scientific functions, as reflected in organizational fragmentation and resulting hindrance in the inception and conduct of horizontal interdisciplinary projects. The founders of IUPAC envisioned and made provision for the organization and action of a dynamic Union. In time, the concept of a changing structure was replaced by the current system of long-term commissions, with little opportunity for divisions to plan for scientific renewal and growth. Significant past attempts for the restructuring of IUPAC by the creation of the pool titular members and by interdisciplinary unification of divisional activities have not been effective. New concepts were developed by the

ad hoc strategy development and implementation committee (SDIC), and with the endorsement of the executive committee, the SDIC proposals have been widely disseminated through IUPAC and comments solicited.

I am delighted to report to you formally that the bureau has now approved a policy and an operational program based on the conceptual framework that the Union represents and serves the entire world chemistry community. The objective is to improve quality, relevance, international impact and effectiveness of the Union's scientific work. The integrated program constitutes a holistic plan, which rests on major changes in the responsibilities of the division presidents and division committees, in the election procedures on the division level, in project evaluation and in the future function of commissions.

The bureau's decision came only after discussing and evaluating many comments and suggestions and after augmenting and modifying some aspects of the SDIC proposals. I have received formal and informal views, all

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supporting the SDIC recommendations, from a number of NAOs. The final vote by the bureau (20-0 with two abstentions) reflects the broad consensus eventually achieved for approving the new program, which is described in more detail in the letter from Dr. Becker. Some aspects of the program, dealing with strengthening of division committees and the inception of a project-based system, will begin immediately. Implementation of other aspects will depend on decisions by council in Berlin in August 1999. I would like to highlight now one action that will be referred to council, so that we can jointly consider all ramifications for individual NAOs and for the entire Union.

One of the major objectives of the new program is to solicit ideas for IUPAC projects from the worldwide chemistry community and to set up short-term task groups to carry out the projects, with membership open to the entire community. A consequence of the project-driven system based on short-term task groups is that we will reduce our reliance on the long-term, essentially permanent commissions that have assumed a central role in IUPAC's scientific activities. Although the 37 current commissions have eminent scientists as members and have collectively carried out excellent work over many years, their continuation year after year now has become an impediment to the development of new approaches within our divisions. Moreover, we are now devoting most of our financial resources to support of these bodies and providing for their regular meetings, irrespective of the need for meetings or the requirements of their projects. For many years the biennial continuation of virtually all commissions has become a routine exercise for the council. Proposals from time to time for consolidation or termination of a few commissions have been virtually impossible to implement, since they appear to unfairly single out certain groups. The problem is not that we have some « bad » commissions ; the problem is the system itself. *The bureau has recommended that council, in exercising its responsibility under bylaw 4. 302, decide at the general Assembly in 1999 not to continue any present commission beyond the end of*

2001. This is a crucial step in the implementation of the integrated program that has been approved by the bureau, and I believe that this step must be taken. It will permit the divisions to take a fresh look at their programs and develop strategies and mechanisms to meet future challenges. However, the termination of the commission structure as we have known it has a number of ramifications that must be examined carefully before council meets.

The enclosed message from the secretary general is intended to be the beginning of a dialog with the NAOs that will explore important issues and refine our new program in ways that will ensure the enthusiastic support of all NAOs. The other officers and I look forward to receiving your ideas and to working together to shape IUPAC's role towards the 21st century.

Sincerely,

Prof. Joshua Jortner
President

Message from the IUPAC Secretary general

As a follow-up to President Jortner's letter, I would like to (i) provide a summary of the recently approved program to modify the organization and management of IUPAC's scientific work ; (ii) discuss some aspects that may have particular importance to some or all NAOs ; and (iii) solicit your views on how we can best implement the new system. Many of the points covered here are also included in material that appears on the IUPAC Web site [<http://www.iupac.org>]. That material is oriented primarily toward the members of IUPAC bodies, whereas here I would like to emphasize the perspective of the NAOs.

Features of the integrated program.

The program approved by the bureau is designed to give clear direction for the Union to

- revitalize its scientific activities,
- ensure the selection of only high quality projects to bear the IUPAC label,
- encourage participation by the worldwide chemistry community,
- optimize the use of IUPAC's limited financial resources, and
- simplify management and accountability.

The seven division committees have been given the responsibility for developing scientific programs within their branches of chemistry, seeking out ideas for projects, evaluating the proposals and managing approved projects. The division committees will be strengthened by new procedures for nomination of their members. Proposals for projects will be evaluated under IUPAC-wide general criteria. It is expected that most projects will be carried out by short-term task groups, with members drawn from the worldwide chemistry community.

In 1999, council will be asked to exercise its responsibility under bylaw 4.302 to decide not to continue any existing commission beyond the end of 2001. This action will permit each division committee to utilize the period 1999-2001 to take a fresh look at its overall programs, to consider how best to allocate its resources, and to determine the optimum way to provide for oversight of activities and continuity of programs, without the impediment of maintaining and justifying a large number of existing commissions.

Council will also be asked to amend bylaw 4.307, which currently describes the « right » of titular members to receive travel reimbursements, irrespective of responsibility for projects or other activities. These two actions will free up funds now used for the General Assembly, which can be allocated to scientific programs. The change will permit greatly increased flexibility for divisions to support their programs and to collaborate on interdisciplinary programs.

Issues to be resolved. The program approved by the bureau has been under development for almost two years. It incorporates many proposals from all parts of the Union, including detailed procedures not included in the above summary. Nevertheless, there are several issues arising from the projected change in the role of commissions that must be resolved before the program can become fully effective in 2002. One question involves the definition of the membership of divisions and the way in which we expect to use the terms *titular member* and *associate member*. Action will be needed by council but can and probably should be

deferred until 2001, when we will have gained experience with the project-driven system. The other issues are more urgent, since they involve the ways by which NAOs can propose members of IUPAC bodies.

In 1997 council approved two « housekeeping » amendments to bylaws to repeal the retrospective approval by NAOs of appointments to IUPAC bodies. At that time I stated that I planned to develop, in conjunction with the NAOs, a mechanism for consultation prior to appointments being made. So far, this has not been done while the new operating program was being formulated. Now we have two aspects to address : (1) How can we best solicit nominations from NAOs for experts to serve on task groups ? (2) How can we assure that NAOs, particularly from smaller countries, can participate continuously in IUPAC activities without continuing commissions and the resultant possibilities for appointing national representatives ?

(1) *Task group membership.* Under past practices, most projects have been initiated and developed informally within a given commission, and decisions have been made there as to who would be able and willing to participate in the project. In some instances, additional members of a project team are solicited to provide expertise or geographic balance, but the process has been largely highly decentralized, personal and informal. I don't mean to be over-critical, since this system often works very well, but it gives NAOs (or any outside groups) little opportunity to propose individuals with interest and expertise. Likewise, vacancies among titular and associate members of commissions have usually been filled during commission meetings at general Assemblies, often under severe time pressure, with limited opportunities for consultation.

Under the new program, beginning in January 1999, proposals for projects are to be prepared in a simple but consistent format and submitted to division committees via the secretariat, which will handle administrative aspects and be aware of the nature of the proposals but will not be involved in decisions to approve or fund projects. In many instances, most of the participants in a project will be known

when the proposal is submitted, but during the review process there will be an opportunity that does not exist now to seek additional interested individuals. We need to gain some experience during the next year to determine how frequently such occasions arise, but I hope that we can work out a process to involve interested NAOs. I welcome your suggestions as to how we can obtain nominations in a timely way. Clearly, project leaders will be interested only in people who have the expertise and interest to contribute to the project. Also, we hope to be able to initiate projects rather quickly - in many instances, in months, rather than waiting for the next biennium, as defined by the date of a general Assembly. How well do you think your NAO can respond to requests by e-mail for such suggestions ? We have been encouraged at responses from several NAOs to requests for suggestions for members of the committee on printed and electronic publications, which had specialized requirements but elicited several replies during August - a vacation month in most of the northern hemisphere !

(2) *National representatives.* We currently have over 200 national representatives (NRs) on various IUPAC bodies. Some of these involve standing committees (e.g., committee on teaching of chemistry), which are unaffected by the new program, but most NRs are on commissions. The position of NR has been filled in several ways. In some instances, a NAO requests such an appointment, and it is made if agreed by the relevant commission chairman. In other instances, a commission chairman requests a NAO to appoint an individual as a NR in order to broaden the geographic base of the commission. In still other cases, a request is made by a commission chairman, not for geographic reasons, but because he wishes to continue a formal connection with someone who has already served the maximum period of 12 years on the commission. Because of the different reasons for appointing NRs, I am not sure how well the current NR policies meet the needs of individual NAOs. Enclosed are the latest data on NRs from your country. I would be glad to have your comments.

In view of the central role of division committees under the new program, the

bureau has approved a provision for a limited number of non-voting NRs on division committees. (Since the division committee is planned to have only 10 titular members, a maximum of six NRs would normally be accepted for a given division committee.) A rigorous nomination procedure is to be followed for TMs on the division committees to be sure that each committee has the breadth of expertise and scientific judgment to meet its expanded responsibilities. The division presidents will welcome participation by NRs who have qualifications similar to those of the TMs. I believe that the provision for participation of NRs on division committees can significantly strengthen ties between NAOs and the operating divisions. Although acceptance of nominations will clearly not be at all automatic, there is an opportunity for a number of senior level scientists from various countries to take an active part in advising on strategy and project assessment.

If council in Berlin follows the bureau recommendation not to continue current commissions beyond the end of 2001, divisions will have two years to decide how to restructure. It is likely that *ad hoc* advisory groups will be needed in some areas, so there may be opportunities for people to participate beyond the normal division committees themselves. Also, it is possible that divisions will request formation of a small number of new commissions, particularly to develop IUPAC efforts in a new field, where some continuity is required. With adequate justification, the bureau and council will probably allow a limited number of commissions, with strict adherence to the conditions given in bylaw 4.301, including specification of termination date. Thus, there may be further openings for NRs, but we cannot forecast the scope at present.

I have raised several questions here and would appreciate your responses and comments on ways that NAOs from both small and large countries can be involved in IUPAC programs to the extent that they wish. Also, please feel free to raise any other points of concern. We would like to optimize the characteristics of the new integrated program well before the next general Assembly.

Sincerely,