

22nd CODATA General Assembly
20-21 October 2000
Grand Hotel Bistro, Stresa, Italy

Report of the Canadian Delegate, Dr. G. H. Wood

1. Location

Originally to be convened at the Grand Hotel Bistro in Baveno, Italy, the General Assembly and Conference were forced, by the flooding conditions, to relocate to a sister hotel in Stresa, some four kilometres distant. Apart from that, the General Assembly ran efficiently and completed its agenda successfully.

2. Participants

A complete list of the 42 participants is attached (Appendix A). Altogether there were 25 voting Delegates present (representing National Members, Union Members and Co-opted Organizations), 8 Executive Committee members, 7 Invited Observers (including Glen Newton from CISTI) and 2 Secretariat staff.

3. Financial Matters

The 1998 and 1999 Accounts, which were approved following the Treasurer's presentation, showed CODATA to be in reasonable financial health. As usual, cash flow can be a problem because of the timing with which some countries pay. Canada, it should be said, is exemplary in the promptness with which we pay our dues.

A motion was passed which addressed the recommendations of the Sub-Committee on Finance concerning the Annual Dues paid by National Members. The complete text of the Motion is attached as Appendix B. In summary the main points were:

- a. No changes to the number of Membership Units assigned to any Nation currently a Member of CODATA;
- b. The annual increase in the value of Membership Units is to be based, beginning in 2001, on an 'all items' index of inflation of the major seven countries as quoted annually by the OECD in its publication *Main Economic Indicators*;¹
- c. The level of dues for new National/Regional Members is to be 20% of the dues such Members pay to ICSU but with a minimum level of \$1000 (US).

4. Election of Officers and Ordinary Members of Executive Committee

Because, at the end of the nominating process, the number of candidates equalled the number of vacancies (no nominations from the floor are accepted), the Official Slate was accepted. A copy is attached as Appendix C.

¹ The 1999 rate of 1.8% will be used to calculate dues for 2001

5. Constitutional Amendments

A document with suggested changes had been circulated to Delegates in July and this, combined with the *Report of the Review Committee on the Proposed Amendments to the CODATA Constitution*, constituted the officially recommended amendments. All the recommendations were adopted as distributed. Copies of the *Suggested Changes* and of the *Report* are attached as Appendix D.

6. Report on the 17th International Conference

Co-Chairs Prof. J-E Dubois and J. Rumble reported on the Conference which had been held the four days immediately preceding the General Assembly. Some 271 presentations had been given, including 10 plenary lectures, 241 invited and contributed lectures and 20 posters. Attendance was about 250 and the budget about 80k\$ (US).

This was the first time that the CODATA Secretariat had been so involved in the details of a Conference, the result of a conscious decision by the Executive to develop more of a corporate memory in this area and of the realities of the location selected. On the whole the Conference was rated a scientific success and the impact of the move required by the flooding was minimal.

7. Approval of Task Groups for 2000-2002

Considerable time was given to this important process whereby CODATA plans and approves its scientific program for the next biennium. Each proposal for renewal or for initial approval was presented by its champion along with reports of the referees. Of the 16 proposals, the 8 Task Groups approved by secret ballot were:

Continuing

- Fundamental Constants
- Data/Information and Visualization
- IUPAC-CODATA Task Group on Standardization of Physico-Chemical Property Electronic Datafiles
- Comparative Mathematical Methodologies for Data Handling and Knowledge Interpretation
- Survey of Data Sources in Asian-Oceanic Countries

New

- Information System on Natural Gas Hydrates
- Reliable Scientific Data Sources in Africa
- Global Species Databases; the Species 2000 and IOPI Projects

Of particular note was the approval of a Task Group based in Africa, a tangible demonstration of CODATA's attempts to address the needs of developing nations.

8. National, Union and Co-opted Members Reports

Opportunity was given to each Delegate to highlight their report or to cite new information. The report from Canada is attached as Appendix E.

9. Future CODATA Conferences

The President outlined the objectives of Conferences, along with the thoughts of the Executive Committee concerning future locations and the amount of central input into planning. Montréal was accepted for 2002, with the next three Conferences to rotate from Europe to Asia to Europe.

10. Publications

Prof. E. Fluck, Chair of the Publications Committee reported that six books had been published under the contract with Springer-Verlag but that fewer than 500 copies had been sold of each. Five more manuscripts are in hand but the contract with Springer has been terminated. Work is under way to publish these as soon as possible.

It is planned that the Newsletter, rather than being distributed in hardcopy as well as being posted on the web site, will be published twice per year electronically and once in paper. The latter version would also include content from the two previous electronic ones for archive purposes.

Details were given as well on plans for an electronic journal devoted to subjects pertaining to CODATA's mandate. Initially, at least, the editorial offices will be based at Queen's University in Northern Ireland with a high component of volunteer labour. One significant concern is a viable subscription model.

11. CODATA's Interactions with ICSU

It was reported that, to smooth the transition process when Presidents complete their terms, ICSU has instituted a 'President-Elect' position in its governance. Perhaps this is a step that CODATA might want to emulate.

With respect to the ICSU Large Grant Program, Dr. Henry Kehiaian reported on his successful application in which the Task Group he chairs had been awarded 100k\$ – a rare and notable achievement for a data-related project.

12. General Observations

With the election of Prof. Royer as Treasurer, the imbalance of three North American Officers out of four has been addressed. The presence of two Executive Members from African nations indicates a higher degree of internationalization is being achieved. Kathleen Cass, the new Executive Director, brings a strong organizational background and lot of energy to the position; her presence augurs well for the functioning of the Secretariat. The ability of some countries to continue to pay their dues is worrisome and has implications on the long-term fiscal viability of CODATA with the current funding model.

Respectfully submitted
Gordon Wood