

Delivered by Prof. G. R. Desiraju, President, at the Opening Ceremony of the International Union of Crystallography in Montreal, Canada, in August 2014

SLIDE ONE

On behalf of the Executive Committee, I would like to welcome you to the 23rd Congress and General Assembly of the International Union of Crystallography. With a line-up of the highest quality speakers, all bringing new and novel insights and thoughts to our rich and interdisciplinary subject, I am delighted that you are here in Montreal for what will undoubtedly be a memorable and enjoyable scientific meeting.

SLIDE TWO

Montreal is setting a precedent, as it is the first city ever to host the IUCr Congress and General Assembly for the second time. The first time was in 1957 when the 4th Congress and General Assembly of the Union was held here. The slide shows the then Executive Committee of the IUCr at the General Assembly. The Union is happy to be in North America for the sixth time in its 66 year history. It is 18 years since we assembled in Seattle and this return to North America in 2014 is long overdue.

SLIDE THREE

The 23rd Congress and General Assembly of the International Union of Crystallography is particularly significant because it takes place during the International Year of Crystallography.

In their resolution proclaiming 2014 as the International Year of Crystallography, the United Nations General Assembly recognised that “humankind’s understanding of the material nature of our world is grounded, in particular, in our knowledge of crystallography”. The Congress will be one of the high points of our celebration of the International Year of Crystallography. We should all pause at some point during the meeting and think what contributions we can make during 2014, and the years that follow, to the long-term impact of IYCr2014.

I would like at this time to acknowledge the support and cooperation of UNESCO, who are our partners in conducting and organising the International Year. I extend my greetings to Prof. Maciej Nalecz of UNESCO who is representing the Director General of UNESCO, Mme. Irena Bokova at this Opening Ceremony.

SLIDE FOUR

The events taking place throughout the year are truly global in nature and too numerous to mention here. The Union is directly involved, however, in three types of event. The first was the Opening Ceremony in UNESCO in Paris on 20 and 21 January this year. This ceremony provided a flying start to the Year.

The second type of event that marks IYCr is the OpenLab, which are organised by IUCr and UNESCO in cooperation with companies that manufacture crystallographic equipment. Specifically I would like to mention Agilent, Bruker, Dectris, PANalytical, Rigaku, STOE and Xenocs.

The OpenLabs are crystallographic laboratories based in different countries worldwide. They are aimed at allowing access to crystallographic knowledge and technology, key for the fruitful development of science, and are intended to open possibilities for conducting high-level research.

These labs are in full swing, and so far we've seen OpenLabs in Pakistan, Argentina, Morocco, Ghana, Cambodia and Uruguay; the next will take place in Turkey this coming September.

The third type of event is the IUCr-UNESCO summit meeting. These meetings are intended to bring together scientists from different countries, using a common crystallographic theme. Three summit meetings have been arranged and the first and highly successful one was held in Karachi at the end of April. I had the privilege of leading the Indian delegation to this meeting. The remaining two summit meetings will be held in Campinas, Brazil, and Bloemfontein, South Africa later this year.

The extensive list of other activities includes crystal growing competitions, symposia, workshops, exhibitions and photo competitions. The IYCr is finally, a celebration of the contributions at the grassroots level, in schools, colleges and in places which are outside the traditional purview of higher level research.

SLIDE FIVE

The IUCr is committed to the spreading of the subject of crystallography in all parts of the world because it is only through the growth of scientific understanding that all round progress can be obtained that benefits society at large.

SLIDE SIX

One of the aims of the International Year has been to increase the number of countries involved in the Union. Currently, the Union has 42 adhering bodies representing 51 countries. A further eleven countries will be putting forward applications for membership during the 23rd General Assembly. This large number is quite unprecedented. The face of the Union is changing and it is becoming much more inclusive and holistic in its approach.

SLIDE SEVEN

I would like to draw your attention to the IYCr legacy fund. This fund, which is based on voluntary donations, has been established to maintain the momentum of the International Year and carry on activities in general outreach and training beyond IYCr2014. Please contact us in the IUCr booth to find out details about how to contribute.

SLIDE EIGHT

The IUCr has an editorial office in Chester. It is the only scientific Union with a significant publishing operation, and the dissemination of crystallographic information through its journals and books has been a key aim since the Union was formed in 1948. Revenue from publications provides 93.5% of the income of the Union, and your support and that of the rest of community for our publications is essential to the long-term health of the Union.

SLIDE NINE

The International Year has also witnessed the move of all IUCr journals to online-only publication, the launch of a new journal, IUCrJ, and many other initiatives including new journal scopes and titles, and specially commissioned issues and articles. The aim of all of these developments is to keep IUCr Journals at the forefront of digital publishing and to ensure that we publish the highest calibre science.

SLIDE TEN

An important part of this ceremony is the award of the Ewald prize. The tenth prize has been awarded to Professors Aloysio Janner and Ted Janssen for the development of superspace crystallography and its application to the analysis of aperiodic crystals. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the winners on a most deserving achievement. The presentation of the award will take place shortly.

SLIDE ELEVEN

I would like to conclude by thanking the Local Executive Committee, the International Program Committee, and Local Organizing Committee for hosting this event and welcoming us to the beautiful city of Montreal. In particular my thanks go to Jim Britten for chairing the International Programme Committee, and Albert Berghuis and Mirek Cygler who have acted as Co-Chairs of the Local Organizing Committee. I would also like to thank the National Research Council of Canada for the invitation to hold the Twenty-Third General Assembly and International Congress of Crystallography in Montreal.

It gives me great pleasure to formally declare this meeting open.