Report from the New Council of IUNS

The new Council of IUNS was elected in September 2013 at the 20th International Congress of Nutrition ‘Joining Cultures through Nutrition’. The President is Dr. Anna Lartey (Ghana), President-Elect Prof. J. Alfredo Martinez (Spain), Vice-President Prof. V. Prakash (India), Treasurer Helmut Heseker (Germany) and Secretary General Prof. Catherine Geissler (UK). The Council Members are Dr. Godwin D. Ndossi (Tanzania), Dr. Swapan Kumar Roy (Bangladesh), Prof. Teruo Miyazawa (Japan), Dr. Lynnette M. Neufeld (Canada), Prof. Reynaldo Martorell (USA) and Prof. Andrew Prentice (UK) (see www.iuns.org).

The 20th IUNS-ICN Congress was held in the beautiful city of Granada, Andalusia, Spain. It was a great success and the biggest ever with 4200 participants, expertly organized by Professor Angel Gil (President of both the Spanish Society of Nutrition and of the Congress), along with the local and international IUNS organizing committee.

The scientific program had extensive scope over the 6 days of the congress with Plenary and Special Lectures, 8 Parallel Symposia, a Sponsored Symposium and short Oral Communications and Electronic Posters on most of the days. This provided an excellent chance for all to select a varied personal schedule from this vast feast of knowledge.

Some of the highlights of the ICN included the IUNS Lifetime Achievement Award to Prof. Kraisid Tontisirin of Thailand; our former IUNS Vice-President, Lindsay Allen, was awarded the EV McCollum prize by the America Society for Nutrition and gave her award lecture. Honor was paid to the memory of Prof. Nevin Scrimshaw, a towering figure in nutrition over many decades, who had recently passed away.


There was also the ‘IUNS Living Legend’ session where we honored great and wise compatriots for their many years of work in nutrition who have now retired from their labors. These were Basil S. Hetzel, György Biro, Ge Keyou, Helio Vannucchi, Salvador Zamora-Navarro, Mamdouh Kamal Gabr, Daniel Lemonier, Malaquias Batista Filho, Jose Eduardo Dutra de Oliveira, Khun Sakorn Dhanamitta, Vina Viravaldhaya, and Mankombu Sambasivan Swaminathan.
The gala dinner had a special Spanish flair as it was held in the Granada bullring (fortunately with no bulls), and we were lavishly entertained with Flamenco music and dancing.

On the last day the President, Dr. Anna Lartey, gave her acceptance speech in which she thanked the Immediate Past-President Prof. Ibrahim Elmadfa and the outgoing Council, declaring that we aim to build on their achievements. She also thanked the Spanish Nutrition Society, and Chair of the Congress, Professor Angel Gil, and his team for such an excellent congress.

She noted that it is no coincidence that a small woman from a small African country (called Ghana), where malnutrition in the form of Kwashiorkor was first described by a British medical doctor (Dr. Cecily Williams), should be taking over the helm of affairs of the IUNS, a global Organization, at this exciting time for Nutrition, with global challenges and opportunities. Since IUNS was founded in 1946, this is only the second time that a woman has become President. The first woman to be elected President was Prof. Barbara Underwood, whom she thanked sincerely for her immense encouragement to take up the position.

Dr. Lartey noted that the year 2015 marks the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and soon we will have the post 2015 development agenda in which the IUNS has a huge role to play in meeting the nutrition goals. This requires a competent workforce of well-trained nutrition scientists working alongside other professionals. This is a responsibility and a challenge we cannot, and must not, take lightly.

She stressed the need to build effective partnerships to fight the menace of poor nutrition, which means working across sectors in multidisciplinary and multisectoral teams, and partnering with groups who have common goals.

The President outlined what the Council hopes to achieve in the next 4 years:

1. To strengthen our adhering bodies, some of which are strong and many weak, by encouraging the strong adhering bodies to support the weaker ones through a twinning initiative
2. To have a major focus on capacity-building for our young scientists
3. To review our statutes and by-laws, nominating an independent working group to examine them for areas of ambiguity and lack of clarity, so as to maintain a dynamic organization in the electronic age of the 21st century
4. To be open to ideas and suggestions on how we can better serve our adhering bodies; and contribute to solving global nutrition problems

The first full meeting of the Council was held recently in Amsterdam on February 6–7. Important items on the agenda included the work plan for the next 4 years, preparations for the next congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2017, and a review of the IUNS Statutes to bring them up to date for this increasingly electronic age so that decisions that require ratification by the adhering bodies can be made between the 4-yearly congress meetings and AGMs. We also discussed the progress of existing task forces and proposed the establishment of others. Further details on these will be available soon.

The Officers and Council look forward with great anticipation to the exciting 4 years ahead.

Professor Catherine Geissler
Secretary General IUNS