

# CHAPTER I

## THIRTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### BUSINESS SESSIONS I and II

**23rd and 26th August 2021**

**Chaired by Ewine van Dishoeck, President of the IAU  
via Zoom**

The business sessions of the XXXI General Assembly, on August 23 and 26, 2021 were held virtually due to the pandemic.

The National Members (NM), Executive Committee (EC), Division Presidents, Resolutions Committee, Finance Committee and other speakers participated by Zoom.

The Individual (IM) and Junior Members (JM) and other interested participants could view the Business Sessions through a YouTube LiveStream (and subsequent recordings). They had a Slack Channel for comments and questions. The IAU Officers and Secretariat monitored the Slack Channel and communicated relevant questions to the speaker.

#### **1. Agenda of the Business Meetings**

**Tuesday August 24 2021 at 15:00 CEST *by Zoom***

Ewine van Dishoeck led the agenda.

1. Welcome, adoption of agenda
2. Listing of National Member representatives
3. Reminder of Voting Rules (Ewine van Dishoeck)
4. Admission of new National Members (Teresa Lago, NM vote)
5. Report of the EC (Ewine van Dishoeck & Teresa Lago) (see ch. VI)
6. Presentation of Changes to Statutes, Bye-Laws (Teresa Lago) (see ch. VII)
7. Presentation of Resolutions (Resolution Committee Chair) (see ch. V)
8. Report of the Special Nominating Committee

**Thursday August 26 2021, 15:00 CEST *by Zoom***

Ewine van Dishoeck led the agenda.

9. Welcome, adoption of agenda
10. Changes to Bye-Laws (Ewine van Dishoeck, vote by NMs\*)
11. Honorary Members admitted by EC (Teresa Lago)

12. Resolutions: recap of discussions (Resolution Committee Chair, votes by IM\*, JM\*)
13. Proposed Division Presidents and Vice Presidents (Ewine van Dishoeck)
14. Financial Matters (Teresa Lago)

- Presentation of 2018–2020 accounts
- Presentation of 2022–2024 budget

Vote on accounts and budget (vote by NMs\*) - this vote was also done electronically

15. Appointment of Finance Committee (Teresa Lago, vote by NMs\*)
16. Appointment of Membership Committee (Teresa Lago, vote by NMs\*)
17. New Resolution Committee appointed by EC (Teresa Lago)
18. Appointment of Special Nominating Committee (Teresa Lago, vote by NMs\*)
19. Election of Executive Committee 2021–2024 (Ewine van Dishoeck, vote by NMs)
20. Brief addresses of retiring and incoming President and GS (Ewine van Dishoeck, Debra Elmegreen, Teresa Lago, José Miguel R. Espinosa)

## Note on Votes

Votes marked with \* were conducted electronically among the National Members over a period of several days between the Preparatory meeting and the Business meetings (typically August 19–25 or 23–25). The vote for new NMs was through a Yes/No poll at the meeting on zoom. The following dates in 2021 for voting were carried out via Zoom during the meeting.

Specifically:

- Resolutions - open August 26th - September 10th for IMs and JMs voting
- SNC Members - NMs vote - August 19th - 25th
- Finance Committee Members - NMs vote - August 19th - 25th
- Membership Committee Members - NMs vote - August 19th - 25th
- Changes to Bye-Laws - NMs vote - August 23rd - August 25th
- Accounts and Budget - NMs vote - August 23rd - August 27th

## 2. Proposed Resolutions and Changes to Bye-laws

The Resolutions (B1, B2, B3, and B4) were discussed during this meeting, and approved via online voting in the subsequent month:

- Resolution B1 in support of the protection of geodetic radio astronomy against radio frequency interference.
- Resolution B2 on the improvement of the Earth's rotation theories and models.
- Resolution B3 on the Gaia Celestial Reference Frame.
- Resolution B4 on the use of a standard photometric system in ultraviolet (UV) astronomy.

See ch. V for the full resolutions.

- Change in the Bye-Laws II. 7.b – consisting of a change to the date the IAU Secretary General has to send the Budget report to the National Members; amendment was approved by the majority (see ch. VII for the full wording)

### 3. New National Members

New National Members were presented and unanimously approved. The IAU welcomed Botswana as a National Member, and Bolivia, Ecuador, and Iraq as Observers.

*Country:* Botswana

*Category:* I

*Adhering Organization:* Astronomical Society of Botswana

*Country:* Bolivia

*Category:* Observer

*Adhering Organization:* Observatorio Astronómico Nacional

*Country:* Ecuador

*Category:* Observer

*Adhering Organization:* National Observatory of Ecuador, Quito Observatory of the National Polytechnic School of Ecuador

*Country:* Iraq

*Category:* Observer

*Adhering Organization:* University of Baghdad, Department of Astronomy and Space, College of Science

### 4. New Honorary Members

The list of Honorary Members was approved. This membership category, introduced at the XXX General Assembly, held in August 2018 in Vienna, gives official recognition to individuals who have significantly contributed to the progress of astronomical research and culture in their country, but who do not qualify as Individual Members.

The Honorary Members are:

- Santiago Paolantonio (Argentina)

Motivation: For his dedication to discovering the history of astronomy in Argentina, and his extensive contributions to the communication of astronomy through numerous books and articles, his blog “History of Astronomy” and his collaboration with the Córdoba Astronomical Observatory Museum.

- Erkan Sahmali (Turkey)

Motivation: For his architectural contributions to astronomy in Turkey, through his innovative design of the National Observatory of Turkey (TUG) and the Eastern Anatolia Observatory (currently under construction).

- Dorje Angchuk (India)  
Motivation: For his passionate promotion of astronomy in the Ladakh region, through his excellent astrophotography, which has been published in *The New Yorker Magazine* and in the 2020 December issue of *AAPPS journal*.
- Richard Huziak (Canada)  
Motivation: For his considerable contributions as an amateur astronomer to variable star astronomy, light pollution mitigation, and fireball and meteorite science, including being the second person to see, and thus confirm the existence of, Comet P/2001 Petriew.
- Govert Schilling (Netherlands)  
Motivation: For his extensive activities in the popularisation of astronomy, through his books (including children's books), numerous magazine articles and contributions to Dutch TV and radio programmes.
- Zdenek Bardon (Czech Republic)  
Motivation: For his contributions to the development of astronomical infrastructure through leading the automation of many observatories across the world, and for his promotion of astrophotography and amateur astronomy.
- Masao Nakagiri (Japan)  
Motivation: For his dedication throughout his engineering career to the planning, building, operating and maintenance of several facilities in Japan, including the Tokyo Astronomical Observatory (TAO), the Okayama Astrophysical Observatory and the Subaru Telescope.
- George A. Danos (Cyprus)  
Motivation: For his passionate promotion of astronomy, including leading campaigns that saw Cyprus join ESA, the IAU and COSPAR, as well as establishing the Cyprus Space Centre and helping Cyprus be selected as an International Astronomy Education Centre of the IAU OAE.
- David Anthony Luchetti (Australia)  
Motivation: For his advocacy for astronomy in the Australian Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, through supporting and managing investments in optical astronomy, and driving the progress of the SKA, as its Project Director.
- Bernard Christophe (France)  
Motivation: For his exceptional contributions as an amateur astronomer, including building his own 600-mm telescope with which he discovered 250 asteroids, and refurbishing an instrument called Miosotys, which allows detection of the passage of a trans-Neptunian object in front of a star.
- Vadym Zhukov (Ukraine)  
Motivation: For his strong technical and financial support for astronomical projects, including the development, restoration and improvement of astronomical instruments and observatories, and the provision of research grants for astronomy students.

## 5. Outgoing and Incoming Committee Members

### 5.1. Incoming Executive Committee

The Executive Committee was elected for the period 2021–2024. The leaders are as follows:

- Debra Elmegreen (President, USA)
- José Miguel R. Espinosa (General Secretary, Spain)
- Willy Benz (President-Elect, Switzerland)
- Diana Worrall (Assistant General Secretary, UK)
- Daniela Lazzaro (Vice-President, 2nd term, Brazil)
- Laura Ferrarese (Vice-President, 2nd term, Canada)
- Junichi Watanabe (Vice-President, 2nd term, Japan)
- Hyesung Kang (Vice-President, incoming, South Korea)
- Solomon Tessema (Vice-president, incoming, Ethiopia)
- Ilya Usoskin (Vice-President, incoming, Finland)
- Ewine van Dishoeck (Past President, Advisor, Netherlands)
- Teresa Lago (Past General Secretary, Advisor, Portugal)

### 5.2. Secretariat

The Secretariat continues as follows:

- Head of Administration, Maria Rosaria d'Antonio
- Database Manager and Assistant, Madeleine Smith-Spanier

### 5.3. Outgoing Executive Committee

- John Hearnshaw (Vice-President, 1st term, New Zealand) (replaced Debra Elmegreen in lieu of her 2nd term, because she was serving as President-elect)
- Ajit Kembhavi (Vice-President, 2nd term, India)
- Boris Shustov (Vice president, 2nd term, Russia)
- Silvia Torres-Peimbert (Past President, Advisor, Mexico)
- Piero Benvenuti (Past General Secretary, Advisor, Italy)

### 5.4. Incoming Division Presidents

- Daniel Hestroffer (France), Div A
- Gabrielele Giovannini (Italy), Div B
- Richard de Grijs (Australia), Div C
- Isabelle Grenier (France), Div D
- Cristina Mandrini (Argentina), Div E
- Maria Barucci (France), Div F
- Andrej Prsa (USA), Div G
- Monica Rubio (Chile), Div H
- Kim-Vy Tran (USA), Div J

### 5.5. Outgoing Division Presidents

- Daniel Hestroffer (France), Div A
- Michael Burton (UK), Div B

- Susana Deustua (USA), Div C
- Elena Pian (Italy), Div D
- Sarah Gibson (USA), Div E
- Gonzalo Tancredi (Uruguay), Div F
- David Soderblom (USA), Div G
- Leonardo Testi (Germany), Div H
- Denis Burgarella (France), Div J

### 5.6. Incoming Special Nominating Committee

The Special Nominating Committee oversees the candidates for President of the IAU, Secretary General of the IAU, Assistant Secretary General of the IAU, and President Elect of the IAU. The committee also oversee the election of the Vice-Presidents (which are members of the Executive Committee). The President chairs the committee.

The Special Nominating Committee was also elected for the period 2021–2024. The resulting names are as follows:

- Prof. Debra Elmegreen, Chair (USA)
- Marcio Catelan (Chile)
- Prof. Corinne Charbonnel (Switzerland)
- Prof. Kotaro Kohno (Japan)
- Prof. Mirjana Povic (Ethiopia)
- Prof. Ginevra Trinchieri (Italy)
- Prof. Ewine van Dishoeck (Netherlands)
- Prof. José Miguel R. Espinosa (Advisor, Spain)
- Prof. Diana M. Worrall (Advisor, UK)

### 5.7. Incoming Finance Committee

The Finance Committee, which oversee the accounts of the IAU during the triennium, was elected for the period 2021 - 2024. The resulting names are given below:

- Dr. Michel Dennefeld (France)
- Dr. Gadiyara C. Anupama (India)
- Dr. Phil Puxley (USA)
- Dr. Robert Szabo (Hungary)
- Dr. Gregg A. Wade (Canada)
- Dr. Na Wang (China)
- Dr. Patrick A. Woudt (South Africa)

### 5.8. Executive Committee Working Group Liaisons

Duties of the Executive Committee members are assigned and agreed during the Executive Committee meeting immediately following the General Assembly. Liaisons are appointed for each of the Executive Committee Working Groups.

- Equity & Inclusion: GS (José Miguel R. Espinosa)
- Junior Members: President (Debra Elmegreen), Junichi Watanabe; Ewine van Dishoeck as advisor
- Global Coordination: Ewine van Dishoeck, President, PE (Willy Benz)

- Women in Astronomy: Daniela Lazzaro
- Dark & Quiet Skies: GS, Solomon Tessema
- new EC WG on Pro-Am relations: Ilya Usoskin
- new EC Functional WG on Planetary System Nomenclature: President, GS
- new EC Functional WG on Exoplanetary Systems Nomenclature: President, GS

### 5.9. Executive Committee Functions

Additional duties of the Vice Presidents include dealing with budgets, fellowships, Honorary Members, symposia selections, and other international groups.

- Budget Committee - Laura Ferrarese, AGS, GS, Rosaria d'Antonio (non-voting)
- The Gruber Fellowship committee - PE, Ilya Usoskin, Hyesung Kang
- Monitoring active status of IAU representation in other International Organisations: PE (UN-COPUOS: Piero Benvenuti will continue)
- Honorary Members - EC review subcommittee - 3 selected in a GA year only
- Annual Symposia selections in spring - by all VPs, after DPs have made recommendations

### 5.10. Executive Committee Members of Steering Committees of IAU Offices

As specified through our Memorandum of Understanding with each of the Offices, the Assistant General Secretary plus additional members from the EC or elsewhere within the IAU serve on the Steering Committees.

- OYA – AGS (Diana Worrall), Michele Gerbaldi
- OAO – AGS, John Hearnshaw
- OAE – AGS, Division C president (Richard de Grijs)
- OAD – AGS, Daniela Lazzaro, Solomon Tessema

## 6. Letter for IAU Commissions encouraging On-line meetings

Due to the special situation with the COVID still around us, Prof. Ewine van Dishoeck sent a letter to promote the use of virtual Meetings.

*Ewine van Dishoeck, IAU President*

“Dear colleagues,

On Monday at the IAU General Assembly Business meeting, the question came up what IAU can do for young scientists, especially during the pandemic. I would therefore like to use this opportunity to reiterate my message to many of you of July 2020 in which I urged you to organise on-line meetings. One of the few good things emerging from this global crisis is that on-line conferences can be highly successful (in some aspects), especially in engaging with large and diverse colleagues around the world. They are particularly well suited to give young scientists a platform to present their results, even if they do not allow for the (equally important) unstructured informal discussions and personal encounters that we all miss.

IAU Commissions are just the right size with a proper focus to have virtual meetings (typically a few hundred people). Traditionally, IAU Commissions do not meet except perhaps as part of General Assembly or Symposia, yet they are an integral part of the IAU structure. This is a new opportunity to make them more active! An excellent example in IAU context has been provided by IAU Commission H2 on Astrochemistry (admittedly the Commission most familiar to me), which has organised for the second year in a row a 5 day (3.5 hrs per day) virtual meeting attended by 250–300 people. Most of the speakers - by design - are early career researchers (PhD students, postdocs). <https://sites.google.com/view/astrochemical-frontiers-2021>

Such meetings do not have to be 5 days, even 2–3 days (part-time) would be useful. Some Divisions have also held virtual meetings (e.g., Division F yesterday) and there may be many other good IAU examples that I am not aware of. Working groups are also welcome to organise meetings; some working groups like the Dark & Quiet Skies have been very active in this respect.

Virtual meetings are not difficult to organise with the help of some postdocs and students, and many people now have experience with them. The IAU has a Zoom license available for IAU-related meetings in cases that no 300+ Zoom license is available from the organising university or institute. You can easily reach your Commission membership to announce such a meeting by asking Madeleine Smith ([smith@iap.fr](mailto:smith@iap.fr)) to send a message to them.

Given the need to communicate results and stay connected during the continuing lockdowns and travel restrictions, I would like to encourage all IAU Commissions to *consider organising an on-line meeting in the coming months - year* (if you have not yet done so), with primarily early career speakers.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Division and Commission Presidents and WG chairs for their leadership. It has been a pleasure working with you: you are at the “heart” of the IAU. A warm welcome to the new leaders in what will surely be another exciting triennium.

Wishing you all exciting scientific discussions

With best regards,

*Ewine van Dishoeck*

## 7. Brief Remarks by Outgoing President Prof. Ewine van Dishoeck

*Aug. 26, 2021*

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

An on-line meeting is not the proper place to thank and say goodbye to so many people that have worked so hard for the IAU over the past three years. Nevertheless, I want thank the outgoing VPs – John Hearnshaw, Ajit Khembavi, Boris Shustov – for their contributions. Special thanks go to the outgoing General Secretary, Teresa Lago, for all her efforts on so many different IAU issues, day-in and day-out. I wish I could call all of you on stage for a big round of applause!



It has been a very unusual, and unusually busy, triennium for the IAU. When I became President-Elect six years ago I had a number of goals, from the new Strategic Plan to the IAU100 celebrations, introduction of Junior Members, reviving Global Coordination of ground and space facilities activities, to more multidisciplinary meetings. Much of this happened, but so did much more that was not foreseen: most notably the Covid-19 pandemic, but also the enhanced attention that was needed for the dark and quiet skies. And other items happened such as the establishment of the I-HOW workshops, the Springboard to Action and fundraising. Let's uncork some bubbles to those that made this possible!

Speaking of bubbles: thanks to Covid-19, everyone is familiar with the concept of bubbles: small groups of people that only interact with each other but not with rest of the world. Even at the recent Olympic games in Tokyo, some of these bubbles were evident as national television channels were primarily focusing on their gold medal winners, e.g. Sunisa Lee (gymnastics) and Caeleb Dressel (swimming) on US tv and Isabel Werth (equestrian) on German tv. But how about the lesser known winners such as Gianmarco Tamberi (Italy) and Mutaz Barshin (Qatar) sharing the high jump gold medal and Greysia Polii and Apriyani Rahayu (Indonesia) winning the women's badminton: those competitions were just as exciting and their stories also deserve the world's attention. Olympics also taught us that mishaps can happen to the best candidates: just look at Matthieu van der Poel's tumble in mountain biking.

Alas, such bubbles are becoming more common in science and society, whether at the national, regional and/or scientific topic level. The importance of the IAU, and especially its General Assembly, is that it takes you outside your bubble, letting you see the full picture of worldwide astronomy and its interconnections. With an increasing number of conflicts around the world, such international relations are more important than ever to build respect, trust and support for each other.

In 2022, my home city, Leiden in the Netherlands, will be the European City of Science with a year full of activities aimed at connecting scientists with citizens. One of its mottos (coined by Lucien Geelhoed) is "Who knows" where the emphasis can be on each of the two words. "Who knows": just a few or everyone? And "Who knows": what? how much? and when?

This theme is so appropriate not only for Leiden 2022, but even more so for Busan 2022, where we will celebrate together at the GA under the motto "Astronomy for All". Open data, big data, and exciting science will be part of the program, but we need to make sure that we tell all the stories, also the smaller ones.

Let me end with a quote from the African-American abolitionist and activist Harriet Tubman (1822–1913): "Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world." Unlocking this strength in everyone through the GA 2022 motto is exactly what the IAU aims to do.

I want to personally thanks to my fellow Officers, especially now President Debra Elmegreen, the IAU Office, Executive Committee, Division Presidents, IAU100 team, IAU Family of Offices and everyone else for making this unusual triennium into a success!

## 8. Brief Remarks by Incoming President Prof. Debra Elmegreen

*Aug. 26, 2021*

I feel enormously honoured and grateful for the confidence placed in me as IAU President. We have been through an unprecedented 1 1/2 years, with global suffering and losses from the pandemic, social and racial injustices, and climate devastation. As we begin to emerge, we recognise that the world is changing, and we have also begun to learn to adapt. We have new opportunities to strengthen the IAU and its international efforts. I want to reflect for a moment on the accomplishments of the last triennium and then look to future aspirations.

First, I thank the outgoing officers for their tireless efforts. Ewine van Dishoeck demonstrated everything it means to be IAU president, executing her office with compassionate and inspired leadership. She led the global IAU100 efforts. She initiated the prizes for Outreach, Development, and Education. She made hundreds of speeches traveling the globe, in person when possible and virtually when not, to provide a compelling vision for the IAU. We are fortunate now to have her as advisor.

Teresa Lago in her role as General Secretary ensured that the IAU maintained a strong financial footing. She was the driver in establishing the new Office of Astronomy for Education, and served on the steering committees for the 4 Offices. She initiated the Catalyst newsletter and the IAU Code of Conduct. She has given generously of her time in service and travel, and we have benefitted from her outstanding leadership. We are grateful she too will be an advisor.

I thank our outstanding outgoing Vice Presidents: John Hearnshaw, Ajit Khembavi, and Boris Shustov. Among their many efforts, John helped write the Code of Conduct and initiated the new Working Group on Professional-Amateur Relations. Ajit served as advisor for the Office of Astronomy for Development, and Boris oversaw IAU representation on several dozen external international organisations. Both Boris and Ajit served on my Gruber Fellowship Prize Committee for the past 3 years.

Finally, I thank our outstanding advisors, Past President Silvia Torres-Peimbert and Past General Secretary Piero Benvenuti, for their wise counsel and continued outstanding service on many issues. I will miss them all. Thanks too to all the outgoing Division Presidents and Commission and Working Group officers for their leadership and service.

As we enter the next triennium, I am guided by the Strategic Plan for 2020–2030 that Ewine and I developed with the help of the Executive Committee and Offices. One of the IAU areas of interest is education. The Office for Astronomy Education and its national education coordinators focus on schoolchildren using astronomy as the gateway to STEM. Through an agreement signed this past May with the International Association of Physics Students, we now have a link with undergraduates. The Office for Young Astronomers and its international schools (ISYA) support graduate students. The Executive Committee Working Group on Junior Members engages postdocs in mentoring and career advancement. The new I-HOW (hands-on workshops) that Ewine initiated will address specialised training for early career astronomers, particularly in developing countries. I am very excited by all of these endeavours, and look forward to their ongoing success.

We are fortunate to have dedicated leaders in each of the 4 Offices. The Office of Astronomy for Development has just celebrated its 10th anniversary. Its remarkable success follows the vision laid out in the previous IAU Strategic Plan. It has engaged hundreds of thousands of people globally and regionally, applying technologies, techniques and the excitement of astronomy to key programs. Its efforts this past year targeting proposals for pandemic-related activities have been especially positive. Similarly, the Office for Astronomy Outreach has expanded its global reach through concerted efforts by its national outreach coordinators on several key projects in over 100 countries.

The IAU fosters an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere at IAU events through its Code of Conduct, Springboard to Action, and Executive Committee Working Groups on Junior Members, Women in Astronomy, and Diversity and Inclusion. A new EC WG on Professional-Amateur relations will develop ties with national organisations of amateurs doing science research.

It is a remarkable time to do astronomy, with numerous current and upcoming international observatories on the ground and in space. There is a great need to use our collective expertise in science and technology to build these observatories and their instruments, and to understand the massive volumes of data they will generate. The best science will be achieved when we have a diverse and inclusive community working together. The Working Group on Global Coordination of Ground and Space Astrophysics is focused on this need. Just as it had international meetings on large space telescopes and on multiwavelength and transient science in past years between General Assemblies, so it will plan another timely Kavli-IAU Symposium in 2023.

The Protection of Dark and Quiet Skies has a prominent role in the IAU through the tireless efforts of Past General Secretary Piero Benvenuti, Connie Walker, and dozens of others, bringing the impact of satellite constellations to the attention of industry as well as the UN through COPUOS. Piero's vision of a new IAU Centre for the Protection of the Dark Sky will get underway soon to ensure that countries work together to help mitigate this existential threat to ground-based astronomical observations and our enjoyment of the night sky.

The recently released IAU statement on Climate Change and the call for a Kavli-IAU interdisciplinary symposium provide an opportunity for us to consider climate and climate change on planets, and to act on sustainability issues where possible, through science, education, outreach efforts, and societal activities.

Of course the core of the IAU is our scientific meetings, where we share our discoveries and ideas about the Universe. As we approach a post-pandemic world, when we have all become accustomed to internet meetings, we have the opportunity to consider the structure of future IAU meetings. We will always highly value face-to-face meetings, particularly at the General Assemblies where in-person connections are essential. But we also recognise that the opportunity for hybrid meetings will help those unable to travel, for health, family, or financial reasons. Hybrid and virtual meetings will also lessen our carbon footprint. So there are many details that we need to consider moving forward. Underlying all our efforts is our desire to have an inclusive, welcoming astronomical community that unites us.

I look forward to helping lead the IAU in these and other new efforts in the coming years along with the new Executive Committee, the Secretariat, and Division Presidents.

I welcome your input and help, and urge your continued engagement through our divisions, commissions, and working groups. I hope to see many of you in Busan in August 2022 at the XXXIst General Assembly!

## **9. Brief Remarks by Incoming General Secretary Prof. José Miguel R. Espinosa**

*Aug. 26, 2021*

Dear colleagues and friends, distinguished guests:

It is a great honour for me to start holding office as General Secretary of the International Astronomical Union and I feel especially privileged to take up duty at this moment in time. There are several reasons for that. First of all, thanks to the fine and dedicated work of the previous Presidents and General Secretaries, who set the course of the Union. I encounter a Union with a new office, the office for Astronomy Education. The Union has a renewed Division structure that is consolidated and sound.

I will and try to do the job of General Secretary faithfully, and efficiently.

It's noteworthy that for the first time in the Union's history, the Executive Committee has achieved gender balance among its officers, with two men and two women. This is not merely an attempt to achieve gender equality, but a significant step forward. Just as Astronomy, deeply intertwined with human culture, is not just another science, a woman scientist is not just another scientist. Women possess a unique natural ability for nurturing and educating. Therefore, a woman who is also an astronomer can have a profound influence on society, beyond that of a typical scientist.

If the IAU were solely focused on the advancement of Astronomy and promoting international scientific collaboration, it would simply be fulfilling the standard role of a Scientific Society. However, our Strategic Plan sets us apart: it acknowledges the deep connection between our science and humanity, a unique attribute that distinguishes it from other disciplines. This necessitates additional resources that far exceed the modest annual investment that the IAU can provide. I am dedicated to pursuing fundraising efforts to increase the IAU's income, a feasible and credible plan that extends beyond 2021, as mandated by Resolution B1 approved in Honolulu. I would like to take this opportunity to kickstart our fundraising campaign by urging each National Member to ensure timely payment of their dues! I understand the potential challenges various countries may face, but it's clear that without this basic income, all Union activities will be impacted and begin to dwindle. On a related note, I want to reiterate my full commitment to strictly adhering to the Union's financial Working Rules, by reinstating the annual audit of accounts and enhancing transparency, regularly submitting the annual reports of the Finance Committee to the National Members.

## **10. Closing the Session**

The Business session was closed by the Incoming President Debra M. Elmegreen.