

Conclusions of C 6 Meeting June 20 - 22, 2002 in Frankfurt

(also suitable as basis for press release)

The representatives of six major Chemical Societies (from the USA, Japan, Germany, UK, France, The Netherlands) on invitation of the German Chemical Society GDCh met on June 21 and 22, 2002, in Frankfurt (Steigenberger Frankfurter Hof) to discuss important fields of future cooperation and activities. The meeting followed earlier such events in Washington, DC, and Ascot, UK.

1. To serve the chemists in the different continents it was accepted to look at membership alliances and consider eventually a network of bilateral agreements. As there exist numerous small and highly specialized ("boutique" type) learned societies, serving only a very small group of experts the concept of open divisions was discussed, to attract also scientists from chemistry-related areas; some of the societies might not even impose full membership on them. Cooperation to run topical cutting-edge conferences on interdisciplinary fields was equally proposed.
2. Public appreciation of the chemical sciences, which are the basis of today's quality and security of life, must be improved. The "Year of Chemistry 2003" in Germany, the celebration of the 125th anniversary of the Japanese Chemical Society and the 100th anniversary of the Dutch Chemical Society as well as the recent experience of the other societies will provide excellent occasions to run high quality programs of public awareness for the chemical sciences.
3. Improving science education is seen to be of high importance by all learned societies. Weaknesses and strengths of the educational systems of primary schools and secondary schools for the area of science teaching were analyzed. Hands-on chemistry is important to motivate very young children to decide in later years in favor of the demanding science courses. The quality of school text books is seminal, not only from their scientific content, but also from their links to the relevant scales of

social life. The qualification and the social status of teachers are a major concern in some of the scientific communities.

4. Evaluation and /or accreditation of university curricula are important tools to improve the teaching quality and the international compatibility of education, and thus the mobility of our students. The experience in this field is quite different for the countries represented, and it was agreed that a foreign expert should serve on the committees of countries, in which accreditation is required by the financing authorities.

5. The major chemical societies are concerned that the gap in science education and research between highly industrialized countries and economically disfavored countries is widening. Efforts were discussed to improve the situation of chemistry in such countries.

6 The major chemical societies can play an important role for international cooperation in scientific projects; only they comprise the members, who may form networks of excellence and competence. European members pointed to the corresponding challenges within the VIth framework programme of the European commission; while the American Chemical Society pointed to the possible cooperative input with regard to chemistry for the National Department of Homeland Security, recently formed in the United States.

7. Electronic publishing is an important issue for all major chemical societies since they are involved in the edition of high-quality journals. They agreed that quality control is a crucial aspect of scientific publishing irrespective of the technological basis.

8. The six chemical societies have underlined the importance of standardization as a basis for international trade and cooperation. Standardization in chemistry may become an even more important topic since the ISO has proposed an initiative in the chemical sector for the year 2003.

9. The next meeting of the major chemical societies will be in Japan on invitation of the Chemical Society of Japan and is being planned for 2004.

Heindirk tom Dieck, June 23, 2002