

Report on the IUPS facilitated meeting for delegates from Africa held Wednesday, July 24, 2013 at the IUPS 2013 Congress

A special forum was held for physiologists from Africa in the evening of July 24, 2013. The aim of the forum, was to further organization and professional development of physiologists and physiology in Africa. The meeting was chaired by the president of the IUPS and co-chaired by Dr Siyanda Makaula. Prof Noble opened the meeting and outlined the purpose of the meeting. In his opening statements he pointed out that the Birmingham meeting had the highest contingent of delegates from Africa ever recorded as having attended an IUPS meeting.

He also noted that members of the IUPS council were present at the meeting.

The first part of the meeting was to identify problems that were affecting the advancement of physiology in the continent. Highlights:

-the president of the AAPS (African Association of Physiological Societies) Prof Amaal Saed was the first to contribute and highlighted the need for teaching workshops and the need to invest in research in Africa.

-The president of the Egyptian physiological society highlighted the need to establish National societies in African countries.

-Prof Musabayane from RSA spoke of the need to establish proper governance structures in the AAPS and to include regional representatives on the committee of the AAPS.

-Prof Ajayi the secretary of the Nigerian Physiological Society spoke of the need for mentors.

-Prof Tony Ebeigbe the editor in chief of the AAPS journal spoke of the new journal from the AAPS and distributed some hard copies to the delegates. He also distributed fliers for their next meeting.

- Aquila from RSA spoke of the limited financial resources and the need to embrace cheap technology such as cell phones to disseminate information across the continent.

-Prof Sofola from Nigeria highlighted some of the weaknesses of physiology in Africa eg lack of equipment or archaic equipment and overcrowding in labs as well as the expense of textbooks from the west.

-Dr Ben Loos from RSA spoke of the need for equipment and the need to network and urged delegates to make use of facilities available at institutions in RSA.

-Dr Peace Mabeta from RSA also highlighted the need for strong representative governance structures.

-A delegate from the University of Benin identified the need to collect contact details of delegates present so as to facilitate communication.

-A delegate from Senegal advertised their own congress to be held in Dakar.

- Prof Mojiminiyi from Nigeria identified the need to revive IPUS fellowships.

-Prof Gathiram from RSA and the AAPS enquired about what criteria were used to recognize societies.

- Dr Chamunorwa from RSA identified the need for student exchange programs and a database of experts in Africa.

-Prof Erlwanger (me) spoke of the need for good governance, the need to foster ties across our continent and gave examples of the information (studentships, newsletters etc) from RSA which he circulates to colleagues across the continent and the consequent positive feedback from recipients. He also took the opportunity to assure delegates of the commitment of the PSSA towards the advancement of physiology across the continent

Dr Makaula from RSA then identified some key issues from the discourse and further discussion was held including:

- The need to see more invited speakers from Africa at the IUPS
- Need to strengthen national societies and review the AAPS constitution
- Need to have local societies meetings
- Subsidize/ waiver membership fees
- Revive 'defunct physiological societies' eg Zambia, Zimbabwe, Tunisia, Kenya etc.

Malcolm Gordon the treasurer of the IUPS expressed his contentment with the high attendance and then explained the categories of membership.

Prof Noble then identified key elements going forward:

-The IUPS would keep the momentum going

-The need to strengthen mentorship

-Mobilize and strengthen local resources (national societies)

-Develop a database of physiologists from Africa

-Facilitate/support research and teaching workshops across the continent (through Tony McKnight in the IUPS).

-Provide a scheme to transfer equipment to Africa

-That the AAPS be reorganized and reconstituted for the future.

-That Francophone countries be brought on board.

It was agreed that a report on the proceedings of the meeting would be generated and circulated.

Kennedy Erlwanger