

# **Committee on International Scientific Affairs (CISA)**

## **Annual Report -- 1998**

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### **GENERAL COMMENTS:**

CISA is a standing committee of the American Physical Society. CISA does not have independent resources (financial or personnel), nor the independence to carry out projects on its own. Therefore, many of the activities, rely truly and solely on the volunteer nature, interests and dedication of its membership, together with other volunteers that can be drafted. This is, of course, the traditional modus operandi of APS.

After many discussions, CISA has arrived at the conclusion that it would be useful to reevaluate the international activities of APS. The resolution which was passed unanimously reads as follows:

#### **Preamble**

It is the sense of the APS Committee on International Scientific Affairs (CISA) that the Society's interests in the areas of international scientific affairs are, at present, not adequately being served by the existing APS organizational and committee structure.

Accordingly, CISA recommends

1. re-evaluating the missions and goals of the international activities of the APS. This re-evaluation should include, as a minimum, the roles played by and interrelationships between CISA, FIP and the Office of International Affairs;
2. utilizing the results of the re-evaluation for restructuring, as needed, the functions/operations/mechanisms of the international activities of the APS in order to better achieve those missions/goals;
3. forming a special committee with representation from the current and past officers of CISA, FIP, POPA, CIFS, APS Office of International Affairs, as well as representation of the current and past Executives of the APS to carry out this task.

### **ACTIVITIES DURING 1998**

CISA's activities in general can be divided into two types:

1. Reacting to external forces such as international affairs, requests by various other committees, requests by the presidential line and the Office of International Affairs. It must be realized that these type of activities are strongly overlapping with interests of other committees, and therefore generally CISA can only react in an advisory capacity.

Moreover, these types of activities are of a very diverse nature and in many cases require specific technical know-how which is not always available within CISA.

2. Initiate and carry through activities which originate with CISA. These activities generally depend very strongly on the interests and dedication of CISA members.

During 1998 there were a number of activities which were pursued in each one of these categories.

1. In the first type of activities, the following issues were debated at length either in person, by conference calls or email.
  - a. Discussions of the India Pakistan nuclear crisis.
  - b. We have run a poll regarding the importance of Physics Today for foreign APS members. This was mostly related to suggestions of implementing an air mail option for foreign members.
  - c. A preliminary list of Spanish speaking physicists was compiled, as a possible resource for Latin American collaborations. This is further being expanded by a larger poll being conducted by the Forum on International Physics (FIP) and Office of International Affairs and by a collaboration from the Organization of Hispanic Physicists.
  - d. We have helped in setting the agenda for the meeting on "Enhancing Physics Collaborations in the Americas" to be held in Cuernavaca, Mexico, 2-4 November, 1998.
  - e. At the request of APS, we have given considerable input to the nominating committee for a variety of committees, divisions and forums.
  - f. We spent a considerable amount of time and effort in discussions regarding the possibility of compiling a list of volunteers which would help out with editing of foreign manuscripts. The final conclusion of all this seems to be that this is a very difficult matter to solve in a practical fashion. Perhaps further discussions could lead to implementing this in some form.
2. In the second type, we have pursued a number of activities with varying degrees of success.
  - a. We have analyzed the International Activities of APS and recommended a full evaluation of all these activities, including the different committees, forums and offices. This will be presented to the APS Board meeting in November.
  - b. We have prepared a resource list for funding of international collaborations. This is available through the CISA Home Page at <http://www.aps.org/intaff/cisa.html>. Through this we developed also a link to a list of Latin American physicists and institutions.

- c. We have obtained at least three concrete opportunities for international collaborations at; the Advanced Photon Source of Argonne National Laboratories, University of California through the US-MEXUS program and at the International Institute of Theoretical and Applied Physics (IITAP) at Iowa State University. These already have funds available for specific collaborations and involvement of young scientists from other countries.
- d. We are in the process of compiling a list of other facilities, which are accessible for international participation and have funding available to encourage them. Particular attention is being paid to involvement of young scientists and participation from Latin America.
- e. A compilation of literature, regarding the availability to Non-U.S. users of a wide range of large and small user facilities in the U.S., was completed and made available to the attendees at the meeting on "Enhancing Physics Collaborations in the Americas" to be held in Cuernavaca, Mexico, 2-4 November, 1998.
- f. We are organizing a series of "International Round Tables" one of the mornings of the Centennial Celebration.
- g. A new CISA meeting modality, starting with an Executive Committee meeting, was introduced. In this fashion it was possible to have a free discussion regarding all important international issues of APS. This was very much appreciated by the whole CISA and has resulted in several of the activities mentioned above. This modality should be continued.
- h. We attempted to develop a comprehensive CISA Home Page. The Home Page exists in some form, however due to lack of support we couldn't make it as comprehensive as we wanted. Fred Wilson and others in CISA spent a considerable amount of time on this. This could be an important contribution, since it could serve as a central resource for information on International Physics Activities.
- i. We tried to organize a Centennial Symposium. We spent time at APS headquarters, had a discussion Home Page, proposed several possibilities, venues and times during the March meeting. Based on APS input due to overlap with other divisions, forums and committees this was not pursued further.
- j. We developed several ideas and partially organized other Centennial symposia including; The Physics of the Environment, Physics and Arms Control, Physics of Nuclear Waste Disposal, and Physics Collaborations on the International Scale. This was deemed not to be feasible and was not pursued further.

**Special thanks** should be given to Ngee-Pong Chang, past chair of CISA, and the current committee who have contributed towards international activities, even when it seemed that some of these are pointless due to lack of support. I believe that many of the activities we have started will be of concrete use to physicists interested in international collaborations. Surely next year's

CISA and its chair Lynn Boatner are strong supporters of concrete actions and will continue and amplify these efforts.

## **PERSONAL OPINIONS**

The international program of the APS needs two distinct types of activities; an advisory type of board and an executive branch.

An advisory board is needed to define clearly the long range international goals of the APS and advice the Presidential line on major policy issues.

The Executive Branch should be involved in developing and carrying through well defined concrete programs which are of importance for the international activities of the APS. Examples of these activities include the journal and equipment exchange, compilation of various information sources, developing and helping administer new funding initiatives, etc.

At this moment, these two distinctly different types of activities are mixed together in CISA, and there is no clear cut direction given to the new CISA members.

Because of this it would be useful to:

1. Clearly define the advisory role of CISA. Moreover, since this is a voluntary body, it should not be overwhelmed by large amounts of correspondence, which cannot be handled efficiently by somebody who is not fully dedicated to this. Therefore, the advisory body should be consulted with very well defined issues of major importance.
2. The Executive body's role should clearly be defined so programs are developed which take advantage in the most efficient way of the voluntary talent available. There is nothing more discouraging to a volunteer, than to spend large amounts of time on activities that at the end are wasted.
3. Long range international goals should be set and only changed adiabatically. The way things are now, it seems like every year a new direction is started.
4. It is important to concentrate many activities towards concrete goals, where well defined results can be obtained. Moreover, these would allow evaluating the results of the international programs, hopefully in a quantitative fashion.
5. Modify the current mode of operation, from a "reactive" mode to temporary crises, to a "proactive" mode where the goals and aims are clearly well defined.
6. Keep track of the volunteer force and get them reinvolved in activities which are deemed positive. Nowadays, once somebody is off CISA it is generally not called back to help out further

I am 100% sure that there is a large contingent of volunteers who would be very happy to help in a myriad of activities. It is just a question of how to get them involved.