



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITIES
ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONALE DES UNIVERSITES
INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES BUREAU BUREAU INTERNATIONALE DES UNIVERSITES

Wednesday, April 22, 2009 - Closing Plenary
Chaired by Eva Egron-Polak, Secretary-General, IAU

Concluding remarks & thanks

As the Chair of this concluding session of the IAU Global Meeting of Associations, and to follow on the two general rapporteurs' remarks as well as the suggestions made by several participants, allow me to make some comments on behalf of the IAU, before turning to Prof. Cortes Guardado, Dr. Rafael Lopez Catañares and to Prof. Juan Ramón de la Fuente, so that they can conclude the Meeting.

Many of us attend numerous conferences and quite often the measure of success for the organizers, or the key indicator of success, is the number of participants. In a certain sense this Meeting's success rests on our failure with regard to this indicator. For the IAU, this is a Meeting designed to be relatively small; to bring together peers and colleagues for a deeper interaction, for consolidating connections and creating lasting interconnections.

About 30% of the associations and networks represented here are already Members of the IAU. I invite all the others to consider joining the Association. Joining IAU means supporting the values and the goals of the organization, becoming involved in the activities that fulfill them and enabling IAU to convene Meetings such as this again. This third Meeting has been highly interesting, but if it serves other groups more than it strengthens our capacity to work together; our calculated risk to act as a regular convener of various associations and networks has backfired.

When we seek collective actions and potential for working collaboratively in the future, let me also encourage all of you (members and non-members) to consider adhering to the Policy Statements that IAU has elaborated and thus provide even more force to our collective advocacy. These are, after all, some of the building blocks of a system of 'self-governance' that the higher education sector is creating globally, a space that we would like to see be based on principles and shared values.

There are multiples paths forward and as we leave Guadalajara, each of us will take a different one. Of course, in the ideal world they would all lead to a similar end point: a strong, effective, high quality Higher Education and Research sector serving to improve quality of life. But we live in a complex world where competition co-exists with collaboration and challenges at times seem to outnumber opportunities.

I am first and foremost pragmatic. So I agree with those who wish to know in concrete terms what we can do in the short and medium term. We can start by the following:

- IAU will open a web page to list all of you and any other associations/networks that we will learn about in the future
- IAU can use the brief introductions some of you have provided for the Backgrounder for the GMA but we can also invite you to share 1 or 2 paragraphs to describe your main activities
- Share with you space on the IAU Events Calendar which is maintained on our website and kept as up-to-date as possible. Such a central repository of higher education conferences is crucial as too often we compete with each other for university leaders' attention and time;
- Invite you to suggest the theme for GMAIV which will be held in 2011, keeping to our biennial pace;
- Encourage all of you to attend the international IAU conferences in Lebanon 2009, in Lithuania 2010, in Kenya 2011, and in San Juan, Puerto Rico in 2012 where we will hold the 14th General Conference.

As we contemplated the emerging global higher education space, what struck me most of all is that this space is big. This means that keeping lines of communications open and flowing, two ways, will continue to be important. As well, we need to engage with you as individuals, but as people in associations change – there are very few here who attended the GMA in Alexandria or in Paris – we need to work with the associations and networks, thus on specific projects. For IAU this is a key challenge and I am pretty certain we can only tackle it through partnerships and collaborations.