

Bonsoir et bienvenue a Utrecht.

Mr. Gisbert, Acting Mayor of Utrecht,
Mr. Nicholas Burnett, Assistant Director General of UNESCO,
Prof. Hans Stoof, Rector Magnificus of Utrecht University,
Prof. Yvonne van Rooy, President of Utrecht University,
Prof. Goolam Mohamedbhai, President of IAU and
Prof. Hans van Ginkel, Chair of the General Conference Programme Committee,
Dear IAU Members,
Dear leaders of Higher Education Institutions soon to become IAU Members,
Dear Participants.

It is a pleasure for me to add my words of welcome to the IAU 13th General Conference to those which have already spoken. I will have other opportunities to address you as we discuss the Business of IAU over then next three days so allow me only to say what an honour it is to work of the International Association of Universities.

IAU is an organization committed to promoting higher education and research, first and foremost, through collaboration, sharing of ideas and mutual learning.

Learning, creation, pursuit and dissemination of knowledge are what higher education is all about. The fact that you have come from more than 120 countries to discuss how, as the higher education community, we can serve humanity better in the future, demonstrates your commitment to this goal.

In bidding you welcome to this 13th General Conference, each of the speakers has evoked the history of IAU and its link to Utrecht. But we are here also to create history, not just to recall it. For this reason, I will stop here so that we can go an have our photograph taken for posterity.

Allow me to end by thanking Utrecht University most gratefully for hosting the IAU in this magnificent venue and for their collaboration over the past months. I also thank all of my colleagues at IAU who have worked for more than a year to prepare for this conference. Last but not least, I thank all of you for participating in this 13th General Conference and I hope that you will find it interesting.

Thank you.