

**Minutes of the meeting held on Friday November 6, 2009 in Bern**

**Swiss Commission for Astronomy**  
**(SCFA)**

**1) Call to Order**

The chair, G. Meylan, calls the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

Attendance at the meeting :

Present : M. Carollo, D. Pfenniger, F.-K. Thielemann, S. Udry, and G. Meylan (chair).

Excused : W. Benz, G. Beutler, G. Burki, M. Güdel, P. Jetzer, G. Lake, W. Schmutz, M. Steinacher (guest from SER).

**2) Nomination of two people as potential Swiss delegate to the ESO Users Committee**

After a brief discussion, decision is taken to nominate Hans Martin Schmid (ETHZ) and Damien Ségransan (UniGE) as potential Swiss delegate to the ESO Users Committee. Both names will be sent to ESO DG Tim de Zeeuw, with Hans Martin Schmid as first priority.

**3) Report on the IAU GA held in Rio in August 2009 from Manuel Güdel, the current Swiss representative to the IAU**

The IAU General Assembly took place in Rio de Janeiro between August 2 and August 14. The "business sessions" (including the meetings of the National Representatives, the Finance Committee, and the Nominating Committee) met on August 3 and again on August 12. The Swiss delegate (Manuel Güdel) represented Switzerland in all six meetings and also in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly.

A total of 2109 attendees were registered. The nomination committee proposed 889 new individual members, approved by the General Assembly, which brings the total membership to 10,147. This includes four new members working in Switzerland, namely : Isabelle Chérchneff (UniBas), Patrick Eggenberger (UniGE), Nicolas Produit (UniGE/ISCD), and Rosaria Simoniello (PMOD/WRC). These few new members will not change the Swiss contribution to the IAU.

The General Assembly also approved five resolutions, among them a new "Strategic Plan on Astronomy for the Developing World". This plan is essentially seen as a successor to the IYA2009.

New elections: the incoming IAU president is Robert Williams (STScI), the incoming General Secretary is Ian Corbett (ESO), and the new Assistant General Secretary is Thierry Montmerle (Grenoble/Saclay).

An important point of discussion during the finance committee meetings referred to the discovery of a major fraud (amounting to several 100,000 Euros) committed by the late Monique Orine (working as a secretary since the late eighties). IAU money was diverted to her personal account through various illegal manipulations. Measures have been taken that this will not be repeated in the future, such as installation of professional audits. Attempts are ongoing to reclaim a fraction of the money from the banks.

The location itself was appropriate for a GA of this size although the city of Rio posed a number of problems, such as most hotels being located far away from the conference center, and also the large number of favelas and neighborhoods to be avoided by non-locals (the conference center itself being located in such a region). Overall, the event with its numerous scientific meetings (symposia, joint discussions, etc.) was, however, successful and enjoyable.

The next IAU GA will take place in Beijing ; Honolulu, Hawaii, was selected for the IAU GA in 2015.

#### **4) Selection of the new Swiss representative to the IAU**

Manuel Güdel having accepted a professorship in Wien, Austria, a new Swiss representative is found in the person of Thomas Schildknecht (UniBE). The SCFA takes the opportunity to thank Manuel Güdel for all his work, especially during the revision of the list of IAU members in Switzerland which was done during the year 2008.

#### **5) One action item from the roadmap : Summer school 2010**

The first Summer school for PhD students in Switzerland will be organized in Summer 2010 by F.-K. Thielemann and G. Meynet. Here is some information :

**Title** : Stars and Stellar Explosions in Galaxies.

**Subjects** : Stellar Evolution and Nucleosynthesis, Novae, Supernovae, X-ray bursts, Gamma Ray Bursts, Photometric and Chemical Evolution of Galaxies.

**Dates** : from Monday September 13 to Friday September 17, 2010 (this is the week just before the beginning of the academic semester in Switzerland).

**Venue** : Hôtel Beausite, St-Luc, Val d'Anniviers, Valais.

An announcement and more details (e.g., about speakers) will appear soon on the web page of the stellar evolution network : <http://obswww.unige.ch/senetwork/> .

The Summer school is intended as an elevated master course organized in a way which will allow all PhD students in Switzerland to attend, with the possibility to gain ECTS credits in the framework of their respective doctoral school. Since it is the first Summer school of its kind, it is expected that each institute will pay for the expenses (fare and hotel) generated by the participation of its students. We shall look for financial support once this first edition will have been a clear success. It is worth mentioning, as a reminder, that such a Summer school is a response to one of the important action items of our Roadmap for astronomy in Switzerland 2007 – 2016. It is intended to be an important opportunity to further connect the various astronomical institutions in Switzerland through their PhD students.

## **6) Miscellaneous**

a) Stéphane Udry asks a question about the opportunity that all Swiss delegates to the ESO STC, ESO UC, and IAU should be made members of the SCFA. After a brief discussion, it is decided not to bring them in as full members of the SCFA, but to invite them each time the Commission feels that it needs from them some further first-hand information.

b) It is also decided to update the distribution list used by Martin Steinacher for the reports written after each ESO Council meeting and Committee of the ESO Council meeting. It is suggested to extend the distribution list to all CHAPS members.

**7) The meeting is adjourned at 3:00 pm.**