Dear Presidents of Immunological Societies, Presidents of Federations of Immunological Societies, Colleagues and Friends,

At the 16th International Congress of Immunology in Melbourne, Australia, from August 21 to 26 2016, the new Executive Board and Council of the International Union of Immunological Societies (IUIS) were formed. The Congress was a great success with over 4,000 participants. The next ICI/IUIS will take place in Beijing, China, 2019, and thereafter in Capetown, South Africa, 2022. Our Executive Board convenes annually, together with the IUIS Council. Our next meeting will take place in Hammamet, Tunisia, on the occasion of the 10th African Immunology Conference (FAIS), 3-7 December 2017.

I have taken over Presidency from Jorge Kalil (Brazil) who is now our Past-President. Faith Osier (Kenya) has been elected as new Vice-President of our Board. Roslyn Kemp (New Zealand) and Michael Ratcliffe (Canada) have been elected as Secretary General and Treasurer, respectively.

At the beginning of the third millennium, Immunology continues to be at the cutting edge of the advancement of science and is a key contributor to human and animal health care. As a long time student of macrophages, I am struck by the coincidence of my taking the responsibility as IUIS President with the 100th Anniversary of the death of Elie Metchnikoff, the pioneer of phagocyte research and a visionary founding father of modern Biology and Medicine (1). As in Metchnikoff’s vision and practice, Immunology continues to be rooted in Darwinian culture and it is refreshing that our discipline continues to be thought provoking to philosophers (2,3). Here I will summarize selected lines of effort during my presidency.
1. Strengthening ties with National Societies, Federations and our Committees at large. IUIS is an umbrella organization and links of thrust and cooperation with its constituency need to be strengthened. In particular, executive reporting will be made available to highlight how IUIS support has served as seed money to mobilize resources at the service of our community. Efforts will be made to reach out to dedicated interest societies in fields such as cytokines to foster ongoing and future collaboration.

2. Committees. Committees are the backbone of IUIS and I am sure that I interpret the feelings of all of us expressing our gratitude to Committee Chairs and Members for their dedication and efforts. We should not forget that some of the invaluable tools of our every day scientific life (e.g. CDs nomenclature; MHC etc) have their foundations in IUIS Committees. At a time when a significant number of Committee chairs are undergoing rotation, I am confident that incoming chairs will live up to the expectations of our community and once more I want to convey to outgoing chairs the appreciation for their invaluable efforts. The renewal of Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs is an opportunity to reconsider activities and implement our gender policy.

3. Communication. Over the past few years, efforts have been made to improve communication within IUIS. This will continue to be a strategic line work, as testified by this very message. Frontiers in Immunology, the official IUIS journal, is a key element in IUIS communication. At the time when IUIS engaged in Frontiers, Open Access publishing was in its infancy and therefore Frontiers in Immunology was a risky, innovative endeavour, occupying an empty niche. It is unquestionable that Frontiers in Immunology has been a success as indicated by submissions and IF (5.6). After formal renewal of our partnership, Frontiers in Immunology will provide a forum for IUIS activities (e.g. Committees) and an effort will be made to foster integration and interactions. We look forward to a productive collaboration with Gigi Notarangelo (NIH, USA) who has taken over as Editor in Chief of Frontiers in Immunology.

4. Immunology without borders. A global vision is at the heart of IUIS. Supporting immunology in less developed countries with emphasis on education has been and will continue to be a major thrust of IUIS. Tackling old and new
threats will require immunological tools. Moreover, many on earth still do not have access to the benefits of immunological research. Think of the 1.9 million children under 5 who die each year because they do not have access to the most basic vaccines (http://www.gavi.org). IUIS Presidents (e.g. Stefan Kaufmann, Jorge Kalil, Director of Butantan in Brazil, myself) have been involved in initiatives on global health issues rooted in immunology such as the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) (e.g. 4). It is time that, in addition to strengthening our commitment, an effort be made to establish institutional links and increase awareness in our community. Immunologists worldwide can serve as loudspeakers in academia and society on global health issues such as hostility to vaccines in developed countries and capacity building in developing countries. I am confident that IUIS and its constituency will continue to serve “Immunology without borders” in the interest of scientific progress as well as human and animal health.

Yours friendly,

Alberto Mantovani, MD
Professor
IUIS President

References
