

Message of the President

In my last message I mentioned several important issues that were in progress. I am happy to report that the most important ones have been brought to a very positive end.

First of all, the request for continued support by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) for another 3 year period has been honoured. It includes a substantial sum for investing measures against falling rocks, a problem which has been aggravated due to the climate warming. We thank all our scientists for having contributed to a very substantial yearly report that serves as convincing evidence for maintaining the SNF support of our stations.

Further, I mentioned last year that we had started talking to our sponsors in kind, the University of Bern and its Physikalisches Institut, about putting this sponsorship on a more formal basis. For example, over many decades Hermann Debrunner and Erwin Flückiger could spend part of their working time for their duties as directors of our foundation. Furthermore the computer specialists of the University have aided in maintaining reliable data lines from Gornergrat and Jungfrauoch. With Erwin Flückiger retiring as professor from the University we needed to ensure that this support will continue. The University has now joined our foundation as a formal member and will maintain its former support in kind. In addition, it finances a position for the continued operation of the neutron monitors within the worldwide network that previously was part of Erwin Flückiger's SNF research grant, and a position for the IT support of the foundation (presently Rolf Bütikofer). With this agreement with our University of Bern, all intermediate personnel problems have been solved.

One issue mentioned a year ago has still not been solved. The plans for using the north tower at Gornergrat for projects of Swiss amateur astronomers are not progressing due to the lack of sponsors. This is, of course, not very surprising in this time of economic crisis. Outreach activity by an amateur astronomer, financed by the Kulm Hotel Gornergrat, has shown that the public would appreciate the possibility to watch astronomical activity at Gornergrat and to get some firsthand information on astronomy. Hence we continue to examine possibilities to ensure that Gornergrat remains a site hosting first-class astronomy. Hopefully in my next message I can inform you about a solution.

I would like to finish by acknowledging the continued support of our loyal international and national members, as well as of the Jungfrauoch Commission SCNAT and the Swiss National Science Foundation. I am also very grateful to our excellent staff, and I take this opportunity to heartily welcome our new member of the Foundation, the University of Bern with its Physikalisches Institut.

Bern, July 23, 2009

Hans Balsiger



