

Message of the President

After having authored the Director's reports for the first ten issues of these annual activity reports, this is my first "Message of the President". Changes in key positions always result in changes in procedures, attitudes, and working relationships. But they are also a chance for new ideas and new activity, continually complementing a proven system in view of the goals of the Foundation. In this sense it gives me great pleasure to look back on my first year as the President of the Foundation with extremely positive feelings.

The Foundation HFSJG has had the great privilege to serve the scientific community with unique high alpine research infrastructure since 1931. As evidenced in this annual report, such research platforms are as much in demand as ever. At Jungfraujoch during the last year scientific activity was again large in number, extremely multidisciplinary, and of high professional standard. I would like to congratulate all the scientists for their excellent work. With your work the key role of the site as a European cornerstone for environmental and climate research was further established. At Gornergrat, unfortunately, the transfer of the KOSMA telescope to Yangbajing near Lhasa in Tibet marked the end of a 25-year era of outstanding astrophysical research and the end of an extremely fruitful collaboration between the University of Cologne and the Foundation HFSJG. We thank our German colleagues for the many years of most successful activity within our Foundation in a spirit of friendship and mutual understanding, and we wish them all the best for the future.

While the year 2010 can again be considered a successful one for the research stations and the Foundation, the challenges for the new management in the near future are manifold.

In order to maintain Jungfraujoch as an outstanding research station with an unperturbed environment, enabling Switzerland to fulfill its leading role within international agreements on air pollutants and constituents affecting our climate, it is a key issue to keep the integrity of the natural environment, in concurrence with the increasing touristic exploration of the site. A constant dialogue between the Foundation HFSJG and all the other institutions that are active at Jungfraujoch, in particular the Jungfraubahn AG, is therefore necessary. Such discussions must also include the exploration of possibilities for eventual expansion of the research infrastructure. We appreciate the benevolence and the understanding of all partners involved for the needs of the Foundation.

At Gornergrat, together with the Burgergemeinde Zermatt and the Gornergrat Bahn, we are confident that we will be able to transform the astronomical observatories into scientifically and educationally attractive sites again in the near future. We are extremely grateful to our Honorary President, Professor Hans Balsiger, for taking the lead for this task, and to Professor Willy Benz, Director of the Physikalisches Institut of the University of Bern, and Professor Didier Queloz of the Observatoire de Genève, for their interest and support of this endeavour.

Collaborations between research teams on a European and even global scale are an essential and established practice, and they anchor the Jungfraujoch and the Gornegrat research sites internationally. In contrast, the networking and the exchange of experience between key research infrastructures in Europe and worldwide can still be improved. The visit of the President of the Foundation to the Environmental Research Station Schneefernerhaus – UFS at Zugspitze, Bavaria, and the discussions

with the Chairman of its Consortium Board, Prof. Dr. Siegfried Specht, represented a further step in this direction. The active role of the new Director in proposing coordinate joint research projects is also an important initiative to strengthen the position of the unique research site Jungfrauoch in such networks. Also, the “Symposium on Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics at Mountain Sites”, organized in Interlaken by the Commission on Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics of the Swiss Academy of Sciences, and the 5th Zermatt ISM Symposium “Conditions and impact of star formation: New results with Herschel and beyond”, organized by the I. Physikalisches Institut of the Universität zu Köln, marked important contributions in these efforts.

Visibility of the relevance of scientific activity at our high altitude research stations, especially in the context of global climate change, to non-specialists, including politicians, public outreach, promotion and support of students and early-career scientists is a key issue. We are grateful to Dr. Martin Pfisterer of the BKW FMB Energy Ltd (BKW) for having invited the Foundation HFSJG to participate actively in the national project “Eiger-Klima-Schulen”. We also highly appreciate the successful public outreach activities conducted by the Jungfrauoch Commission of the Swiss Academy of Sciences, chaired by Professor Martin C.E. Huber.

Operation of two research stations in a harsh high-altitude environment is a continuous challenge for the Foundation. The Director’s long-term acquaintanceship with the sites and his anchorage in the scientific community give him the basis to ascertain the essentials. Research infrastructure in a high alpine environment is not something that is ready on demand only. It must be continuously maintained and adapted to meet the needs of the researchers. Furthermore, the effects of global warming, as e.g. the increasing risk of falling rocks, make additional investment necessary. In order to be able to cope with these tasks a stable long-term financial basis is essential. We therefore highly appreciate and gratefully acknowledge the long standing loyalty and responsibility demonstrated toward our Foundation especially by our non-Swiss member institutions, i.e. the Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique F.R.S.-FNRS, the Max-Planck Gesellschaft, the Royal Society, and the Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Their substantial support, even under difficult financial conditions, has an essential signaling effect to our Swiss member institutions, i.e. the Swiss Academy of Sciences, the Jungfraubahn AG, the Gornergrat Bahn AG, the Burgergemeinde Zermatt, and the University of Bern, as well as to the Canton of Bern and to our main funding body, the Swiss National Science Foundation.

I am convinced that with the new Director of the research stations, Professor Markus Leuenberger, with the continued collaboration of our Honorary President, Professor Hans Balsiger, with the secretary of the Foundation, Mrs. Louise Wilson, and the highly motivated members of the HFSJG team, we can cope with all these challenges and that we can look forward to the future with great confidence. With the understanding and support of many individuals and institutions the International Foundation HFSJG will continue to pursue its goal to serve the scientific research at high altitude and high alpine environment, with vision and dedication to excellence, for the benefit of the entire community.



Erwin O. Flückiger

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