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33<sup>rd</sup> FEBS Congress-11<sup>th</sup> IUBMB Conference  
"Biochemistry of Cell Regulation"

It is a life privilege for me to stand here today as the chairman of the world renown 33 FEBS - 11 IUBMB congress and to be able to extend a warm welcome to all of you in Greece.

I consider this opportunity as a privilege and a great honour since I am addressing this warm welcome to 3000 distinguished scientists from 80 countries around the world. Among us today we have Nobel prize laureates and a galaxy of leaders from several fields of Biochemistry who possess the scientific knowledge, which without doubt, in the near future will radically transform the world's social life.

Biochemistry and I am now addressing our distinguished guests who are representatives of many sectors of Greek Society, the mother discipline of all Biosciences and her "daughter" the discipline of Molecular Biology were viewed for many years as the beloved children of Medicine and as expected, always remained in the shadow of Medical Sciences.

During the last twenty years of the previous century, however, this notion began to change due to new discoveries concerning, the structure of nucleic acids, the mechanism of the flow of genetic information, and the structure of enzymes. These scientifically immense findings created their eternal indelible seal, a fact which lead to the establishment of Biochemistry as an autonomous Science of extreme importance.

Since the 21 century begun, enormous research endeavours such as, the decoding of the human and other genomes from different species, the exploration of stem cell characteristics and biological capabilities (including their possible biological reprogramming capacities), the discovery of new micro RNAs and their involvement in gene regulation, are clearly establishing that we are facing the dawn of an enormous scientific revolution. A multitude of scientists from



a wide spectrum of academic fields are now convinced that it is the science of Biochemistry that will constitute the main landmark of humanity history for this century.

In Greece a multitude of Biochemists and Molecular Biologists are working in close collaboration with their colleagues in other countries, choosing to ignore unfounded criticisms coming from unskilled – scientifically illiterate groups, continue to work under unfavourable conditions and by means of really insufficient research funding are performing pioneering work leading to excellent publications. In Greece one will not find established “Centers of Excellence” but will definitely find many Research groups of Excellence. These groups are found in all our Universities and all our Research Centers.

When the administrative council of the Greek Biochemical Society honoured me by entrusting to me the chairmanship of the organisation committee for claiming the opportunity of organizing the 33rd FEBS – 11th IUBMB congress, we prepared the candidacy proposal with great enthusiasm. We were convinced that the successful organisation of such a congress would represent an important legacy to the new generation of Greek Biochemists since it would give them the opportunity to interact with European scientists, hopefully using this great opportunity to create collaborations which will be prove valuable for the submission creative proposals to the European commission. Furthermore the organization of the congress would be an excellent opportunity for the recognition of the quality of scientific work performed in our country in the area of Biosciences.

When FEBS council assigned the organization of this congress to Greece and IUBMB accepted the decision, the feelings from these successful candidacy results were mixed with some scepticism.

Accepting the honor of the handing-over to Greece the organization of a great magnitude and complicated congress, in the frame of which leading scientific federations and biochemical societies would participate as co-organizers, was really a major decision. We did not foresee any problems in terms of experience in managing such big projects, but our considerations focused on the possible problems that could arise within the context of Greek reality.



In Greece, as in the majority of other countries, scientific achievements are not easily understood and therefore are less assailable by society at large, when compared to achievements in sports and arts. This is mainly the reason why financial support from the government and the private sector is reversely proportional to the importance of the achievement.

The support from the President of the Hellenic Republic gave us the courage to continue and take on this challenge.

The completion of this task took three years of hard work. The great and valuable experience of the FEBS Meeting Counselors, Pr. Adam Szewczyk and of IUBMB Prof Jean Knut Andersen which was given to us during the five meetings of the monitoring Committee, as well as the friendly disposition of the new Secretary of FEBS Professor Israel Pecht, who supported our effort by means of friendly personal communications, significantly contributed to finding the best solutions to problems that arose during the organizing process. It would be however unfair if I did not mention the important role of AC&C, the event organizing company. AC&C personnel, namely, the General Director Mrs Vatsika and the Executive Directors Georgina Alexopoulou and Katerina Gova worked beside us with true professionalism and sometimes acted as a shield catering to the local organizing committee's, FEBS and IUBMB temperaments. Last but not least I would like to express our sincere thanks to the members of Organizing and Scientific Committee to Nominated speakers, Chairmen and invited speakers for their participation as well as the sponsors and exhibitors for their support.

With all of these in mind, I am very pleased indeed to extend once more warm welcome to all of you. I hope that you will find time to enjoy the beautiful Attic sun and sea. After all, you have the opportunity these few days to study and to discuss in the same place where the great thinker Aristotle has lived thought and created new worlds for posterity.