

FAOBMB – A Focus on the Development of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in the Asian and Oceanian Region

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Founded in 1972, FAOBMB is a Federation of National Societies of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in the Asian and Oceanian Region. The primary purpose of FAOBMB is to promote the science of biochemistry and molecular biology, including education, research and technological applications, worldwide and, in particular, in the Asian and Oceanian Region.

The Federation of Asian and Oceanian Biochemists (FAOB) was jointly founded on 1 August 1972 by the Australian Biochemical Society, the Society of Biological Chemists (India) and the Japanese Biochemical Society to promote the development of biochemistry in the Asian and Pacific Region. The Federation changed its name to Federation of Asian and Oceanian Biochemists and Molecular Biologists (FAOBMB) in 1993. FAOBMB is an Incorporated Association registered in the State of Victoria (Australia) and is an Associate Organization of the International Union of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (IUBMB), with which it actively collaborates. The Federation's logo, adopted in 1989 and modified in 1993 to include the change in name, reflects the dynamic nature of the FAOBMB and the continual flow of information of biochemistry between members, which consists of countries in both the Asian and Pacific region. FAOBMB is



FAOBMB EC members in Colombo, June 2016. From left: Sheila Nathan (Fellowships Chair; Malaysia), Zengyi Chang (then President-elect; now President; China), Kiyoshi Fukui (then President; now Past-President; Japan), Phillip Nagley (Secretary General; Australia), Piamsook Pongsawasdi (Treasurer; Thailand), Siok Im Koh (Education Chair; Singapore)



the primary regional association in biochemistry and molecular biology to focus on the promotion and development of this area of science and technology in the Asian and Oceanian regions. FAOBMB is one of four regional groupings of IUBMB, the other three regional groupings being in Europe (FEBS), Africa (FASBMB) and the Americas (PABMB).

Since its founding in 1972, FAOBMB has developed steadily, playing an important catalytic role in stimulating life sciences, technology transfer and entrepreneurship.

FAOBMB works closely with its constituent members (national societies in the region) and IUBMB to advance research, teaching and applications of biochemistry and molecular biology. There are currently 21 Constituent Members of the Federation, representing more than 20,000 active scientists, from Australia, Bangladesh, China, Hawaii, India, Indonesia, Iran, Hong Kong (a special administrative region of China), Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taipei China, Thailand and Vietnam.

FAOBMB holds a Congress every three years (the most recent held in Hyderabad, India, 2015). When IUBMB holds its triennial Congress in the Asia-Oceania region, a joint IUBMB-FAOBMB Congress takes place. We are fortunate that in recent years this has been the case in Kyoto, Japan (2006) and in Shanghai, China (2009), with the next such Congress to be held in Seoul, Korea (2018). Annual Conferences of FAOBMB take place in each of the intervening years between Congresses (the most recent held in Manila, Philippines, 2016 – see below). A complete list of FAOBMB Congresses and Conferences (including Symposia, the previous term for FAOBMB Conferences), since the inaugural FAOBMB Congress 1977, can be found at: <http://faobmb.com/news-and-events/past-congresses-conferences-and-symposia/>.

FAOBMB activities not only comprise sponsorship of FAOBMB Congresses or Conferences in the region (supported by funds kindly provided by IUBMB), but also include provision of Travel Fellowships and other opportunities for early career researchers (including Young Scientist Program events from time to time), and support for education and training workshops. Generous financial contributions from several former Presidents of FAOBMB have allowed the establishment of the Osamu Hayaishi, Takashi Murachi, Jisnuson Svasti and Kunio Yagi Lectureships, providing funds for plenary lectures delivered at FAOBMB-sponsored Congresses (every 3 years) and the Yasuhiro Anraku Young Scientist Awards for outstanding early career researchers. Anraku had the foresight to provide funds for one male and one female

FAOBMB Young Scientist Award, each to give a lecture at the triennial FAOBMB Congress.

Under the presidency of Andrew Wang (2011-2013) funding was secured from agencies in Taiwan for the establishment of the FAOBMB Awards, which include the FAOBMB Award for Research Excellence (annual), the FAOBMB Education Award (triennial) and the FAOBMB Entrepreneurship Award (triennial). These awards attract a very high standard of applicants, and there is much competition for these prestigious awards.

The subsequent President, Kiyoshi Fukui (2014-2016) and now the current President, Zengyi Chang (from 2017) have continued to develop the activities of FAOBMB to encourage and support biochemists and molecular biologists. Thus, since 2014, FAOBMB has provided support for the FAOBMB Exchange Fellowship scheme (a regional program, similar to the IUBMB Wood-Whelan Fellowships scheme) and the FAOBMB Visiting Lectureship scheme that supports visits of prominent scientists from one FAOBMB country to another in the region. For many years, the FAOBMB Travel Fellowship scheme has provided support for several early career scientists to participate in the FAOBMB Congress or Conference each year.

The Federation has grown from its initial 3 founding members to the present 21 national societies or groups of biochemistry and molecular biology. Council meets once a year, at the particular location at which the FAOBMB Congress or Conference is held each year. Over the past 10 years it has been customary for a meeting of the Executive Committee (EC) to take place once a year at another location from Council. These EC meetings are often associated with a small symposium put on by the national host Society, so that the local Biochemistry and Molecular Biology community gets the benefit of scientific and professional input from the visiting EC members. This has great outcomes for internationalisation and energisation of the local Biochemistry and Molecular Biology community.

Thus, in 2016, the FAOBMB EC meeting was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, hosted by the College of Biochemists of Sri Lanka (CBSL), the most recently joining Constituent member of FAOBMB. The associated Scientific Symposium was organised by CBSL with a series of presentations by all EC members, two observers at the EC meeting from Malaysia (attending to help plan the FAOBMB Conference in 2019) and a visiting scientist from Iran who held the inaugural FAOBMB Visiting Lectureship. More than 100 local scientists and students from Colombo and other places in Sri Lanka enjoyed the one-day Symposium.

The most recent FAOBMB Conference took place in Manila, Philippines during December 2016. This was a mid-size Conference with 575 participants, including 60 from overseas (of whom, there were nine plenary speakers). Particularly notable were the vibrant interactions between students and international participants; the organisers under the leadership of Grace Yu did a great job in facilitating sessions to maximise student involvement. As with all FAOBMB Congresses and Conferences over many

years, an IUBMB-supported Education Symposium was an integral part of the Scientific Program, thus emphasizing the integral bond between education, training, research and technology in biochemistry and molecular biology.



Hosts at the Symposium organised by College of Biochemists of Sri Lanka, Colombo, June 2016. In the centre is Rasika Perera (CBSL President) pictured to the left of Phillip Nagley



FAOBMB EC with Delegates of Constituent Members and Observers at the FAOBMB Council meeting held in Manila, December 2016. FAOBMB EC members are in the front row. Andrew Wang (President-elect of IUBMB and a past President of FAOBMB is third from the right in the front row)

The current policies and strategies of FAOBMB strongly support such bonds. For example we have provided support for fellowships for younger scientists to attend special events such as IUBMB Advanced Schools held in our region. Most recently, FAOBMB is providing, in partnership with IUBMB, fellowships for younger scientists/educationists to participate in the New Horizons in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Education Conference to take place in Israel in September 2017. More generally, plans are under way to extend both the FAOBMB Exchange Fellowship scheme and the FAOBMB Visiting Lectureship scheme to embrace educationists and training experts as well as researchers (the present scope of these two schemes is restricted to research and technology).

These varied events that take place under the auspices of FAOBMB not only serve to enhance research, professional and educational links between the participants but there is a large social component that crosses national and cultural boundaries as well as providing much personal interest for the participants. Such “extracurricular” activities may comprise engagement with the local folk-culture (as in the photo taken in the Intramuros district of Manila, Philippines) or history and religion (as in the photo taken in Kandy, Sri Lanka). We are looking forward to our FAOBMB EC meeting in April 2017 in Beijing, China and then, later in the year, to the Council meeting associated with the FAOBMB-ConBio2017 Conference to be held in Kobe, Japan, in December 2017.

An essential component of communication between FAOBMB and interested people, not only in the region but worldwide, is the FAOBMB webpage. Much useful information about FAOBMB can be found at the newly rebuilt webpage (www.faoymb.com). The webpage provides details of the history, governance and activities of FAOBMB. There are both Upcoming Events and Latest News sections, and the various pages of the website include Guidelines and Application forms for the multiplicity of Awards, Fellowships and other schemes that are available from time to time.

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General References:

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FAOBMB Travel Fellowship awardees at the Conference in Manila, December 2016. All Travel Fellows are holding their certificates, except for those at second and third left in the photo. Grace Yu is at the extreme left; Sheila Nathan (FAOBMB Fellowships Chair) is at the extreme right, next to whom is Pol Yambot (President of PSBMB)



FAOBMB folks with traditional Filipino performers at the famous Barbara’s restaurant in Intramuros (the old Spanish walled city of Manila)



FAOBMB folks with other international colleagues at the opening of the 25th FAOBMB Conference in Manila in December 2016. Grace Yu (Chair of the Conference Organizing Committee), in formal Filipino attire, is fifth from the left



FAOBMB folks with guide (bearded) at the Buddhist Temple of the Sacred Tooth in Kandy, Sri Lanka