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TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FEDERATION OF ASIAN AND OCEANIAN BIOCHEMISTS (FAOB)

M.R. JISNUSON SVASTI

*Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Science, Mahidol University, Rama VI Rd.,
Bangkok, Thailand*

The Federation of Asian and Oceanian Biochemists (FAOB) exists to promote the science of biochemistry, in particular by dissemination of information, by arranging meetings and in other ways encouraging contacts between its member biochemical societies in Asia, Australia and islands in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The Federation was jointly founded in August 1972 by the Australian Biochemical Society, the Society of Biological Chemists (India) and the Japanese Biochemical Society (JBS). Currently the membership includes the biochemical societies from 15 countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Hawaii, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand.

The affairs of the Federation are conducted by a Council represented by one delegate from each of the constituent societies. The Council appoints an Executive Committee which has the power to act for the Federation between meetings of Council. The current executive committee consists of O. Hayaishi (Tokyo) as President, K. Imahori (Kyoto) as Immediate Past-President, F.L. Bygrave (Canberra) as Secretary-General, and J. Svasti (Bangkok) as Treasurer. Previous Presidents of FAOB have included E.C. Webb (Australia), A.W. Linnane (Australia) and K. Imahori (Japan).

After an initial slow start due to administrative and financial problems, major constitutional changes enacted in 1976 and financial support from the International Union

of Biochemistry (IUB) helped FAOB initiate a program of activities. Major FAOB Congresses, scheduled triennially, were held in Nagoya, Japan (1977) and Bangalore, India (1980) and served as meeting points for over a thousand biochemists from the region to get to know each other and exchange views. More specialized FAOB symposia, involving smaller groups of 50-150 active research workers and held in the intervening years, have focussed on problems of special relevance to the region, such as *Practical applications of biochemistry to the economics of developing countries* (Singapore, 1978), *Food and nutritional biochemistry in Asia and Oceania* (Kuala Lumpur, 1979) and *Contribution of biochemistry to family planning and tropical disease* (Bali, 1981). In addition to providing financial assistance to the organisers of such meetings to help defray the expenses of invited speakers, FAOB has occasionally provided Travel Fellowships to enable promising young scientists from the region to participate.

The three major problems facing FAOB are probably shared by many regional scientific associations in developing countries. Firstly the wide geographical distribution of the constituent societies, stretching from India to Australia and to Hawaii, makes communications a major problem and the selection of locations of meetings suitable for all members difficult. Central locations are desirable, but at the same time, societies at the periphery of FAOB need to feel involved. The second problem concerns the wideranging academic standards and state of development in biochemistry of member societies, from the very advanced to the as yet undeveloped state. Advanced societies can undoubtedly help their less developed counterparts, as the JBS has done, but FAOB must still try to design its activities to cater for the whole spectrum of its constituent members. The third and by no means the least problem is the limited funds available from subscription fees and from the moderate grant provided by IUB.

Such problems were well recognized at the first meeting of the Executive Committee of FAOB in Tokyo in March 1981, held to map out a plan of action for 1981-1984. To enable FAOB to widen the scope of its activities, a substantially increased budget is required. To achieve this, a voluntary increase in subscription rates has now been put into operation, a Finance Committee headed by I. Yamashina (President, JBS) has been formed to seek funds from industrial sources, and requests for additional support have been made to IUB and ICSU (International Council of Scientific Unions). In view of the communication problems, a substantial proportion of the proposed budget has been ear-marked for travel expenses, in particular to allow the executive committee to meet annually and to provide an increased number of travel fellowships for young scientists to attend scientific meetings, not only of FAOB but also of IUB. In addition, the FAOB Newsletter, edited by C.W. Wang (Malaysia) and initiated in January 1981, will continue to be promoted as a means of disseminating information within the FAOB network.

Regular events to be supported over the next three years include FAOB-sponsored scientific meetings. The Third FAOB Congress on the theme *Biochemistry: progressive science of relevance to society* will be organized by the Biochemical Section of the Science Society of Thailand in November-December 1983. The Fourth FAOB Symposium on *Applied biochemistry in food and energy production* is scheduled to be held in the Philippines in October 1984. New initiatives planned include the initiation in 1982 of FAOB Visiting Fellowships to enable young biochemists to visit and work in other countries within the region for short periods. A proposal for FAOB Workshops to provide laboratory training in the techniques of modern biological research, such as nucleic acid sequencing and protein sequencing, is also under consideration. Furthermore,

a special lectureship within the FAOB region has been endowed by the Suntory Company of Japan. This will initially be used to sponsor an FAOB Plenary Lecture at the Twelfth International Congress of Biochemistry in Perth in August 1982 to commemorate the tenth anniversary of FAOB.

Along with the existing events and new activities, FAOB hopes to gain greater coverage of the Asian and Oceanian region and promote new memberships. In this regard, it is encouraging to note that Mainland China has expressed a strong interest in joining FAOB. If the objectives described here can be achieved, then the second decade of FAOB will see its maturation into an organization that makes a real impact on the development of biochemistry in the region.