

ASPEN General Assembly
Ateneo de Manila University Quezon City, Philippines
22-23 October 2007

ASPEN Members present for the General Assembly

Prof. M.A.K. Lakshman Dissanayake

(Chair of Coordination Board and NPC, Sri Lanka)

Dr. Alex Mazzolini

(Executive Secretary of Coordination Board and NPC, Australia)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jaafar Jantan*

(Vice Chair of Coordination Board and NPC, Malaysia)

Prof. Hiroshi Kawakatsu*

(Member of Coordination Board and NPC, Japan)

Mr. Ivan B. Culaba*

(Member of Coordination Board and NPC, Philippines)

Dr. Boonchaot Paosawatyanong*

(Member of Coordination Board and NPC, Thailand)

Prof. Jin Seung Kim*

(Member of Coordination Board and NPC, Korea)

Prof. Dr Thec Hien Thi Nguyen

(NPC Vietnam)

Dr Pratibha Jolly*

(NPC India)

Prof Dr Sultana Shafee

(NPC Bangladesh)

Prof. Aziz Fatima Hasnain

(Acting NPC, Pakistan)

UNESCO Representative at the ASPEN General Assembly

Dr Linda Posadas

(UNESCO Jakarta Office)

The ASPEN NPCs (above) from 11 member countries attended the 5th ASPEN General Assembly (GA); the representatives of the other 8 countries (China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Singapore[#], New Zealand, Papua/New Guinea) were either unable to attend, could not be contacted, or currently do not have an active NPC representative.

Lakshman Dissanayake (ASPEN Chair) gave the welcome address, which was followed by a short talk by Alex Mazzolini (ASPEN Exec. Sec.) entitled "ASPEN and its role in improving physics education in the Asia-Pacific region", and then a short talk by Linda Posadas (UNESCO) entitled "Scientific and technological literacy for sustainable development"

* Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jaafar Jantan has taken over from Prof. Abd. Aziz Tajuddin as NPC Malaysia

Prof. Hiroshi Kawakatsu has taken over from Prof. Prof. Akizo Kobayashi, NPC Japan

Mr. Ivan B. Culaba has taken over from Dr. Henry Ramos, NPC Philippines

Dr. Boonchaot Paosawatyanong has taken over from Dr. Pisistha Ratanavararaksa, NPC Thailand

Prof. Jin Seung Kim has taken over from Prof. Keum Hwi Lee, NPC Korea

Dr Pratibha Jolly has taken over from Prof Arun Nikavekar, NPC India

[#]Singapore has recently joined the United Nations so is now eligible to be a member country of ASPEN.

Lakshman Dissanayake (ASPEN Chair) presented his report outlining the activities and achievements of the past 5-year period, which included education conference/workshop participation in Malaysia, India and South Africa, active learning workshop (ALW) activities in Laos and Sri Lanka, ALW for trainers in the Philippines, participation in UNESCO Active Learning in Optics and Photonics (ALOP) activities in India (and other countries outside the ASPEN region) and a fact-finding mission to Cambodia. A short country report from each of the NPCs attending the GA followed this.

There was then a review of the ASPEN constitution.

The GA recommended a number of changes to the ASPEN Constitution.

(1) Several of these changes were only minor (correcting typographical or grammatical errors) that did not change the intended meaning of the original articles. Two of these changes should be noted:-

- ASPEN acronym has been changed back to ASPEN
- Coordinating Board has been changed to Coordination Board

(2) Article 15 required significant changes. The changes to this article were recommended in order to allow NPCs to have 3 months advance notice, not only of the date and place of the Gas, but also the AGENDA so they could have greater time to carefully consider any points to be discussed.

The second sentence of Article 15 covered discussion papers and suggested future constitution amendments. In this case, the GA recommended that 3 months advance notice would NORMALLY be given. This wording would allow important “last minute” discussion paper submissions or Constitution amendments to be discussed and acted upon during the GA meeting itself.

The original text was:

15. Announcement of the next General Assembly, giving details of dates, time and place, and request for papers for discussion, and proposals for the amendment of the ASPEN constitution, shall be sent to each NPC by the Executive Secretary not later than 3 (three) months from the proposed date of the General Assembly.

The new text is:

15. Announcement of the next General Assembly, giving details of dates, time, place and the agenda shall be sent to each NPC by the Executive Secretary not later than 3 (three) months from the proposed date of the General Assembly. All papers for discussion and proposals for the amendment of the ASPEN constitution shall normally be sent to the Executive Secretary not later than 3 (three) months from the proposed date of the General Assembly.

The GA unanimously agreed to these recommendations, and all ASPEN NPCs were given the opportunity (via email) to further consider these changes to the Constitution over a three months period. The new ASPEN Constitution has now been ratified[@].

[@] There being no objection to the proposed changes in the ASPEN Constitution (after a three month consultation period), the current Chair of ASPEN, Dr Alex Mazzolini, ratified the new Constitution on 1st Feb 2008

The General Assembly then selected its new Coordination Board for the next 5-year period. After a brief discussion period, it was the unanimous decision of the GA that the new ASPEN Coordination Board for 2008-12 is as follows:

Chair: Alex Mazzolini (NPC Australia)
Vice Chair (and Web Master): Jantan Jaafar (NPC Malaysia)
Exec Sec: Boonchoat Paosawatyanong (NPC Thailand)
Member 1: Pratibha Jolly (NPC India)
Member 2: Horoshi Kawakatsu (NPC Japan)
Member 3: Sultana Shafee (NPC Bangladesh)
Member 4: Jin Seung Kim (NPC South Korea)

Lakshman Dissanayake (NPC Sri Lanka) has agreed to be co-opted onto the Board as the immediate Past Chair (to assist continuity).

The GA gave a sincere vote of thanks to the outgoing ASPEN Coordination Board[&] for their enthusiasm and efforts during the 2002-7 period.

During the planning phase of the meeting, several topics were discussed. The GA firstly considered resources. Jin (South Korea) reminded the group that in 1999, under the auspices of ASPEN, a Regional Centre for Physics Education was set up at Chonbuk National University. The Centre has a purpose-built room with various sensors used in ALWs interfaced to 6 computers. There have been two ASPEN-related activities (ALWs) at the Centre in 2000 and 2001, but the Centre has been under-utilised since then. Jin sought further (non-financial) endorsement from ASPEN to support a university upgrade of the facility.

Action: Jin to send 1999 letter of support

Action: Alex to write a new letter of support

Pratibha (India) also outline her plans for a similar Education Resource Centre to be established soon in her University, and suggested that it might also be used to host ASPEN-related activities.

Alex (Australia) suggested that a long term ASPEN goal could be the establishment of an education program at a Science Education Research Centre, where young academics from developing countries could spend 6-12 months doing Physics Education Research (PER), taking education courses etc. This could then be extended into some form of MSc or PhD (Education Research) program jointly coordinated by the country of origin and the Science Education Centre.

[&] The outgoing ASPEN Coordination Board (2002-2007) is as follows:

Prof. M.A.K. Lakshman Dissanayake (Chair of Coordination Board and NPC, Sri Lanka)
Dr. Alex Mazzolini (Executive Secretary of Coordination Board and NPC, Australia)
Ass. Prof. Dr. Jaafar Jantan (Vice Chair of Coordination Board and NPC, Malaysia)
Prof. Hiroshi Kawakatsu (Member of Coordination Board and NPC, Japan)
Mr. Ivan B. Culaba (Member of Coordination Board and NPC, Philippines)
Dr. Boonchoat Paosawatyanong (Member of Coordination Board and NPC, Thailand)
Prof. Jin Seung Kim (Member of Coordination Board and NPC, Korea)

The ASPEN GA agreed that the ASPEN mandate, which is to improve university physics education, should be extended to also include the improvement of upper high school physics education.

The ASPEN GA decided to set a series of “minimum goals” for ASPEN activities during the next 5 year period.

- To encourage the establishment of 2 Science Education Centres, and to make use of these Centres for ASPEN activities (such as ALWs).
- Aim to coordinate at least 1 local/regional ALW each year (using a mix of local and international resource. It is estimated that these activities would require external funding of between \$5,000-10,000 (USD), mainly to cover travel costs of ASPEN participants/facilitators.
- Aim to encourage the development of at least 1 new resource person (ASPEN ALW facilitator) per year.

To help with funding these ASPEN goals, it was agreed that Alex (Australia) contact ICPE and other private organisations and foundations with the view of trying to secure funding for the Network.

Action: Alex to write to various organisations to seek funding support

The ASPEN GA also discussed several other activities, including:

- Boonchaot (Thailand) would like to produce a Volume 2 of the CD project entitled “Virtual Physics” Lecture Demonstration Video Clips”. Volume 1 of this CD was produced by Alex Mazzolini in 2002 (and contains 25 high resolution video clips). Alex (Australia) expressed an interest in being involved with the project.
Action: Alex to send Boonchaot the original Master tapes and CDs
Action: Jin to ask Keum whether he has any material that might be useful for the lecture Demonstration Video Clip CD
- Boonchaot (Thailand) also expressed an interest in developing a give-a-way kit to support particular workshop themes of interest to ASPEN.
- JJ (Malaysia) suggested a survey of ASPEN NPCs. Each NPC would develop a document to identify the physics education needs and capabilities of their country. This would identify useful “needs-based activities” that ASPEN could organise.
- Hiroshi (Japan) said that he was interested in developing local low-cost equipment and training in physics education.

Possible ASPEN activities in the near future:

- September 2008 India: 1 week workshop on the development of low-cost lab equipment, with a follow up “Innovators and Developers” workshop the following year.
- October 2008 South Korea: Women in Physics Conference?

Alex (Australia) said that the ASPEN web-site that had been hosted from Australia for many years was now out of date and off-line (due to changes in the Swinburne University web-server). As Alex does not have the time or skill to maintain the ASPEN web site, JJ (Malaysia) has agreed to host and upgrade the site from his university.

Action: Alex to find the html files for the current ASPEN site and send them to JJ via email or as a CD.

The members of the ASPEN GA agreed to consider what type of ASPEN activity would be appropriate for their country, and when would be the best time to host such an activity, and to report back to the Coordination Board.

As the ASPEN business was now concluded, the ASPEN GA was brought to a close at 4pm on Tuesday 23rd October 2007.

GA Minutes prepared by Alex Mazzolini