

Dear Colleagues,

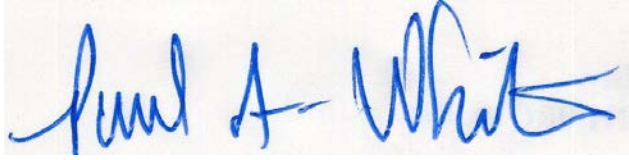
At the 12th International Conference on Environmental Mutagens (ICEM), which took place in Incheon, South Korea November 12-16, 2017, I was formally inaugurated as the incoming president of the International Association of Environmental Mutagenesis and Genomics Societies (IAEMGS). I am honoured to accept the presidency of this prestigious organization, which was established some 45 years ago by Alexander Hollaender, and look forward to serving its worldwide membership. I am grateful to the outgoing president, Dr. Tekehiko Nohmi, and indeed all the outgoing executives, for their dedicated service between the 11th ICEM in Iguacu Falls Brazil (2013) and the ICEM in Inchoen.

Since taking office in November 2017, I have been reflecting on the history and mission of the IAEMGS; indeed its entire future. Currently, the IAEMGS includes approximately 4000 members from some 10 regional EMGS's worldwide. The mission of the IAEMGS, which was originally called the IAEMS, as stated in the most recent (2013) version of the constitution, is "to generate and communicate globally scientific information based upon current research and best scientific practice". More specifically, the organization is expected to "(1) develop an understanding of the mutational basis of human disease, environmental effects, and human risk for genetic-related disease resulting from induced mutational events; (2) promote science-based risk assessment activities and regulatory policies on issues of environmental and human health; (3) facilitate international agreement on acceptable methodologies and technologies in these fields; (4) provide education and training to scientists towards these ends, and promote informed public awareness on issues of the mutational basis of human disease and risk; and (5) promote collaborative research at the international level on the mutational basis of human disease, new methodologies and technologies in the field, and the application of new information to the risk assessment process". Despite the best efforts and intentions of recent past presidents and their executive officers, I contend that the organization is no longer meeting these expectations.

It is certainly important to recognise that the IAEMGS has historically provided logistic and financial support for numerous environmental mutagenesis conferences worldwide, including regional meetings in Korea, Brazil, Morocco and Turkey, as well as Hollaender training courses in Chile, Columbia, India and Kazakhstan. Moreover, financial support for scientist training and education. However, due to a lack of financial resources, meaningful support for these types of activities has seriously waned since 2009. Consequently, the organization's primary function has been relegated to support for the quadrennial ICEM and IWGT (International Workshop on Genotoxicity Testing). However, even with respect to those activities, the role of the IAEMGS is perfunctory. The IAEMGS does approve the site for the ICEM; however, other than providing modest seed funding (e.g., \$10,000 USD), the organization does not play a formal role in conference planning and execution. In addition, with respect to the IWGT, the IAEMGS's role, which was never prominent, was diminished when the IWGT and IAEMGS became financially separated in 2015. Thus, although the IAEMGS has historically supported and/or organised activities to fulfil mission expectations (2), (3) and (5), there has been little activity in this regard since 2009. Similarly, the organization has not been fulfilling (5) since 2009 (i.e., providing funding for scientist training and education).

I contend that the time has come to reflect on the mission, purpose and structure of the IAEMGS; indeed, its overall role in promoting and/or supporting environmental mutagenesis research worldwide. Over the coming months, the executive and I will endeavour to explore these issues and identify activities that can provide the IAEMGS with a clear path forward. If you have any opinions, I certainly welcome input from all member worldwide.

Sincerest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul A. White". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'W' at the end.

Paul A. White, President
Health Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.