

## The International Association of Environmental Mutagen Societies (IAEMS)

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The IAEMS was founded in Asilomar, California, during the First International Conference on Environmental Mutagens (ICEM) in 1973. IAEMS is an international organization of regional or national Environmental Mutagen Societies (EMS). The primary objective of the Association is to provide the means whereby international contacts and cooperation may be promoted among those engaged in all aspects of environmental mutagenesis research, both basic and applied.

The IAEMS sponsors, through its local member societies, the organization of an international conference every four years. Following the first in Asilomar, 1973, the second was held in Edinburgh, 1977, the third in Tokyo, 1981, and the fourth in Stockholm, June 1985. In Stockholm, Dr. Michael Shelby, President of the EMS, announced that the fifth ICEM would be hosted by the EMS in Cleveland, Ohio, July 10-15, 1989. Professor Herbert Rosenkranz of Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, has been instrumental in arranging for this meeting and will serve as the local host. Dr. Frederick de Serres has been appointed chairman of the National Organizing Committee and can answer any inquiries regarding the fifth ICEM. Satellite meetings have been suggested for Washington, DC, Galveston, Toronto, and Mexico City. An invitation has been received from Professor C.C. Tan, President of the Chinese EMS, to hold the sixth ICEM in the middle of June 1993 in Shanghai, with a satellite meeting in Beijing, People's Republic of China.

Another important activity of the IAEMS is to encourage research and educational activities in environmental mutagenesis and related disciplines, supporting genetic toxicology in its broader sense. To this end, workshops, training courses, and symposia have been held in literally all parts of the world to introduce scientists and regulatory authorities to the new techniques of short-term testing and to the evaluation of test results. Dr. Alexander Hollaender, founder of the EMS and the IAEMS, has

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played a major role in helping to organize a large number of these activities, both in developing as well as in industrialized countries.

At the fourth ICEM in Stockholm, a group of scientists from various developing countries, came together and decided to follow a common strategy in order to promote genetic toxicology in a more efficient manner in their respective countries. As a general framework for such activities, they proposed a tentative scheme (see Fig. 1).

A steering committee was formed, consisting of Cristina Cortinas de Nava, Mexico; C.C. Tan, China; Ahmed Shawky, Egypt; R.H. Wickramasinghe, Sri Lanka; H.N.B. Gopalan, Kenya; C.J. Chetsanga, Zimbabwe; P.S. Chauhan, India; Clara Lim-Sylianco, Philippines; Abdel Aziz S. El-Bayoumi, Qatar; Effat S. Badr, Saudi Arabia; E.K. Shubber, Iraq. The members of this steering committee intend to prepare a document summarizing their objectives and the main aspect of the common strategy, shown here. This will be submitted for publication in journals in the field of genetic toxicology, and it will be sent to various international and national organizations that could provide possible support for such initiatives. In this context, a training course should be mentioned that is planned in 1986 in Bombay, entitled "Identification and Monitoring of High Risk Populations," sponsored by IARC, the International Agency for Research on Cancer and IPCS, the International Programme on Chemical Safety.

An initiative, recently proposed by Dr. Marvin Legator who has vast experience in organizing training courses and workshops, consists of making use of educational videotapes. Since video equipment is available in almost all countries, the development of a series of high quality videotapes on experimental procedures and their implications should deserve serious consideration. The tapes could be used in conjunction with a formal course or even distributed to interested scientists when no course is anticipated.

IAEMS has official relations with WHO as a Nongovernmental organization. As of October 1982, IAEMS has been accepted as a member of IUBS, the International Union of Biological Sciences (which by itself is a member of ICSU, the International Council of Scientific Unions).

IAEMS is represented in ICPEMC, the International Commission for Protection against Environmental Mutagens and Carcinogens, by its president, who is an ex-officio member of the ICPEMC Executive. Likewise, the chairman of ICPEMC (Prof. Bryn A. Bridges, at present) is an observer in the IAEMS Council Meetings. ICPEMC was formed in 1977 and from its very beginning has been affiliated with IAEMS. The objectives of ICPEMC are to identify and promote scientific principles and to make recommendations that may serve as the basis for guidelines and regulations designed to minimize deleterious effects in man caused by the interaction of chemicals with genetic material. Its two main strategies involve (1) the preparation of authoritative critical reviews of the current body of knowledge that may serve to establish priorities for further research or possible regulatory action, and (2) the identification of substances or exposure situations that may entail significant human genotoxic risk. In pursuit of these strategies, the Commission has been concerned in identifying not only the available facts but also the areas of ignorance. Until now, some 40 ICPEMC publications, committee reports and working papers have been published both in *Mutation Research* and *Biologisches Zentralblatt*.

The total membership of IAEMS is now over 3,000. There are at present six member societies in the Association: the Environmental Mutagen Society, the Euro-

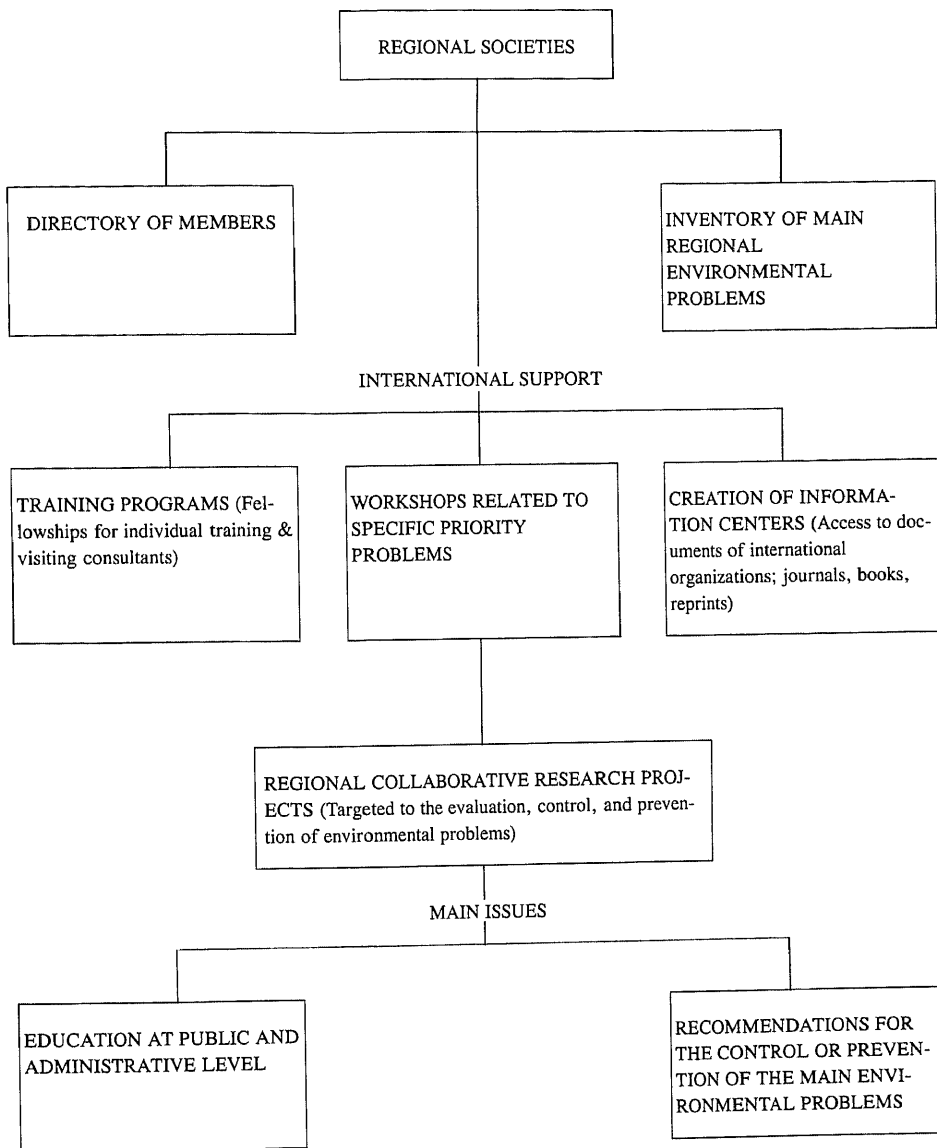


Fig. 1. Strategy for the development of genetic toxicology in developing countries: general framework.

pean Environmental Mutagen Society, the Environmental Mutagen Society of Japan, the Environmental Mutagen Society of India, the Latin American Association of Environmental Mutagen, Carcinogen, and Teratogen Societies, and the Australian and New Zealand Environmental Mutagen Society. Two new societies, the Chinese Environmental Mutagen Society, represented by Dr. C.C. Tan and the African Mutagen Society, represented by Dr. H.N.B. Gopalan from Kenya, have applied for membership.

IAEMS activities are financed primarily from dues paid by the member societies (US \$0.50 annual contribution for each member) and from gifts and proceeds of IAEMS Conferences.

From the third ICEM in Tokyo, 1981, until the fourth ICEM in Stockholm, 1985, the officers of the Association have been President T. Sugimura, Vice-Presidents R.R. Rao and K. Sundaram, Secretary P. Oftedal, and Treasurer S. Wolff. This is an adequate place to thank all of them for their activities and dedicated work. At a council meeting on June 25, 1985 in Stockholm, the following officers were elected to serve for the period until 1989: President F.H. Sobels, Vice-Presidents F.J. de Serres and D. MacPhee, Secretary Marja Sorsa, and Treasurer T. Matsushima. The number of councillors representing the various member societies is determined by the size of their respective societies.

The new council will direct its attention to two kinds of activity. First, there is an obvious need in various parts of the world for introducing new techniques of short-term mutagenicity testing, for properly evaluating the outcome of such efforts, and for monitoring exposed populations. Workshops, training courses, and the establishment of fellowships for the training of promising young scientists from developing countries in laboratories with adequate experience should be helpful in this respect. The available funds of IAEMS are insufficient to achieve this objective. What we will try to do is to establish a more permanent financial infrastructure for IAEMS. It is hoped that the expertise available in IAEMS may help to inspire the confidence of large international organizations that could provide us with the means to make such activities possible. IAEMS could in this function take the responsibility as a refereeing board to ensure that funds provided for such planned activities by its member societies are well spent.

Second, we feel that this large, worldwide organization would profit from a more intense communication among its members concerning its various functions and activities. To this end, we propose to publish an IAEMS News Column at regular intervals on the last page of issues of the Blue Section of Mutation Research (Environmental Mutagenesis and Related Subjects). Donald MacPhee, Marja Sorsa, and I will take responsibility for this activity. This is the first one of this series, and I hope that many will follow. Please do not hesitate to let us have your suggestions and inform us about your proposed initiatives.