

IS-MPMI Reporter

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IS-MPMI REPORTER DEADLINE

The deadline for submitting items for the next issue is August 20, 2013.

Share your news, accomplishments, and upcoming meeting details with your colleagues. Submit articles, announcements, and any ideas you may have for the next issue. You can send an e-mail (ismpmireportereditor@scisoc.org) or submit your item online (www.ismpminet.org/newsletter/submissionform.asp).

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Sophien Kamoun,
President

A Letter from the President

Science on The Med

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I am pleased to report that preparations for the XVI International Congress, to be held July 6–10, 2014, on the Greek island of Rhodes, are proceeding according to plan. Congress Chief Organizer **Eris Tjamos** and his Local Organizing Committee have been working diligently toward an exciting high-quality program. They have been consulting closely with the Board of Directors (BOD), which forms the bulk of the International Scientific Committee.

In recent years, the International Society for Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions (IS-MPMI) has received much feedback from its members about improving the scientific program of the international congresses. We listened. Our main action is the approval by the BOD in January 2013 of a document entitled “Guidelines for organizing the scientific program of IC-MPMI.” The objective of this framework is to streamline the organization of the congress to ensure a consistent scientific program that matches the expectations of the BOD and the society membership.

The key feature of the “Guidelines” document is that the program is developed through a collaboration between the local organizers and the BOD. Specific rules have been set. To encourage interactions between members of different communities, overly specialized concurrent session topics, particularly taxon-specific ones, will be avoided. For example, a session on “pathogenesis” is preferable to one on “bacterial pathogenesis.” Similarly, talks on “nematodes” are better spread throughout the program than grouped together in a single specialized session, which runs the risk of being attended mainly by specialists.

Another excellent decision that has broad support from the BOD is based on the positive experience of the 2007 Sorrento Congress. Concurrent session topics may be revised following abstract submission to ensure that the program reflects the interests of the participants and to bring about a balanced program. We also plan to offer abstract authors the option to choose an “OTHER” option, in addition to the preliminary list of topics, to capture the interests of all the participants. More than half of the congress speakers will be selected from the abstracts, so those who submit their best work will be rewarded.

A related decision is to mix speakers presenting different topics in the plenary sessions. This worked well at the 2012 Kyoto Congress. It should ensure better attendance throughout the conference. For instance, in the past, participants working on pathogens may have skipped the “Symbiosis” Plenary Session (I sheepishly admit to doing just that), and vice versa. Therefore, plenary sessions will not be labeled with specific themes but rather arbitrarily numbered to encourage broad and consistent attendance.

Finally, IS-MPMI must ensure that its congress truly reflects the diversity of the society membership. The speaker lineup must guarantee balance in gender, career stage, and geography. The BOD decided that gender balance should be at worst 35–65%. Also, at least 50% of the plenary speakers should be different from those who spoke at the preceding congress.

Many of us wait in anticipation for the biennial IC-MPMI. I am personally thrilled about the prospect of discovering historic Rhodes and experiencing again the legendary Greek hospitality. Our Greek hosts are fully dedicated to delivering an exceptional congress in the beautiful setting of the Mediterranean Sea. We hope that the “Guidelines” will contribute to the success of the next congress and beyond. You can be the judge and arbiter. ■