

Rising Sun in Chemistry

The Société Française de Chimie (SFC), the French Chemical Society, sends the Chemical Society of Japan (CSJ), its members and staff the most heartfelt greetings and warmest congratulations on the occasion of its 125th anniversary.

It is worthy to note that at the end of the 19th century and within *ca.* 25 years, several of the current chemical societies have taken root. The predecessor organisations of The Royal Society of Chemistry date back to 1841, of the French Chemical Society to 1857, of the German Chemical Society to 1867, of the American Chemical Society to 1876, and of the CSJ to 1878. This reflects the vital and beneficial impact of the great scientific discoveries that came around the turn of that century exerted on chemistry, which became a central science and the "industry of industries."

The CSJ has played an important role in developing chemistry in Japan during the Meiji era: students were sent to Europe (many to the Sorbonne in Paris) and America to learn the scientific method. The results became really spectacular in the last decades, in a period of phenomenal technological progress throughout the world. Japan shares now leadership in many fields of chemistry like organometallic chemistry, enantioselective catalysis, materials, nanotechnologies and environmental chemistry. The recent Nobel prizes attest this international recognition.

Different disciplines represented in the scientific divisions of SFC as well as distinguished members of our Society continue since several decades to develop strong interactions with Japanese chemists. One can quote the regular meetings in synthetic organic chemistry (Société Franco-Japonaise de Chimie Fine et Thérapeutique), very good exchange in catalysis (French-Japanese Symposia on Catalysis), solid-state chemistry, coordination and organometallic chemistry, *etc.* Moreover, eminent Japanese chemists participate in the publishing activities of the European network of publications. Finally, Japan attracts a lot of young French scientists who are staying one to two years in world-leading laboratories of Japanese universities, and this will provide further cross-collaborations between our countries.

In the present context of globalisation, it is important to strengthen such contacts and relations. Within Europe, we are making progresses towards a European Chemical Society. The initiatives of the SFC have contributed to these advances. The current network of Societies has developed a homogeneous set of European Journals, for instance. The rise



of other networks in North America and in Asia (*e.g.*, the FACS) persuades us to continue in this way and to set up a worldwide network of networks. This will provide an efficient basis for stronger international co-operations, better visibility of chemistry as a central science and a key industry, and improved education of young generations.

As one of the largest chemical societies, the CSJ has sought an exchange of views with societies throughout the world and has made numerous contributions for the benefit of chemists and the advance of chemical sciences. The next C6 meeting gathering ACS, CSJ, GDCh, KNCV, RSC and SFC will be hosted by the CSJ in 2004: we are already anxious to discuss definite achievements.

Chemistry has to serve the improvement of the quality of life and to safeguard the Earth for future generations. There is a contradiction between the poor public image of chemistry and its critical role in the domains of life sciences, materials, consumer products and environment. This is a tremendous challenge to change this attitude and to persuade young students that they will find in teaching this discipline, exploring new fields, developing sustainable technologies, and producing worthy and environmentally benign compounds and systems, serviceable and rewarding careers. We are convinced that in this area too the CSJ has a decisive role to play.

On behalf of French chemists who value highly their relationship with colleagues in Japan, the SFC welcomes this opportunity to express its confidence that the CSJ will continue to flourish and to play a leading part in the development of chemical sciences. In these times of highly mediated world, the contribution of the CSJ is worthy for the recognition of chemistry as a major discipline and industry for the well being and prosperity of mankind.

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