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This is the first of an irregular series of variable-length newsletters from the URSI President. As you can see, I am providing myself with plenty of scope to sometimes write very little – and, indeed, sometimes write nothing at all, if there is no news. However, there is no shortage of copy as I write this in September 2015.

As most of you know, I took over as URSI President in August 2014, inheriting a number of initiatives from Phil Wilkinson, and with the intention of introducing a few of my own. Consequently, the last year has been incredibly busy for the Board and Secretariat. We are all of the opinion that we need to modernize and reform URSI – while of course retaining its very good points.

Flagship Meetings

Under the guidance of Phil, URSI adopted a three-year conference cycle of flagship meetings: the Atlantic Radio Science (AT-RASC) meeting in the year after the GASS, the Asia-Pacific Radio Science (AP-RASC) meeting in year two, and then the General Assembly and Scientific Symposium (GASS) in year three. AT-RASC took place in May 2015 (more on that below), AP-RASC (2016) will be held in Seoul, Korea, and the GASS (2017) will be held in Montreal, Canada. As you can imagine, these extra meetings entail an enormous amount of extra work. In order to deal with this, George Uslenghi and Kazuya Kobayashi have kindly agreed to serve as Assistant Secretaries General for AT-RASC (2016) and AP-RASC (2018), respectively. More details of these meetings can be found at the following Web sites:

URSI AP-RASC, August 21-25, 2016, Grand Hilton Seoul Hotel, Seoul, Korea, <http://aprasc2016.org>.

URSI GASS, August 19-26, 2017, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, <http://gass2017.org>.

AT-RASC

The first AT-RASC was held in Gran Canaria (Spain), in May 2015. There were over 400 participants and more than 600 papers scheduled over the five-day meeting. Notwithstanding the beach location and glorious weather, the papers were sufficiently good to hold the audiences through to the end! One important novelty was the daily General Lectures, given by international experts. It was most gratifying to see so many people in the auditorium for these. Three of the lectures are available to watch through the URSI Web site. My thanks go especially to Peter van Daele, George Uslenghi, and Kazuya Kobayashi for making this meeting such a success.

The Board and Secretariat took soundings regarding the organization and location of the meeting throughout and after AT-RASC 2015. As a consequence, we have decided to run AT-RASC 2018 in the same location (most likely during the week starting May 28, 2018), so that we can benefit from the organizational experience gained in 2015. Later meetings may move to a different location. Next time, we will be providing greater guidance for those traveling to Gran Canaria from outside of Europe. For those in Europe, it is simple and cheap to travel to the Island, but non-European travel agents were generally not aware of the options.

Early Career Representatives

An important new initiative this triennium was the election of Early Career Representatives (ECRs) from each of the Commissions. I believe that this has been a huge success. Under the guidance of their superb Chair, Stefan Wijnholds, they have participated in the organization of the General Lectures at AT-RASC, provided guidance on the development of the *Radio Science Bulletin*, and advised the Board on how URSI can improve its visibility. The latter will involve the ECRs in the design and testing of new URSI Web pages.

Commission Budgets

You probably know that the Commission Chairs have a budget to support their Commission activities. The introduction of annual flagship meetings with an annual planning cycle has put these budgets under pressure. While we have maintained the Commission budgets at 9000 Euros, we have introduced two innovations to mitigate the impact of these additional meeting commitments. The first is a further discretionary budget of 3000 Euros per Commission, where a good case is made. The second is the ability to roll-over under-spent budgets to the following triennium. You can help these budget pressures still further by organizing your conferences and working groups under the umbrella of our flagship meetings.

Development of the *Radio Science Bulletin (RSB)*

My final topic relates to the *RSB*. Ross has led the development of the *RSB* over many years, and it is now a well-respected and valuable publication. The Board decided earlier in the year that it was time to enhance it further by supplementing the tutorial articles with radio-science news articles. Hopefully, you will have already noticed the first steps in this journey. Editing *RSB* every quarter is a mammoth task, and I would publicly like to thank Ross Stone for all of his hard work.

With very kind regards and best wishes,

Prof. Paul Cannon, OBE, FREng