IUPAC/UNESCO release, 30 Dec 2008

UN declares 2011 as International Year of Chemistry

New York, Paris, 30 December 2008 - The 63rd General Assembly of the United Nations has adopted a resolution proclaiming 2011 as International Year of Chemistry, placing UNESCO and the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) at the helm of the event.

Ethiopia submitted the U.N. resolution calling for the Year, which will celebrate the achievements of chemistry and its contributions to the well-being of humanity. The Year will also draw attention to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014. National and international activities carried out during 2011 will emphasize the importance of chemistry in sustaining natural resources.

Chemistry is fundamental to our understanding of the world and the cosmos. Moreover, molecular transformations are central to the production of food, medicines, fuel, and countless manufactured and extracted products. Through the Year, the world will celebrate the art and science of chemistry, and its essential contributions to knowledge, to environmental protection and to economic development.

"The International Year of Chemistry will give a global boost to chemical science in which our life and our future are grounded. We hope to increase the public appreciation and understanding of chemistry, increase young people's interest in science, and generate enthusiasm for the creative future of chemistry," declared the President of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), Professor Jung-Il Jin.

"I welcome the opportunity to celebrate chemistry, one of the fundamental sciences," said the Director-General of UNESCO, Koïchiro Matsuura. "Raising public awareness about chemistry is all the more important in view of the challenges of sustainable development. It is certain that chemistry will play a major role in developing alternative energy sources and in feeding the world's growing population," he added.

The year 2011, the 100th anniversary of the award of the Nobel Prize in chemistry to Mme Maria Sklodowska Curie, will also provide an opportunity to celebrate the contribution of women to science. The Year also marks the 100^{th} anniversary of the founding of the International Association of Chemical Societies (IACS), which was succeeded by IUPAC a few years later. IACS and IUPAC were established to address the needs for international scientific communication and cooperation among chemists by standardizing nomenclature and terminology.

In 2007, the IUPAC Council unanimously endorsed the plan to obtain the proclamation of 2011 as the International Year of Chemistry. Less than a year later, UNESCO's Executive Board recommended the adoption of such a resolution which was submitted by Ethiopia and agreed to support all efforts leading the UN General Assembly to declare 2011 the International Year of Chemistry.

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IUPAC was formed in 1919 by chemists from industry and academia. For nearly 90 years, the Union has succeeded in fostering worldwide communications in the chemical sciences and in uniting academic, industrial and public sector chemistry in a common language. IUPAC is recognized as the world authority on chemical nomenclature, terminology, standardized methods for measurement, atomic weights and more. In recent years, IUPAC has been pro-active in establishing a wide range of conferences and projects designed to promote and stimulate modern developments in chemistry, and also to assist in aspects of education and public understanding of chemistry. More information about IUPAC and its activities is available at www.iupac.org.

UNESCO, founded in November 1945 as a specialized agency of the United Nations, contributes to the building of peace, the alleviation of poverty, to sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, science, culture, and communication. In fulfilling its mission, UNESCO functions as a laboratory of ideas and a standard-setter to forge universal agreements on emerging ethical issues. The Organization also serves as a clearinghouse – for the dissemination and sharing of information and knowledge – while helping Member States to build their human and institutional capacities in diverse fields. Through these activities, UNESCO promotes international co-operation among its 193 Member States and six Associate Members. Its programmes in natural sciences focus on mobilizing science knowledge and policy for sustainable development in the areas of basic sciences, science education, ecological and earth sciences, water sciences and climate change. More information about UNESCO and its activities in the natural sciences is available at www.unesco.org/science

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