

Conference Call

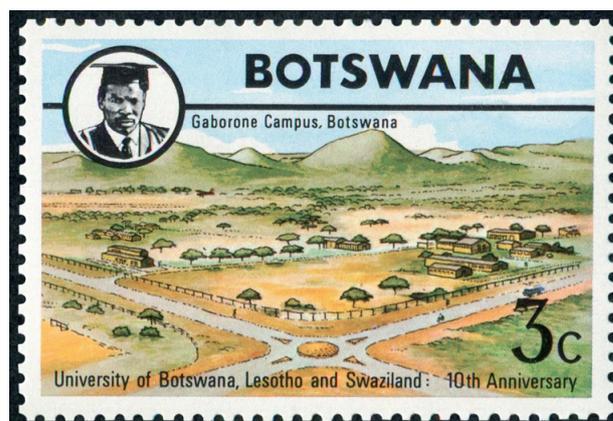
Bringing IUPAC to Southern Africa Division II promotes IUPAC in Africa by meeting in Botswana and co-sponsoring the 2nd Symposium on Organic and Inorganic Chemistry, Southern Africa.

by Lars Öhrström and Ishmael Masesane

Scientists seldom meet outside the high-income countries without an explicit purpose to promote development or solve problems in low- and middle-income countries. While such meetings may serve a good purpose, the very format and objective do not create a platform where all scientists can connect and discuss as equals. Moreover, this geographical restraint of the regular conference circuit also means that low- and middle-income countries to a large extent, and especially in Africa, often miss out on this both formal and informal scientific exchange of ideas and information.

Decisions on where to hold conferences and symposia are largely up to individual groups of researchers and seldom guided by any overall policy aimed at a geographical diversity. This is therefore an arena where individuals, or groups of individuals, can make a difference and promote a truly global scientific culture [1].

IUPAC's technical divisions meet every second year under the larger IUPAC umbrella of the General



This stamp was issued in 1974 for the 10th anniversary of the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. (Thanks to Daniel Rabinovich)

Assembly during the World Chemical Congress, and in the intervening year an “off-year” meeting is organized by the divisions themselves. The Inorganic Chemistry Division had for some years discussed whether it would be feasible to hold one of these “off-year” meetings somewhere in Africa, and the right conditions materialized in 2018.

Hosted by the University of Botswana (UB) in the capital Gaborone, the Division first assembled for an informal evening meeting with the Head of the Chemistry Department, Prof Ishmael Masesane, followed by the regular off-year meeting from 2-3 October, including a visit to the chemistry department facilities, and lunch with faculty members.

As the division meeting was concluding, with some matters postponed to a break-out session with participation from potential new IUPAC-membership countries Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe, the speakers of the following days upcoming symposium started to arrive. Consequently, an informal get-together session with the speakers and the local organizing committee was held in the evening and the guests were welcomed by the conference co-chairs Ishmael Masesane and Lars Öhrström.

Then, early morning the next day (because that is how to organize things in a semi-arid hot climate) the 2nd Symposium on Organic and Inorganic Chemistry, Southern Africa was inaugurated in the new conference center just beside University of Botswana's main campus in the center of Gaborone. The importance with which the local UB community regarded this event was emphasized in the inaugural speech delivered by the acting Deputy Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs Dr. Oathokwa Nkomazana. She had to step in at the very last minute for the Vice Chancellor, but

2nd Symposium on Organic and Inorganic Chemistry, Southern Africa

Organizing bodies: University of Botswana, IUPAC Division II, Swedish Research Links – Swedish Science Council via a network grant.

Additional sponsoring organizations: University of California –Berkeley, USA, through the Berkeley Global Science Institute; Chalmers University of Technology through the Area of Advance Energy; IUPAC through the Financial Support for Conferences in Scientifically Emerging Regions; University of Helsinki

Nations present (by residence and origin): Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Kenya, Ghana, Sweden, Finland, Spain, Italy, Germany, Slovakia, USA, Peru, Jordan, Singapore.

Attendance: Around 60

Venue: University of Botswana Conference Center in Gaborone, the capital of Botswana. With about 500 000 inhabitants it is the country's largest city with around 20 % of the total population.

www.chalmers.se/en/conference/Organic_Inorganic_Chemistry/Pages/default.aspx