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### INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION

The 7th Latin American Symposium on Polymers (**SLAP'2000**), a joint meeting with the 5th Ibero-American Congress on Polymers and 1st Ibero-American Symposium on Chitin and Chitosan, was recently held in Havana, Cuba from 20 to 24 November, 2000 organised by the Cuban Chemical Society, Polymers Section.

The SLAPs are being organized since 1988 as an effort of Latin American polymer scientists and businessmen to exchange, discuss and share results on polymer investigations. It could be stated that SLAP'2000 closed a cycle in the life of these Latin American and Ibero-American meetings, after having been celebrated previously in Venezuela, Mexico, Spain, Brazil, Argentina and Chile.

It was a pleasure to welcome 291 delegates coming from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Peru, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, USA and Venezuela. The program of this meeting included the following topics:

1. Synthesis and characterisation of polymers
2. Chemical modifications and specialty polymers
3. Polymer processing
4. Rheology
5. Composites
6. Biomass utilisation
7. Biopolymers and natural polymers
8. Polymer degradation
9. Environmental impact and recycling
10. Biomedical, pharmaceutical and biotechnological applications
11. Polymer physics

In addition to the above-mentioned topics, an Ibero-American Symposium on Chitin and Chitosan took place for the first time.

On behalf of the Organizing Committee of SLAP'2000 I would like to thank all the Latin and Ibero-American colleagues as well as those from other regions for their participation and support that culminated in this successful meeting.

W. Argüelles-Monal