

The 8th UNESCO/IUPAC Conference on Macromolecules: “Polymers for Africa” organized by Associate Professor Dhanjay Jhurry of the Department of Chemistry of the University of Mauritius in collaboration with the Chemical Society of Mauritius was held in the beautiful environment of the seaside resort “La Pirogue” in the island of Mauritius, June 4–9, 2005. This conference, previously organized by the UNESCO Associated Centre for Macromolecules & Materials, Stellenbosch, South Africa, is a main conduit for young and established scientists from the continent of Africa to discuss with their colleagues from other parts of the world topics of current and future importance to Africa. The conference was well attended with an excellent mix of oral and poster presentations loosely arranged around the themes of biopolymers and biodegradable polymers, functional polymers and polymers in health and medicine, all topics of global importance but with special relevance to the African context. The enthusiastic participation of numerous young African graduate students and scientists led to many lively discussions during the well-attended poster sessions.

It is obvious that this conference series can make an important contribution to the development of polymer science in the African continent as more young scientists

are exposed to and participate in state of the art polymer research in contexts of relevance to their local environment. While it is clear that holding such conferences on the African continent stimulates the all-important participation of both young and more mature African scientists, should the rest of the world not be exposed to the needs and issues of polymer science in the developing world? Should topics such as “Polymers for Africa” or “Polymers for the Developing World” be included in the major IUPAC sponsored polymer conferences held in the developed world to sensitize polymer scientists to the special needs of developing nations?

The papers collected for this issue of *Macromolecular Symposia* represent only a fraction of the presentations made at the conference but give a flavor of the diversity of the topics that were presented. We thank Professor Dhanjay Jhurry and the organizers of the conference for their hard work, not only for this very successful conference, but also for the assembly of this volume. It is hoped that the readers will be stimulated to attend and participate in the next edition of the “Polymers for Africa” conference for a better understanding of the global significance of this topic.

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