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IUPS Congress : An important event for physiologists of the world

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I have been looking forward to the 36th IUPS Congress in Kyoto since the San Diego meeting in 2005. Needless to say, the Congress is one of the most important activities of the Union as it provides an extraordinary platform for the physiologists across the world to exchange research experiences and achievements. Of particular importance is that the theme of the Kyoto Congress 2009 is "Function of life: Elements and integration" which clearly indicates the current trends in the study of biomedical sciences. We are now becoming more and more aware that pure reductionism has limitations to help us to understand the functions of the whole living organism, and therefore measures have to be taken to promote translational research and studies of integrative physiology. Professor Björn Folkow declared as early as 1994 that "integrative physiology is truly the biology of the future". However, in recent years the advances in molecular biology and the grant funding policies have pushed biomedical research in the direction of molecular and cellular biology, leaving only a small number of physiological scientists conducting research at the whole body level. Therefore, the importance of translational research and integrative physiology should never be overemphasized. As we always

say, the discipline of physiology plays a role as a bridge linking the bench and the bedside, therefore, the physiological scientists all over the world being the bridge builders, have the duty as well as privilege to promote the development of translational and integrative research. As Professor Allen Cowley wrote in 2005, "now is the time to begin building the scientific infrastructures that will enable an integrated understanding of the function of complex organisms and chronic diseases". In this regard, the Long Range Planning Committee of the IUPS recently defined the discipline of physiology as "the study of the functions and integrative processes of life at all levels of structural complexity between the molecular level and that of the whole organism". I am quite sure that the 36th IUPS Congress will be successful in directing world physiological scientists to a way of integrative research.

On the other hand, the mission of the IUPS is to bring together physiological scientists from throughout the world to promote the advancement of physiological research and facilitate the dissemination of knowledge of physiological sciences worldwide. However, as we are all aware, the advancement of physiological research and

education does not progress evenly in different areas of the world. Therefore, the IUPS Congress remains a very important event that provides a good opportunity for physiological scientists to share research and educational advancement and strengthen scientific relationship globally and by extension to achieve a goal of the universality of science. As a Chinese physiologist, I would like to say that for years Chinese physiologists have always rated very highly the importance of developing and strengthening academic relationship with scientists of other countries. "Facing the

world" becomes an important strategic measure of our academic organizations. The IUPS Kyoto Congress will provide us with a wonderful opportunity to get together with our international colleagues and to exchange experiences and enhance friendship. Chinese physiological scientists will certainly play an active role in promoting the progress of international exchange and scientific collaborations among the physiological scientists of the world. I look forward to the 36th IUPS Congress in Kyoto and am optimistic that it will be a great success.