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An International Effort in Chemical Science

The International Organization for Chemical Sciences in Development (IOCD) was founded in July 1981 with the main objective of involving chemists from Third World nations in the search for solutions to the urgent problems of their countries. To do this, the IOCD intends to use essentially three channels—initiation of research programs, provision of services, and improvement of education in the chemical sciences. Because scientists from industrial countries will serve as scientific advisers and monitor IOCD research projects, technology transfer and the strengthening of institutions in Third World countries will also be facilitated.

The IOCD has already made an impressive start in accomplishing some of its objectives in the brief period since its founding. A program of chemical synthesis designed to uncover new drugs for the treatment of tropical diseases has been initiated. Eleven laboratories located mainly in developing countries are participating in this program, and IOCD is planning a similar chemical synthesis program in the area of food sciences. Possibilities for making contributions in the field of human fertility regulation are also being investigated. And IOCD is conducting a survey to identify principal investigators and groups throughout the world who are involved in research relevant to such activities. In particular, the organization is making an attempt to identify scientists from developing countries who are working in the chemistry of natural products.

In addition to organizing facilities for analyzing samples from developing countries, IOCD is initiating a program for maintaining and repairing instrumentation and equipment in chemical laboratories in these countries. Eventually there will be a comprehensive biological screening program in Third World nations for compounds prepared by synthesis or isolated from natural sources. Scientific and technical advice will be provided free of charge to managers or governments in countries attempting to build chemical research programs or industrial facilities.

Plans to improve education in the chemical sciences include dissemination of information on modern methods of teaching chemistry as well as sponsorship of seminars and round-table discussions on multidisciplinary research areas. There has been a limited distribution by IOCD of information letters in some countries, and publication of a newsletter with wider distribution is contemplated.

The administrators and staff of IOCD are all volunteers who work directly with scientists from developing countries. Its small infrastructure and low overhead give IOCD a great deal of independence and flexibility.

Start-up funding from the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (Unesco) has enabled IOCD to take some significant first steps toward accomplishing its major objectives. It has initiated several joint programs, some sponsored in part by such organizations as the World Health Organization, the Walter Reed Institute for Medical Research, the National Institutes of Health, and others. In the future, however, IOCD must obtain funding from governmental organizations and private sources, including foundations and companies in industrialized countries as well as in the developing world.

Responses from chemists around the world have been encouraging and have confirmed the conviction that IOCD has an important role in aiding the development of Third World countries and in assisting them in improving the quality of life through chemistry. It is gratifying that chemists in developed nations now have a way to collaborate in their areas of expertise with colleagues in the developing countries. So far, only the groundwork for facilitating international communication and collaboration has been laid; now a great deal more work must be done.—GLENN T. SEABORG, *President, IOCD, and Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, Berkeley, California 94720*

Inquiries from scientists and organizations interested in becoming involved in this activity should be addressed to Pierre Crabbe, Secretary General, International Organization for Chemical Sciences in Development, c/o Unesco, 7, Place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.