Welcome from the IAG

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The creation of the International Association of Geodesy (IAG) goes back to an initiative by the Prussian General Johann Jacob Baeyer (1794-1885), who wrote a memorandum to the king of Prussia in 1861. In this memorandum he argues that international collaboration to perform arc measurements is required for scientific reasons. He stated in particular: *If Central Europe is therefore willing to unite and use its resources for the solution of this task, it will call into being an important and magnificent work.*

A similar statement in 1989, this time by Prof. Ivan I. Mueller (not a general, but IAG President at that time), led to the creation of the International GPS Service: *The primary motivation in planning the IGS was the recognition in 1989 that the most demanding users of the GPS satellites, the geophysical community, were purchasing receivers in exceedingly large numbers and using them as more or less black boxes, using software packages which they did not completely understand, mainly for relative positioning.*

From the IAG perspective the creation and realization of the IGS really was an important and magnificent task. The same attributes are appropriate for the current performance of the IGS.

The IGS was not the first IAG service. The idea of establishing a service whenever an important permanent task has to be solved, is well established in IAG. The creation of the International Latitude Service (ILS) in 1899 is the first example for this policy. The International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service (IERS), created in 1987, may be viewed as the successor of the ILS. This long-term perspective is important in geodesy and in IAG. The tasks of the ILS and the IERS are very closely related, the tools, on the other hand, could probably not be more different. Astrometry was used in the ILS, the space geodesy in the IERS.

The IGS has no predecessor within IAG. The long-term perspective is, however, of greatest importance in the IGS. Today's generation of Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS), namely the GPS, the Russian GLONASS, and the upcoming European Galileo system will be the dominating tools for precise positioning and navigation at least in the next two decades. This implies that many noble scientific tasks like the realization of a unique terrestrial reference system and the monitoring of Earth will, to a great extent, be based on the IGS. When the service was created in 1994, IGS stood for International GPS Service for geodynamics. Today, the same acronym stands just for International GPS Service – based on the insight that the IGS products are of much broader use than "just for geodynamics". We predict that well before the 20th IGS anniversary the same acronym will stand for International GNSS Service.

In this first week of March 2004 we are celebrating ten years of IGS as an official IAG service. The IGS community was in Bern already once, in 1993. At that time the 1992 IGS Test Campaign was reviewed and the IGS Terms of Reference were written – in the meeting room of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of the University of Bern. We are thus back to the roots of the IGS in this week. It is worthwhile to compare the proceedings of the 1993 Bern workshop with the program of the 2004 IGS events. Both documents are impressive and stand for the innovative spirit within the IGS. The comparison also proves that the progress achieved between 1994 and 2004 is breath taking. Nobody would have predicted such a performance of the IGS in 1993.

On behalf of IAG I wish us all a very fruitful and interesting week in Bern. Let us use this time to lay the technical and administrative foundations for the second decade of IGS services to a steadily growing user community.