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EUROPEAN MOLECULAR BIOLOGY CONFERENCE

CEREMONY OF SIGNING
THE AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING
THE EUROPEAN MOLECULAR BIOLOGY CONFERENCE

Geneva-Meyrin (CERN), 13 February 1969
at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Jean HUMBERT, Ambassador, Head of the
Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the
International Organizations in Geneva

PROGRAMME OF THE CEREMONY

1. Introduction by Mr. Jean HUMBERT, Ambassador, Head of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the International Organizations in Geneva.
2. Address by Mr. Willy SPÜHLER, Federal Councillor, Head of the Federal Political Department.
3. Report of the Credentials Committee.
4. Signing of the Agreement establishing the European Molecular Biology Conference.

1. The PRESIDENT spoke as follows:

"Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Federal authorities have instructed me to be the steersman of our ceremony to-day.

In this capacity I should like to extend a very warm welcome to those who have been appointed by their Government to sign the Agreement establishing the European Molecular Biology Conference and to all those who have done us the honour of being present to-day, especially the representatives of the international organizations interested in the extension of international collaboration in the field of biology. I should also like to welcome the representatives of the press, radio and television. Finally, I should like to express our gratitude to CERN for its welcome and its generous co-operation.

You have before you the programme for our meeting. First of all we shall hear Federal Councillor Willy Spühler and then, after the report of the Credentials Committee, the Agreement will be signed. However, it would not, perhaps, be inappropriate if I were first to recall briefly the circumstances which have led up to the acceptance of the Agreement establishing the European Molecular Biology Conference.

In response to the desires of the scientists constituting the European Molecular Biology Organization, and after diplomatic consultations, the Federal Council called a preparatory Conference to examine the prospects for European co-operation. This Conference was held here at CERN under the presidency of Professor Olivier Reverdin, with Professor John Kendrew as Secretary-General. Both of these gentlemen are here to-day, and we should like to thank them for joining us.

The principles of this new scientific collaboration were established at a first session held from 4 to 6 April 1967. Then, during the months of June and September of the same year, a working group drafted an intergovernmental document. The draft was submitted to the second session of the preparatory Conference which was opened on 22 January 1968, and it was accepted on the 25th of that month.

There was, however, one point which remained undecided: whether German should be used as one of the languages of the future institutional Conference.

The rather difficult consultations entered into by the Federal authorities on this matter resulted in the following compromise:

We know that the governments you represent, Gentlemen, will do the utmost which the demands of their legal systems permit to hasten the ratification, acceptance or approval of the Agreement. However, because of certain of these demands we think it improbable that our treaty can come into force before the end of this year.

We are all agreed, I am sure, that it would be extremely regrettable if the co-operation already existing through the scientists of the European Molecular Biology Organization were now to be brought to a standstill pending the coming into force of the Agreement, whether through a lack of funds, or through inability to take certain organizational measures.

Thanks to several governments it has now become - or will very shortly become - possible to make some limited financial arrangements so that the immediate future of the European Molecular Biology Organization does not appear too uncertain. The problem is still there, however, and we must keep it in the forefront of our minds.

Provisional legal or administrative measures might also be required. If it should become necessary to call a meeting to provide for such measures, it will be open to the European Molecular Biology Organization to call it, and the Swiss authorities will, without a doubt, be willing to give diplomatic support in such an event.

I should now like to call upon the Federal Councillor, Mr. Willy Spühler."

2. Mr. Willy SPÜHLER, Federal Councillor, Head of the Swiss Federal Political Department, spoke as follows:

"Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is less than two years ago, on 4 April 1967, that I had the honour and the pleasure of bringing to this same spot the Federal Council's expression of welcome and good wishes to the representatives of those governments who, at my country's invitation, had agreed to meet together to study the possibilities of organizing European co-operation in the field of molecular biology. If we give a thought to the time that has been needed to draw up many other international agreements, we may conclude that some diligence has been evident in the preparatory work that has led to the final drafting of an intergovernmental instrument which all governments represented at the preparatory Conference, or nearly all, will be prepared in a moment to approve through the signatures of their plenipotentiary delegates.

advice of CERN's Directorate and staff, and CERN has undoubtedly contributed to to-day's achievement. I am happy in the belief that the links thus created will endure and become still closer, for I have no doubt that the European Conference on Molecular Biology can benefit from CERN's experience not only at the scientific level, but in other ways.

Finally the rôle of Geneva - that traditional meeting-place of minds - has, as always, proved propitious. Indeed the European Molecular Biology Organization has had its legal headquarters here for some years and knows well that it can continue to count upon the interest and goodwill of both the Genevese and the Swiss authorities.

In suggesting that our countries should unite in a highly promising scientific endeavour, the object of the Swiss Government has been to broaden still further to scope of international humanitarian collaboration, to which, as is well known, it is profoundly devoted. My Government is therefore deeply gratified to find that the first stage has been successfully accomplished and looks towards the next stages with confidence.

Throughout the world of to-day governments are being pressed to define their scientific policies. Faced with this complex task and the resultant accumulation of responsibilities we may feel encouraged in finding that a piece of teamwork performed by scientists, legal experts and administrators has led to a clearly-defined result in scientific policy.

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I do not propose to take up your time here in commenting upon the text of the Agreement which enshrines our common thinking. Its terms are well-known to all of you.

But with your permission, I would venture upon a few observations regarding the future of the collaboration we are setting into being.

I would note in the first place that agreement was finally reached on regarding this Instrument as a first step, the fruits of which will call for close scrutiny within five years. Some would have wished this experimental period to be shorter, while others - including the Swiss Delegation - had not thought of setting a limit to it at all. The five-year testing-period is accordingly the result of a compromise.

After due consideration I conclude that this solution is to be welcomed. Not that there can be the slightest possible doubt in my mind as to the horizons which have been opened up by those scientists who became the first builders of European collaboration

of caution will doubtless be required, for the path we shall be treading will not be devoid of obstacles. If, in setting foot upon this path, we have banded ourselves in a relatively close-knit group, our object has been to achieve concrete results with the minimum of delay. This concern with realities should remain present in our minds for as long as we have not become convinced that we have indeed built a solid structure capable of offering to every newcomer a beneficial hospitality.

CERN's example has inspired our work since the beginning as one of the best illustrations of the aims that can be attained when a number of countries combine their forces in a spirit both resolute and pragmatic. CERN has also, to my mind, shown us a course for the future by setting up, in 1967 already, a form of collaboration with the Institute of High Energy Physics at Serpukhov.

* * *

In conclusion may I say that it will be a very keen personal satisfaction to me to be able in a few minutes to affix my signature, on behalf of Switzerland, to an international treaty which will not only contribute to the development of a particularly important sector of pure research and of European scientific collaboration in general, but which may, in the longer prospect, improve the destinies of all men.

It has been said that science, in order to qualify for the State's financial backing, should achieve directly or indirectly goods of an economic or social nature. The answer to this thesis, to the extent that it is an exaggeration, is that out of research of the most detached nature possible in appearance may emerge discoveries of the utmost benefit to mankind. Truly we must recognize that in the breathless unfolding of the last few decades science has not always taken sufficient account of the repercussions it has brought about in day-to-day existence, that it has not been sufficiently concerned to safeguard for each one of us those conditions which are essential for living - for living harmoniously. Are not the "contestations" which, in the past year, have arisen in various parts of the world the direct effect of the fear of many, that our present civilization no longer assures those conditions of harmony which we all need?

In the face of such dangers new areas of science are in course of creation, those which it is becoming current to style the "environmental" or "behaviourist" sciences. Very briefly put, the problem is to assure that man shall enjoy a healthy physical and moral climate in which he can flourish in a balanced way. I will not venture to forecast what effect molecular biology may exert within or alongside this group of sciences.

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

SWEDEN

SWITZERLAND

Four Plenipotentiaries, at the moment of signing the Agreement, made declarations as under:

AUSTRIA

"My Government has instructed me to confirm the following declarations contained in document CEBM 69 / 48 E:

Ad Article II, paragraph 2 of the Agreement establishing the European Molecular Biology Conference:

Austria is of the opinion that decisions according to Article II, paragraph 2, last sentence, can only be taken insofar as they do not include any amendment of or addition to the Agreement.

Ad Article XI, paragraph 4, c:

It is Austria's view that any extension or amendment of the Agreement according to Article XI, paragraph 4, c, is to be considered as a conclusion of a new Agreement and is therefore to be subjected to the amendment procedure as provided for in Article IX, paragraph 3.

Reference is made in this respect to the remarks made by the legal adviser at the Conference (see page 65 of the summary records of the meeting of 22/25 January, 1968, CEBM 68 / 45 E)."

NETHERLANDS

"Confirming document CEBM 69 / 49 E I place the following text on record:

1. As regards the Kingdom of the Netherlands the Agreement shall apply, for the time being, solely to the territory of the Kingdom situated in Europe and in the Netherlands' Antilles, however, the Royal Government taking into account the equality which exists under public law between the Netherlands, Surinam and the Netherlands' Antilles, reserves the right to extend, at the request of Surinam, the application of the Agreement to that country either at the date of deposit of the instrument of ratification by the Kingdom or at a later date.

LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

AUTRICHE

M. Anton GROESEL Directeur au Ministère de l'Instruction publique

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ESPAGNE

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M. Michael D. BUTLER

Conseiller, Mission permanente du Royaume-Uni auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies à Genève

SUEDE

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M. Stig BRATTSTRÖM

Premier Secrétaire, Délégation permanente de Suède auprès de l'Office des Nations Unies et des autres organisations internationales à Genève

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UNESCO

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Professeur

M. Raymond K. APPLEYARD

Secrétaire exécutif de l'OEBM

PROGRAMME
FOR THE CEREMONY OF SIGNING THE AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING
THE EUROPEAN MOLECULAR BIOLOGY CONFERENCE

Geneva-Meyrin (CERN), 13th February, 1969, at 10.00 a.m.

Under the presidency of Mr. Jean Humbert, Head of the Permanent
Mission of Switzerland to the International Organizations at Geneva

1. Introduction by Mr. Jean Humbert.
2. Address by Mr. Willy Spühler, Federal Councillor, Head of the Political Department.
3. Report of the Credentials Committee.
4. Signing of the Agreement establishing the European Molecular Biology Conference.

The signing ceremony will be followed by a cocktail party at CERN given by the Swiss Federal Council, the Republic and Canton of Geneva and the City of Geneva for all those taking part.

CEREMONY OF SIGNING OF THE AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING
THE EUROPEAN MOLECULAR BIOLOGY CONFERENCE

13 February 1969

Address by Ambassador Jean Humbert, Head of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the International Organizations in Geneva

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Federal authorities have instructed me to be the steersman of our ceremony to-day.

In this capacity I should like to extend a very warm welcome to those who have been appointed by their Governments to sign the Agreement establishing the European Molecular Biology Conference and to all those who have done us the honour of being present to-day, especially the representatives of the international organizations interested in the extension of international collaboration in the field of biology. I should also like to welcome the representatives of the press, radio and television. Finally, I should like to express our gratitude to CERN for its welcome and its generous co-operation.

You have before you the programme for our meeting. First of all we shall hear Federal Councillor Willy Spühler and then, after the report of the credentials committee, the Agreement will be signed. However, it would not, perhaps, be inappropriate if I were first to recall briefly the circumstances which have led up to the acceptance of the Agreement establishing the European Molecular Biology Conference.

In response to the desires of the scientists constituting the European Molecular Biology Organization, and after diplomatic consultations, the Federal Council called a preparatory Conference to examine the prospects for European co-operation.

The second feature of the compromise is that the future signatories to the Agreement have consented to the insertion in the Rules of Procedure of the European Molecular Biology Conference, when they are adopted, of the following arrangements:

(a) The English, French and German languages shall enjoy equal status at meetings of the Conference and its subsidiary bodies, and simultaneous interpretation facilities shall be provided in three directions;

(b) the documents submitted to the Conference and its subsidiary bodies shall include a summary in each of the three languages.

It is nevertheless understood that the acceptance of this compromise does not mean that German is formally recognised as an official language of the Conference.

The negotiations on the use of German and the drawing up of a German version of the Agreement acceptable to the three German-speaking States took up a considerable time. It was therefore unfortunately impossible to have the Agreement ready for Signature by the date originally intended by the Swiss authorities.

We know that the governments you represent, Gentlemen, will do the utmost which the demands of their legal systems permit to hasten the ratification, acceptance or approval of the Agreement. However, because of certain of these demands we think it improbable that our treaty can come into force before the end of this year.

We are all agreed, I am sure, that it would be extremely regrettable if the cooperation already existing through the scientists of the European Molecular Biology Organization were now to be brought to a standstill pending the coming into force of the Agreement, whether through a lack of funds, or through inability to take certain organizational measures.

EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON MOLECULAR BIOLOGY

Ceremony of Signature of the Agreement establishing the European Molecular Biology Conference

Geneva, 13 February 1969

Speech by Federal Councillor Mr. Willy Spühler, Head of the Political Department

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is less than two years ago, on 4 April 1967, that I had the honour and the pleasure of bringing to this same spot the Federal Council's expression of welcome and good wishes to the representatives of those Governments who, at my country's invitation, had agreed to meet together to study the possibilities of organizing European co-operation in the field of molecular biology. If we give a thought to the time that has been needed to draw up many other international agreements, we may conclude that some diligence has been evident in the preparatory work that has led to the final drafting of an intergovernmental instrument which all Governments represented at the preparatory Conference, or nearly all, will be prepared in a moment to approve through the signatures of their plenipotentiary delegates.

This achievement flows from the continuous effort of the governmental delegates who, under the vigilant guidance of their President, Professor Olivier Reverdin, devoted lengthy and sometimes strenuous sessions to the solution of a variety of problems. All were agreed from the outset on the high importance and interest of the undertaking; but opinions differed significantly as to the means of bringing it to fruition. Patiently, and in an atmosphere of the utmost mutual understanding and courtesy, they kept the common objective steadily in view, and thus succeeded in building up a structure of co-operation which is both straightforward and adaptable. These delegates richly deserve the expression of our gratitude.

Finally the rôle of Geneva - that traditional meeting-place of minds - has, as always, proved propitious. Indeed the European Molecular Biology Organization has had its legal headquarters here for some years and knows well that it can continue to count upon the interest and goodwill of both the Genevese and the Swiss authorities.

In suggesting that our countries should unite in a highly promising scientific endeavour, the object of the Swiss Government has been to broaden still further to scope of international humanitarian collaboration, to which as is well known, it is profoundly devoted. My Government is therefore deeply gratified to find that the first stage has been successfully accomplished and looks towards the next stages with confidence.

Throughout the world of to-day Governments are being pressed to define their scientific policies. Faced with this complex task and the resultant accumulation of responsibilities we may feel encouraged in finding that a piece of teamwork performed by scientists, legal experts and administrators has led to a clearly-defined result in scientific policy.

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I do not propose to take up your time here in commenting upon the text of the Agreement which enshrines our common thinking. Its terms are well-known to all of you.

But with your permission, I would venture upon a few observations regarding the future of the collaboration we are setting into being.

I would note in the first place that agreement was finally reached on regarding this Instrument as a first step, the fruits of which will call for close scrutiny within five years. Some would have wished this experimental period to be shorter, while others - including the Swiss Delegation - had not thought of

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no majority of countries willing to commit themselves forthwith.

The time at our disposal should allow us to give careful consideration to the possibility of broadening the geographical scope of our undertaking, which some have now and then criticized as having a somewhat exclusive character. As you all know, Article III of the Agreement already makes it possible to contemplate various means of opening the doors wider. It is open to European States which were not called upon to take part in the actual drafting of the Agreement to request that they become members of the Conference or, if they prefer, that they become associated with its work in some other way. Under conditions to be laid down, links may also be established with all other countries and institutions having an interest in this work. For my own part I hope that the broadest possible recourse will be had to these possibilities. Here again, however, a measure of caution will doubtless be required, for the path we shall be treading will not be devoid of obstacles. If, in setting foot upon this path, we have banded ourselves in a relatively close-knit group, our object has been to achieve concrete results with the minimum of delay. This concern with realities should remain present in our minds for as long as we have not become convinced that we have indeed built a solid structure capable of offering to every newcomer a beneficial hospitality.

CERN's example has inspired our work since the beginning as one of the best illustrations of the aims that can be attained when a number of countries combine their forces in a spirit both resolute and pragmatic. CERN has also, to my mind, shown us a course for the future by setting up, in 1967 already, a form of collaboration with the Institute of High Energy Physics at Serpukhov.

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Properly speaking, molecular biology is not a new science. It is a field of fundamental research which, for some years now, has called upon several disciplines, including biochemistry, biophysics and genetics, in order to interpret the phenomena of life at the level of the molecules of which living cells are composed. The essential aim of molecular biology is to discover the basic origins of life. This research will open the way to a wide variety of practical applications in vastly differing fields: in pathology, for the study, for example, of virus diseases, many congenital disorders, cancer, and the action of ionising radiation; in industry; in agriculture; etc. The new prospects which it opens up give good reason for believing that the new impetus given to this subject could well become one of the greatest events in the history of modern science, comparable, perhaps, with the remarkable reawakening of interest in physics over the past few decades.

Europe, which has taken such a leading part in the history of biology, could not fail to take a deep interest in molecular biology. The proof of this is to be found in the establishment of many special laboratories, examples of which are those in Cambridge and Naples. Two institutes have been set up in Switzerland itself, one in Geneva, the other in Zurich. There will be yet a third in Basle. However, whereas the powerful resources available in the United States of America and the huge size of that country have enabled it to achieve within its own borders the full convergence of all the disciplines involved in molecular biology, the scientists of our continent have reached the conclusion that no one European country can, on its own, bring about the necessary concentration and assemble on its own soil all the specialists whose wide variety of knowledge is essential for the study of all the basic molecular processes common to living organisms. This is why European scientists have worked together within the European Molecular Biology Organisation (EMBO, also known under its French initials of OEBM), a private institution and true scientific academy, with its headquarters in Geneva. In the beginning it obtained temporary financial assistance which enabled it to launch a programme of research or study fellowships, courses and professional meetings; but, in order to ensure that its work can continue, it has had to call for help from the States principally interested in the science. Switzerland answered this call by organizing a Preparatory European Conference on Molecular Biology, following in the tradition of the many international meetings which it had organized in the 19th and 20th centuries in the pursuit of its humanitarian ideals.

Besides the General Programme, but still within the framework of the Conference, some members will be free to work on special projects financed by themselves. It is possible that the creation of a European Molecular Biology Laboratory may later be studied as a project of this kind.

It will be possible for other European States to adhere to the Agreement after it has come into force, together with States "which have made a considerable contribution towards the work of EMBO from its foundation". Furthermore, co-operation (without adherence) may be entered into with non-Member States, either European or non-European, and with national bodies and governmental or non-governmental international organizations.

Initially the Agreement will remain in force for five years only. At the end of this time it may be renewed as it stands or in amended form, unless it is decided to cease co-operation in molecular biology - a highly improbable eventuality. This restriction was introduced into the Agreement as a compromise to satisfy certain countries which were not yet prepared to commit themselves for an indefinite period.

The Conference and its General Programme will be financed mainly by contributions from Member States calculated on the basis of a scale similar to the one used for CERN. It should, however, be pointed out that at the present stage the proposed expenditure is relatively modest. The cost of the General Programme, according to EMBO's estimates, lies between maxima of \$ 606.000 for 1969 and \$ 1.017.000 for 1971, to which will be added the expenses involved in holding the Conference itself.

February, 1969.