

Commonwealth Chemistry Annual General Meeting 19 May, 2022

AGM/0522:99

MINUTES of a meeting of the Commonwealth Chemistry Annual General Meeting held on 19 May 2022 from 1145 – 13:45 GMT.

PRESENT

Executive Board	
Dr Vicki Gardiner (President)	Australia
Professor James Darkwa	Ghana
Dr Michael Forde	Trinidad and Tobago
Dr Deborah Nicoll-Griffith	Canada
Professor Peter Mallon	South Africa
Professor Ishmael Masesane	Botswana
Professor Sarah Masters	New Zealand
Professor Priyani Paranagama	Sri Lanka
Dr Robert Parker	UK
Professor Sourav Pal	India
Mr Roger Stapleford	Australia
Professor Choon Hong Tan	Singapore
Secretariat:	
Dr Ale Palermo	Secretary
Ms Gill McGrath	Secretariat
Dr Andrew Shore	Secretariat
Dr Sarah Thomas	Secretariat
Dr Aurora Walshe	Secretariat
Attendees:	
Professor Andrew Holmes	Australia
Professor Anthony Gachanja	Kenya
Professor Avril Williams	Barbados
Professor Basil Shelton Marasinghe	Papua New Guinea
Professor Bice Martincigh	South Africa
Dr Cora Young	Canada
Dr Erick Awas	Kenya

Dr Genevieve Adukpo	Ghana
Professor Mosotho George	Lesotho
Professor Gill Reid	UK
Dr Helen Pain	UK
Professor Iqbal Rouf Mamun	Bangladesh
Professor Narayanaswamy Jayaraman	India
Mr Jean Claude Ndom	Cameroon
Professor Jean Pierre Nkurunziza	Rwanda
Professor Johannes Awudza	Ghana
Dr Jo Reynolds	UK
Dr Josephine Tsang	Canada
Professor Leonard Gitu	Kenya
Professor Marvadeen Singh-Wilmot	Jamaica
Professor Michael Mucalo	New Zealand
Dr Naumih Noah	Kenya
Professor Neil Coville (CC President-Elect)	South Africa
Professor Oluwole Familoni	Lagos
Professor Sandeep Verma	India
Datuk Dr Soon Ting Kueh	Malaysia
Professor Vincent Nyamori	South Africa
Professor Xian Jun Loh	Singapore
Professor Zhongxin Zhou	Canada
Professor Zuriata Zakaria	Malaysia

1.	<p>WELCOME</p> <p>Dr Ale Palermo welcomed all to the 2nd Commonwealth Chemistry Annual General Meeting. She took attendees through the Participant Agreement and Housekeeping and handed to Dr Gardiner to formally open the meeting.</p> <p>Dr Gardiner confirmed that there were 67 registered attendees on the call and thanked everyone for joining and acknowledged that for some it was very late or very early. She made reference to the current and challenging situation in Sri Lanka and thanked those in the region for joining.</p>
2.	<p>PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS</p> <p>For the benefit of new members Dr Gardiner briefly touched on the beginnings of Commonwealth Chemistry from the first meeting in 2018, the set-up of the governance through to present day.</p>
2.1	<p>Elections and Appointments (AGM/0522:02)</p> <p>Dr Gardiner set out the results of the recent and first elections of Commonwealth Chemistry, explaining that the fine detail of the statistics of the voting were contained within the paper.</p> <p>The new members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Neil Coville, President-Elect • Dr Naumih Noah, Elected Member • Professor Datuk Dr Soon Ting Kueh, Elected Member • Dr Genevieve Adukpo, Appointed Member • Professor Sandeep Verma, Appointed Member <p>She explained the criteria for selecting the appointed members: Professor Verma was a close third in the final round of the elections and it was therefore felt appropriate that he should be offered one of the positions. For the second position, the Executive Board consulted the Rules and Articles of Commonwealth Chemistry and after consideration of the criteria around geographical representation and gender balance, Dr Adukpo was approached to take up the appointed member position.</p> <p>Dr Gardiner welcomed the new members and asked each to introduce themselves.</p> <p>Dr Gardiner paid tribute to the four departing members of the Executive Board and thanked them for their contribution, including their input to the set-up phase.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Ishmael Masesane • Mr Roger Stapleford • Professor Tan Choon Hong • Professor James Darkwa

2.2	<p>Commonwealth Chemistry Membership (AGM/0522:03)</p> <p>Dr Gardiner referred attendees to the paper which showed the current membership of Commonwealth Chemistry, currently 25 members and one application in progress.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Royal Australian Chemical Institute 2. Bangladesh Chemical Society 3. Chemical Society of Botswana 4. Cameroon Society of Chemistry 5. Canadian Society for Chemistry 6. Pancyprian Union of Chemists 7. Ghana Chemical Society 8. Indian Chemical Society 9. Chemical Research Society of India 10. Caribbean Academy of Sciences Jamaica Chemistry Division 11. Kenya Chemical Society 12. Chemical Society of Lesotho 13. Institut Kimia Malaysia 14. New Zealand Institute of Chemistry 15. Chemical Society of Nigeria 16. The Chemical Society of Pakistan 17. The Institute of Chemists, Papua New Guinea 18. Rwanda Chemical Society 19. Singapore National Institute of Chemistry 20. South African Chemical Institute South Africa 21. Chemical Society of the South Pacific 22. Institute of Chemistry Ceylon 23. Tanzania Chemical Society 24. Trinidad and Tobago Chemical Society 25. Royal Society of Chemistry, UK <p>In progress: Chemical Society of The Gambia</p> <p>Dr Gardiner highlighted that there were no Associate Members and encouraged those present at the meeting, that would meet the criteria, to contact the Secretariat to discuss this membership option. The criteria:</p> <p><i>An individual representative(s) who holds membership on an ex officio basis in their capacity as a nominated representative of a chemical sciences community for those Commonwealth countries without an incorporated, national chemical sciences society.</i></p>
2.3	<p>Commonwealth Chemistry Boards and Committees (AGM/0522:04)</p> <p>Dr Gardiner referred attendees to the corresponding paper which showed the current boards and committees of Commonwealth Chemistry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commonwealth Chemistry Executive Board (CCEB) • Commonwealth Chemistry Finance Board (CCFC) • Sustainable Chemistry Report Working Group (RWG)

		<p>With the President's Business concluded she handed to Professor Peter Mallon for the next item.</p>
<p>3.</p>		<p>A SUSTAINABLE CHEMISTRY WORKFORCE REPORT</p> <p>Professor Mallon took attendees through the Report and the activities that had taken place since publication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media and promotional packs had been prepared, to share the key outcomes more easily and were available from the Secretariat. • The formal launch in March 2022, at an event for Commonwealth Day to share the key outcomes and which had included a panel discussion. • A webinar aimed at addressing one of the findings of report: How to publish scientific articles. • Looking at ways to facilitate networking and sharing of knowledge, for ECCs across the Commonwealth. <p>On the last point, Professor Mallon said that creating groups could be a way to guide decisions. Therefore, a call had been put out for early career chemists, volunteers and contributors to form focus groups, and several candidates had expressed interest. The Report Working Group and the Secretariat were working to create these groups and would start gathering insights during the summer of 2022, with information to be shared with members thereafter. The goal was to create a network for Commonwealth ECCs, which would be expected to launch at the 2023 Congress.</p> <p>Professor Mallon opened the item for discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Mucalo asked about tackling the supply of chemists and whether it was a popular subject or were students being lost to other disciplines such as engineering? Professor Mallon agreed and said this was the case in many countries, partly because of the perception of chemistry. There was effort required to make it clear what chemists actually do and the opportunities available. This was not the specific remit of the ECC network, but it was something to be taken into account and Commonwealth Chemistry, by sharing its resources, could help. • Professor Singh-Wilmot gave thanks to the Report Working Group for taking forward the recommendations. She said ECCs in the Commonwealth that return to their countries after being abroad find it difficult to compete with those that have a good research infrastructure, particularly equipment to produce data, so that they can be competitive. This was causing a 'brain drain'. She asked that Commonwealth Chemistry help with the issue of accessing grants. Professor Mallon acknowledged this as a problem and that it had been identified in the report. He suggested members think of ways to collaborate differently so that those with the resources can help those with fewer – develop networks and contacts and turn competition into collaboration and he said he believed Commonwealth Chemistry could be a vehicle to achieving this. • Professor Verma followed on from this, giving an example from India where portals had been created allowing young people to look at the physical infrastructure within their institution, to aid them to take their research to the next level. He offered to discuss this with anyone who would be interested in the detail. Professor Pal added that Covid had limited travel to different facilities which had made things very difficult, and he said that collaboration, even outside the Commonwealth, was very important and setting up the routes and ways to do this should be given time and consideration.

- Professor Mamun said that students in Bangladesh were losing interest in science as a subject of study, because chemistry was not being taught properly at mid school level and therefore became daunting. He asked if there would be an opportunity to use Commonwealth Chemistry as a platform to counter.
- Dr Adukpo said that support for teachers was important – training and empowerment. This would need to take the form of regular training so that students can be properly taught.
- Dr Gardiner talked from the perspective of engineers and the relevance of chemistry within that discipline and asked if this could be another area where the profile of chemistry could be raised. She added that members should send through details of international collaboration grants and other funding and resources for teachers to the Secretariat so that it can be added to the Commonwealth Chemistry website.
- Datuk Dr Kueh added to this saying that fellowships and postdoctoral training and also resources that encourage young people to study chemistry would be useful content for the website.

Professor Mallon thanked everyone for their input and reiterate that Commonwealth Chemistry should be used as a vehicle for the sharing of resources and information. He encouraged members to use the broad banner of Commonwealth Chemistry where it would help with funding etc and reminded members that the report had key recommendations for funders, universities and asked that it be shared widely. He reminded members to contact the Secretariat with the names of those that might be interested in the Focus Groups.

4. ANNUAL FINANCE UPDATE (AGM/0522:05)

Dr Palermo gave an update on 2021 expenditure and forecast for 2022 as contained with the paper:

	2021		2022			Notes
	Actual £	Notes	Actual as at March £	Forecast Apr-Dec £	Total Forecast £	
Externals (Contractors, Consultants, Commissions, etc.)	8,000	1	-	15,760	15,760	5
Grants, Prizes, Awards	12,500	2	-	7,500	7,500	6
Conference & Event Costs	5,624	3	920	17,500	16,580	7
Technology	2,398	4	-	2,680	2,680	4
Non-Payroll Costs *	28,522		920	43,440	42,520	
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	(28,522)		(920)	(43,440)	(42,520)	

Notes:

1. Website build costs.
2. Prizes for annual poster event held in September 2021.
3. Virtual event costs for: Inaugural Commonwealth Chemistry Congress in May and Poster Event in September 2021.
4. Federation website hosting fees.
5. Social media set-up and monthly support fee.
6. Prizes for annual poster event to be held in September 2022.

	<p>7. Virtual events cost for: Commonwealth Day event held in March 2022, Poster Event to be held in September 2022, and another event still to be decided to be held in November 2022.</p> <p>The balance of funds was 1.3M GBP from the initial allocation of 1.4M GBP.</p> <p>Professor Pal took AGM attendees through the work of the Commonwealth Chemistry Finance Committee (CCFC). He reiterated the current objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to advise the Executive Board on the financial stability of Commonwealth Chemistry • to focus on 2nd Commonwealth Chemistry Congress budget <p>He confirmed that the budget had been approved by the Executive Board at a meeting in April 2022 and thanked everyone who had contributed to the preparation.</p> <p>He advised on a change of the number, from each country, currently able to attend the Congress in Trinidad and Tobago in 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of ECCs from each country would be three • One additional delegate would be able to attend the AGM • Each country was strongly encouraged to find funding for these four delegates but should this not be possible, Commonwealth Chemistry could provide partial or full funding • For wider participation, countries could send two additional delegates but these could not be funded by Commonwealth Chemistry • The total number of delegates per country could therefore be a maximum of six <p>He added that these changes would aim to ensure equal representation, inclusivity and participation and a level playing field.</p>
5.	<p>PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES (AGM/0522:06)</p> <p>Professor Nyamori took attendees through the 2023 Congress in Trinidad and Tobago. This would be a physical event with the theme strongly linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in particular number 17, Partnership for the Goals, with an emphasis on achieving the SDGs through inclusive partnerships.</p> <p>The aims would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equal representation • Strengthen scientific capacity • Elevate the role of chemistry to society and policy makers • Celebrate achievements in our discipline • Focus on early career chemists • To create effective partnerships for the UN SDGs <p>He talked about the Scientific Organising Committee, the full details of the members were contained within the paper, and explained that the first full meeting had taken place recently with a focus on agreement of the programme and speakers. On this last point he asked Commonwealth Chemistry Members for their assistance and that the Secretariat would be in touch to ask for recommendations of inspirational speakers that could enhance the programme</p> <p>The scientific themes:</p>

1. **Zero Hunger (SDG 2), Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3)**
Biodiversity, natural products, food chemistry and security, agriculture, medicinal chemistry, drug discovery, good health, well-being
2. **Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12)**
Sustainable energy solutions, new materials, biofuels, green chemistry and catalysis
3. **Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6), Climate Action (SDG 13)**
Water treatment and supply, tackling pollution and contamination, environmental chemistry

The supporting themes and for panel discussions:

- Chemistry, the Commonwealth and the SDGs
- Gender Equality (SDG 5) and Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10)
- Quality and Effective Education (SDG 4)

The programme would take place over 2.5 days, beginning on the morning of 23 May and finishing at lunchtime on 25 May. The AGM would take place on the afternoon of 25 May at the close of the Congress.

Scientific sessions

- 6 x 30 min plenary talks
- 12 x 20 min keynote talks
- Flash presentations
- 2 x Poster sessions

There would be a session on skills development particularly for ECCs.

Each country would be responsible for choosing their ECCs and Professor Nyamori put forward the following criteria to aid decision making:

- A chemical scientist in the early stages of their career (up to 10 years after completion of their most recent qualification excluding any career breaks).
- A member of their Commonwealth national chemical society where one exists.
- Working in academia, industry or a science institution.
- Living and working in a Commonwealth country.
- The three ECCs must reflect gender diversity.


Professor Nyamori handed to Dr Forde, Chair of the Local Organising Committee (LOC).

Dr Forde said that he was looking forward to welcoming delegates to Trinidad and Tobago in 2023. The details of the Congress remained much the same as the postponed Congress which was due to take place in 2020 but had not been able to take place in that location due to Covid19. He added that the LOC could help to provide delegates with travel and visa information.

The Congress would be held at the University of the West Indies and the sessions would mostly take place in the Learning Centre, a new a purpose built centre with sufficient space. LOC would arrange transport between the hotel and venues for all delegates. On the first day there would be a welcome reception and a dinner would take place on the second day.

Dr Forde then gave details of the 2022 Poster Competition, the third and following on from two very successful events. The format would be similar to 2021 and all ECCs were

	<p>encouraged to participate. There would be generous prizes available. He added that these events were useful for networking and sharing information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28–29 September 2022 • Virtual poster event • Prizes • Secretariat to provide additional information • Members asked to promote it through networks
7.	<p>DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR COMMONWEALTH CHEMISTRY</p> <p>Dr Aurora Walshe introduced herself to members explaining that she had recently joined the Secretariat in place of Mrs Rachel Thompson who was on maternity leave. She added that it was a very exciting time to join and that she was looking forward to working on the Congress and the activities around the ECC Report.</p> <p>She explained that a new project in hand was the implementation of social media for Commonwealth Chemistry with a view to expanding the number of countries involved, to engage with career audiences, to raise the profile of chemists within the Commonwealth and to share the breadth and impact of their research.</p> <p>Social Media would greatly aid this, and a strategy was being formed with the aim of educating, informing and inspiring ECCs and would launch with the Elements Video Campaign. As part of this campaign, each month a Commonwealth chemist would be interviewed and from there a suite of promotional messages formed and uploaded to platforms, with Facebook being the most widely used.</p> <p>Seven chemists would take part, across 5 continents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Michael Forde (Trinidad & Tobago) • Professor Thimmaiah Govindaraju (India) • Dr Cynthia Ibeto (Nigeria) • Dr Sangata Kaufononga (New Zealand) • Dr MD. Iqbal Rouf Mamun (Bangladesh) • Victoria Porley (UK) • Dr Thishana Singh (South Africa) <p>All seven members were involved with work around the SDGs through education or research. Four chemists had already been filmed and their content would be edited shortly.</p> <p>When the campaign is live members would be asked to respond by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following Commonwealth Chemistry social media • Engaging with Elements campaign • Sharing content <p>Dr Walshe gave an update on how to share information via the Commonwealth Chemistry website and encouraged members get involved.</p>



**Commonwealth
Chemistry**
Federation of Chemical Sciences Societies

Have a question for us or want to provide some feedback, contact the Commonwealth Chemistry Secretariat.

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Registration

If you want to:

- receive the Commonwealth Chemistry newsletter
- submit content
- and feedback on existing content

[Register Now](#)

Submit your content

Do you have any content that you wish to be included on this website?

Registered users can submit events, news and resources to expand their audience and help the community grow.

Submit an upcoming event, a resource or some news of interest to the Commonwealth Chemistry audience [here](#).*

*Commonwealth Chemistry reserve the right to not publish content that is deemed not relevant to the audience.

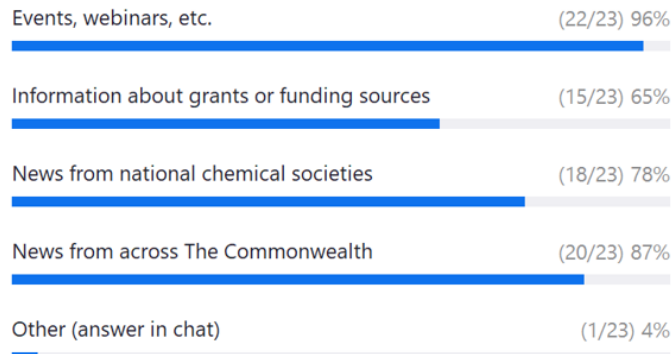
She added that a Commonwealth Chemistry Newsletter was being progressed and asked for feedback on what should be included and asked members to vote via a poll the results of which were:

Newsletter input

Poll ended | 1 question | 23 of 41 (56%) participated

1. What type of content would you like to receive in a Newsletter?
(Multiple Choice) *

23/23 (100%) answered



She closed the item by saying that the Secretariat would be in touch with further information about Commonwealth Chemistry social media plans.

8. OPEN DISCUSSION

Professor Paranagama Chaired the open discussion. Several questions had been received in advance of the meeting which would be addressed and members were encouraged to submit further questions via the chat function.

There were also items to cover from the previous AGM and SGM discussions:

- EDI forum - which would be discussed by Dr Nicoll-Griffith
- Sharing success stories which would be raised by Professor Masters

Dr Nicoll-Griffith introduced herself to members and addressed the question from the SGM in November 2021:

- **What will the Executive Board to ensure inclusion and diversity within Commonwealth and would there be an event supporting EDI in the Commonwealth?**

Dr Nicoll-Griffith reminded everyone that inclusion was at the heart of Commonwealth Chemistry and was embedded into the strategy and throughout the Congress 2023 through the SDGs. She explained further that a EDI Forum had been proposed and ideas were being worked through. It could include a Task Group and Sub Committee with Executive Board members and others, and specific events during the Congress to include regional events and keynote speakers. She asked attendees to share their comments via the chat or directly with the Secretariat after the meeting. She added that the Executive Board wanted the initiative to be member led and idea put forward would be shared with the Scientific Organising Committee.

Professor Gachanja asked if equality included the access to facilities and if it so then a survey to show where this was most needed would be critical to progress? Dr Forde confirmed that specifically in relation to the Congress, the format ensured that large countries and small countries would have equal representation and funding was also available to aid attendance. Additionally everyone would be housed at the same accommodation.

Datuk Dr Kueh said that he strongly supported the EDI Forum and that a focus on countries with fewer resources would be key.

- Professor Masters shared a success story: a student who had attended the first poster competition had made contact was now working with Professor Masters and her group. It was hoped that with the opening of borders, the student would be able to visit in person. She also cited examples from Canada and two ECCs who had attended the first Congress. Juliana Vidal who worked at Memorial University had met researcher Sam Perry who had involved Juliana in a project. Juliana had also appreciated gaining access to networks. A second success story from Amanda Bongers, an ECC from Canada, who had also found the networks and access to other chemists valuable and had made contact with Profess Singh-Wilmot, whom she had invited to give a departmental seminar. She was also able to help a fellow chemist with a move to Ontario. Professor Masters asked members to feedback success stories for uploading to the website.
- **What are the main priorities for the Executive Board over the coming year?**
Dr Gardiner confirmed that the focus would be on the strategic direction of the Federation and monitoring performance against directives. The main priorities for 2022:
 - To raise the profile of Commonwealth Chemistry through social media.
 - To engage with countries without a national chemical society and encourage Associate Membership.
 - To implement the recommendations from the Sustainable Workforce Report to create an ECC network.
 - To plan to host the Congress 2023 and with a sustainable programme.
 - To design guidelines for financial stability for future events.
- **When will the list of speakers for the Congress be shared?**
Dr Forde confirmed that Members would be asked for their ideas following the AGM. August 2022 was likely to be the time of the announcements of the list.

- **After holding the first elections for Commonwealth Chemistry will any changes be made to future elections?**

Dr Parker confirmed that the wording 'clear winner' had not been completely transparent and that the process would be changed so that a threshold of 50% or more of possible votes was met. For clarity, this would mean that all members would need to cast a vote, in order that the result be valid.

- **How can Commonwealth Chemistry increase social media visibility for individual societies?**

Dr Forde said he hoped the Elements campaign discussed earlier would be a good start - showcasing chemists from different backgrounds and journeys. Establishing, developing and promoting the online profile was underway and the Secretariat would ask members for their input.

- **How can chemical societies or individuals contribute to Commonwealth Chemistry?**

Professor Darkwa said that societies can participate and were encouraged come up with ideas and also to relay information to their own membership about Commonwealth Chemistry. Associate membership was also encouraged. The website would also be an important tool and sharing ideas and inputting would be key. He said he was encouraged by the candidates that put themselves forward for the positions on the Executive Board – a widespread range and which showed good participation across the Commonwealth.

- **How do we make sure we are capturing and engaging with all Commonwealth Chemists?**

Dr Gardiner said engaging with countries without a chemical society could be challenging but that she hoped the social media campaign would help to encourage involvement. She added that Commonwealth Chemistry was a young federation and required the support of all its members. She added that a survey would be shared with members to ask how they want to receive and share information. Members would also be asked to contribute to the newsletter.

- **What sort of content would be required for the Newsletter?**

Dr Nicoll-Griffith said that the results of the poll taken earlier in the meeting would be used as a guide. Local stories were also important – regional events, celebrations, achievements and opportunities for funding.

- **The Royal Society of Chemistry had provided funding for the first 5 years of Commonwealth Chemistry, what will happen thereafter?**

Dr Parker explained that the Finance Committee was tasked with finding sustainable financial policies for the Federation with one aspect, the Congress, and its financial model which would form a core component of guidelines for future Congresses. Many events were held online which kept costs lower and this model would continue to be used. He asked members for their input on funding and to send ideas to the Secretariat.

- **How will Commonwealth Chemistry be different in its approach and agenda compared to other federations/organisations?**

Professor Pal said that Commonwealth Chemistry was unique in terms of geographical spread and diversity. All 25 society members had input to the strategy and its activities and at the core was a belief in equality and inclusivity.

	Commonwealth Chemistry could make a great difference in terms of the SDGs as most of the challenges related to chemistry.
9.	CLOSE Dr Vicki Gardiner closed the AGM and thanked everyone for their input. She also thanked Executive Board members for their contribution and for sharing the agenda items. She added that all of the feedback would be noted and the minutes would be uploaded onto the website and reminded members to make contact with the Secretariat with ideas and content. She welcomed again new members and thanked outgoing Executive Board members and said closed by saying she looked forward to working with everyone over the coming year.

Dr Ale Palermo
Secretary