

Message of the President

This is my last message: as of January 1, 2010, Erwin Flückiger, our former director, has taken up the presidency of the foundation. For those who were not at our Board Meeting last October I would like to repeat here some of the statements I made then. The changes in the leadership of the foundation at this time were both logical and timely and took into account that, thanks to the University of Bern formally joining the Foundation, its mid-term future could be secured with respect to necessary administrative positions. More specifically: the University and the Physikalisches Institut agreed to continue supporting a part-time director together with several further important contributions in-kind. Fortunately, Prof. Markus Leuenberger agreed to take up this directorship, and Erwin Flückiger was available to follow me as president. For the Foundation it is crucial that Erwin, with his vast experience at Jungfrauoch and Gornergrat, remains in leadership and can advise the new director when it comes to the daily activities of the stations. At the same time it gave me the opportunity to step down at a time when the mid-term future of the Foundation looks safe and bright, and this is a very satisfactory feeling.

For a review of the activities in 2009 I refer to the detailed report of the director. It was certainly a good year, which ran very smoothly thanks to the responsible staff. The Board meeting at Hotel Victoria-Jungfrau in Interlaken was held in a good spirit and was followed by the traditional excursion to Jungfrauoch.

One issue that I mentioned in my last report has unfortunately not made the progress I had hoped for. The future of the astronomical activity at the Gornergrat south tower is still not clear. Clear is only that our long-time “customers” from the University of Köln will move out of the south tower and ship their telescope to China. This move is being prepared as I write this message. We still hope to establish a new observatory that serves the public and the guests at Gornergrat as well as the astronomers, professionals and amateurs. Erwin Flückiger has asked me to follow up on this matter, and I am confident that a project can be established that takes advantage of this excellent high altitude site for scientifically worthwhile astronomy and that serves at the same time for a broader understanding of astrophysics for interested lay persons.

It remains for me to step down. Looking back at my presidency I have very good memories, and I am actually grateful for having served a very good foundation with an excellent purpose. The collaboration with the staff was always in a good spirit and constructive, and I thank all the collaborators, especially Louise Wilson, Erwin Flückiger and Rolf Bütikofer for their friendship. Furthermore I gratefully acknowledge in particular the hard work of our custodians at Jungfrauoch.

Wishing the researchers, staff and all affiliated institutions a bright future, I remain yours sincerely



Bern, May 21, 2010

Hans Balsiger

