

WORKING GROUP FOR THE WORLDWIDE DEVELOPMENT OF ASTRONOMY

*(GROUPE DE TRAVAIL POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT MONDIAL DE
L'ASTRONOMIE)*

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The Working Group often overlaps in responsibilities with other Commissions, particularly with Commission 46. Some projects (e.g. TAD) may begin on the initiative of our Group but are maintained by Commission 46. TAD programmes are now running in Viet Nam and Central America and one will begin soon in Morocco. Preliminary inquiries have been received from other countries.

In June 1997, A.H. Batten and J. Fierro attended the VII UN/ESA Workshop on Basic Space Science for Developing Countries. During that meeting, the new Central American Observatory, with its 42-cm telescope was officially dedicated on the campus of the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Honduras, in Tegucigalpa. The Observatory became an important focus for the TAD programme, introduced at about the same time, and it was with considerable dismay that we learned that the building was severely damaged, just over a year later, by Hurricane Mitch. That natural disaster, affecting as it did the economies of several Central American nations, has been a real setback to the hopes of our colleagues there.

During JD 20 in Kyoto in 1997, J.V. Narlikar presented his plan for a Third-World Astronomy Network (TWAN). He later elaborated this and submitted a proposal to the IAU Executive for further consideration. There is much interest in the plan but, so far, no obvious source of funds.

After the Kyoto General Assembly, A.H. Batten attended a mini-workshop in Bisei at the public observatory there. Public observatories are a feature of the Japanese scene and provide excellent opportunities both for teaching the public about astronomy and for enabling amateur astronomers to undertake useful research.

In the spring of 1998, a first Middle-Eastern regional meeting was held in Jordan. J. Fierro represented the Group at this meeting. A year later, a UN/ESA Workshop was also held in Jordan. Several members of the IAU, including the General Secretary, were present. Wider collaboration around the Mediterranean littoral is being organized by F. Ferrini of Pisa, Italy. Another area in which regional cooperation is increasing is the continent of Africa, where the UN-sponsored Working Group on Space Sciences in Africa is creating a community of interest, especially through its publication "African Skies". Mention should also be made of the UN Centres for Space Science which are now being set up, especially in India, although these are not an IAU initiative. D.G. Wentzel organized a Special Educational Workshop at the UNISPACE III conference, held in Vienna in July, 1999. J. Fierro and D. McNally also took part in this Workshop. J. B. Hearnshaw visited Venezuela early in 1999.

A.H. Batten continues to maintain contacts with colleagues in several countries, especially Viet Nam, The Philippines, Morocco and Zambia. An account of the Joint Discussion held in Kyoto in 1997, organized by the Group in collaboration with Commissions 38, 41 and 46, has now appeared in "Highlights of Astronomy", Volume 11B, p. 883. The Group

is currently actively involved, in conjunction with Commissions 5, 38 and 46, in arranging a special session (approved by the IAU Executive) for the forthcoming General Assembly in Manchester, devoted to "Astronomy for Developing Countries".

A.H. Batten
President of the Commission