ISSCT Executive Committee
Chairman's Report

2001–2005

Introduction

The inter-Congress period 2001–2005 was a special one for ISSCT in its quest for improvement and progress. This period saw the consolidation of the various strategic initiatives taken at the XXII\textsuperscript{nd} Congress in Colombia, with the setting up of a Permanent Secretariat and reinforced with others at subsequent congresses. Furthermore, those initiatives started to bear tangible fruits. The same period was also a special one for the sugar industry worldwide, as with globalization of world trade, competitiveness became the order of the day.

The industry is being transformed from a mostly single commodity industry into a renewable biomass one. In some countries, energy through electricity cogeneration and ethanol production are becoming as important as sugar production itself.

Competitiveness also meant cost reduction processes and, paradoxically, research and development took the brunt in major countries, although it was more appropriate to invest more in these activities to achieve progress through increased productivity and diversification within and outside sugar.

Reduction in R&D had an unfortunate impact on sugar cane research centres, which by tradition support ISSCT in various ways, especially through providing precious resources in terms of time and facilities to the office bearers. Some of them have been made redundant, while others have retired, some prematurely. I will comment on the consequences of these changes later in this report.

Initiatives were taken during the period under review to broaden the scope and activities of ISSCT through the creation of a new section, the enhancement of communication through collaboration with established sugar journals, and the rendering of Congress more attractive via interaction of delegates, with the aim of increasing satisfaction from membership.

Executive Committee

I had the privilege and honour to be elected Chairman of the Executive Committee at the end of the XXIV\textsuperscript{th} Congress in Brisbane, while Dr Vic Mason was elected Vice Chairman and was \textit{de facto} Chairman of the Technical Program Committee, formerly Technical Co-ordination Committee. Dr Peter Rein became immediate past Chairman as per statute. The other members of the Executive were, as newly elected, Alvaro Amaya, Mario Melgar, Tim Murray, and Paulo Nogueira. They joined Altaf Saleem, H. Sjamsir, and Claude Ricaud, the latter being an \textit{ex officio} member as Permanent Secretary.

The members of the Executive Committee gave me full support during my tenure as Chairman and I would like to put on record my appreciation and to express to them, especially Vic Mason, Claude Ricaud, and Peter Rein, my sincere gratitude.

As per statute, there will be five vacancies on the Executive Committee at the end of the period under review. Furthermore, a decision must be taken concerning members who are elected for one single term of three years and who may have to go through two further elections to serve for the four terms, should they wish to do so.

Mid term and other meetings

As per the Constitution, the Mid Term Meeting (MTM) was held in Guatemala from 9 to 13 February 2003, and was attended by all members of the Executive, except H. Sjamsir, who had asked to be excused. The meeting was hosted by the Congress Organising Committee (COC) which went out of its way to cater for all our needs and requests and extended to us all facilities required.

The meeting was a pleasant and successful one and members of COC deserve our heartfelt congratulations and thanks not only because they were excellent hosts but also for their positive
attitude to all requests, queries and suggestions from the Executive Committee. During the MTM, it became evident that the preparations for the Congress were so well under way that it could even take place earlier if there was a need.

Another meeting was held from 11 to 15 May 2004 with COC when Vic Mason, Peter Rein, Claude Ricaud and I travelled to Guatemala to finalise various matters related to Congress. Opportunity was taken to discuss ISSCT matters. Other members of the Executive were invited to the meeting but no one could make it.

Advantage was taken of other meetings to advance ISSCT matters when Peter Rein and Vic Mason travelled to Mauritius in October 2003 and November 2004, respectively. Regular contact was kept with all members of the Executive through e-mails to keep them fully informed of evolution of matters and of new events as and when they occurred.

At the MTM and at the subsequent meeting in Guatemala, all matters related to Congress were discussed and finalised including pre- and post-Congress tours, venues, accommodation, security, and costs. Special attention was given to the latter to enable the largest number of delegates to attend. COC made proposals along that line with varying rates to encourage early registration, while providing for a range of hotels from luxury to budget ones.

Other related aspects such as simultaneous translation, trade exhibition, accompanying persons program and social events were covered. COC innovated with an accompanying persons program even during the pre-Congress tour, which is to its credit and of which members will certainly be appreciative.

Interaction with COC

As one of the strategic options of ISSCT is to have greater control of Congress so as to ensure better quality and value for money for delegates, thereby allowing a larger number to attend, interactions between Executive Committee and COC were of a new and particular nature for the XXVth Congress.

I would like to put on record how COC co-operated fully with the Executive Committee, since the very beginning at the session which followed the presentation in Brisbane and throughout the inter-Congress period. The COC has shown an openness of mind and was particularly attentive to matters raised by the Executive Committee.

For the first time ever at ISSCT, the budget of the Congress was communicated by COC in full transparency, and it should be congratulated and commended for its performance and its motivation to make the XXVth Congress a resounding success and also the cheapest one for delegates for years. The recommendations of ISSCT to have a professional conference management agency was implemented and made COC’s task much easier. Details of technical matters concerning the Congress are given in the TPC Chairman’s report.

Strategic initiatives

To keep up with changing times and to stay a dynamic organisation, ISSCT Executive has, since the XXIInd Congress, taken various strategic initiatives of which the most important ones will be commented upon.

Permanent Secretariat

The Permanent Secretariat, which became functional in 1996, is now fully operational and plays a pivotal role in ISSCT to the point that it could not function without it. The Secretariat has assumed an indispensable role as a focal point for the organisation, thanks to the commitment of Claude Ricaud and his staff, and the MSIRI, which as host has continued to provide its support in financial and other terms.

The Secretariat is assured of the continued support from the MSIRI in the years to come. This is important for its stability and continuity. Thanks are due to the MSIRI Board for its generosity at a time when the industry is facing prospects of price reduction. It is felt that the Secretariat should be strengthened to enable ISSCT to meet its future objectives.
Management of Congress/Appointment of Permanent Editor/Proceedings

While, in the past, management of Congress was entirely left to COC, ISSCT Executive Committee and TPC have assumed gradually greater prominence and control over congresses, especially at the XXIVth Congress with appropriate changes in the Constitution. In the light of the experience dealing with papers and posters at that Congress, it was felt appropriate to ensure better standard and quality, that a Permanent Editor be appointed. The post was advertised with a job description on the web site soon after the Congress and a committee consisting of Vic Mason, Claude Ricaud, Peter Rein and me selected Mac Hogarth, one of the two candidates for the post. The appointment was ratified at the MTM, which the Permanent Editor attended. I am pleased to put on record that Mac Hogarth has played his role to the fullest and has rendered the task, especially of TPC, much easier and it has been relieved of many practical time-consuming technicalities. Furthermore, it has allowed uniformity and quality control of the papers and posters. With the assistance of Peter Knight, Production Editor, and Jorge Sanchez, the latter delegated by COC as local editor, proceedings have been printed on time and delivered to delegates at Congress. It can be safely stated that the whole process of editing has much improved over 2001. However, various shortcomings have been identified and are mentioned in the report of the TPC Chairman.

It had been decided in Brisbane to have proceedings in the form of CD ROM with a volume containing only abstracts in English, French and Spanish. It has not been possible to achieve this as explained in the report of the TPC Chairman. However, the matter should be pursued.

Communication: web site and role of Councillors

With members of 57 countries scattered all over the world, communication is not an easy matter. While full advantage is being taken of progress in technology, especially of electronic services, the Executive Committee has endeavoured, through the Permanent Secretariat and also, but to a lesser extent, through COC, to communicate with members world wide. To that end, the web site has been constantly improved and updated with prompts to members every time new items of significance were posted, such as Workshop organisation details and reports, and information on Congress. As far as possible, all items were translated into French and Spanish, to make them more convenient to members more conversant in these languages. Innovations such as drop-down menus were used to make contents more appealing. Furthermore, the domain names ISSCT.com and ISSCT.net were regained after appropriate payment and retained for five years until June 2009. In future, privileged access through passwords will be implemented. The web site will in future assume greater importance, and will provide vital communication, at ISSCT level and also for communication with other technologists’ associations.

The web site, which is hosted free of charge by the Mauritius Telecom, should become independent in order to enable access on an online basis for registration, etc. As it develops further, the security aspects will have to be looked into and reinforced. In addition to the web site, circulars were sent to all members who were registered in 2001 and also to new ones by the Permanent Secretary and me on seven occasions to keep them fully informed of all matters pertaining to ISSCT, especially the Congress and the strategic initiatives.

It was considered that the role of Councillors needed to be enhanced so as to make them more committed to advance the objectives of ISSCT. To that end, affiliated members were encouraged to designate their respective councillors six months ahead of Congress and to keep them for two terms, i.e. two congresses, to ensure continuity and also to encourage proper handing over between successive councillors. While regular contact was kept with elected/designated councillors, it is regretted that seven affiliated members have not designated their new councillors by November 2004.

The designated councillors were asked to publicise ISSCT matters at local congresses, gatherings and other activities. This was successful to a certain extent, especially when councillors availed themselves of ISSCT workshops when delegates from various countries spread across several geographic zones were present.
To enhance the prestige of councillors and to make them more productive it was initially decided to publish a special manual detailing their role and duties. However, after careful consideration, a document entitled Guidelines for Councillors was produced and circulated to all concerned. In the light of the expected feedback, changes will be made as necessary. It is hoped that, with these guidelines, councillors will be in a better position to fulfil their role in ISSCT.

**ISSCT Journal**

It was felt desirable at the level of the Executive Committee that ISSCT should have its own journal in line with the strategic initiative of improving communication with its members, to provide them with a vehicle for the publication of their research, and to reinforce the prestige of our organisation, as is the case with other professional associations.

As it became evident that ISSCT did not have the resources to run a journal, discussions were held with three specialised sugar journals, namely International Sugar Journal, Sugar Cane International, and Zuckerindustrie, who had raised valid points on this initiative. It is now proposed to allow these three journals, on an equal footing basis, to publish all matters contained on the web site, especially those related to the XXVth Congress and the abstracts of papers/posters.

Furthermore, publication of the full text of papers/posters will be finalised together with other matters, with the editors of the three journals at Congress in Guatemala.

**Members’ expectations**

To achieve more consistency between ISSCT activities and members’ expectations, a comprehensive survey was carried out during the 1999-2001 inter-Congress period and results analysed by a professional firm, thanks to the courtesy of past Executive Committee Chairman, Dhruv Sawhney.

At the end of the XXIVth Congress, through a questionnaire, the exercise was pursued. Members, while generally giving good comments on the Congress, were of the opinion that the quality of papers had to be improved, the pre-Congress visits had to be more transparent and open, the web site had to be enhanced for better communication, and had to incorporate more data on the sugar industry to keep members informed as well as to encourage them to visit the site, which in turn would ensure better communication. Also, members should be prompted to visit the web site as new information becomes available.

Many of the requests have been entertained during the inter-Congress period. With systematic refereeing by panels of experts, the quality of papers is expected to have improved, so is expected communication with efforts made at the level of the Permanent Secretariat for the web site.

Another exercise will be carried out in Guatemala to gauge whether matters have improved or not and to take relevant actions.

**Commissions**

The activities of the various Commissions are detailed in the report of the Chairman of TPC and will not be dealt with. However, mention must be made that in the 2001-2005 inter-Congress period, nine workshops were held in all the sections of ISSCT and were attended by 402 members from all over the world. This is indeed very encouraging, especially for the Co-products Commission, which was given new impetus under the chairmanship of Regis Lima Verde Leal from Brazil. This commission had not held a workshop since the XXIIth Congress.

Members are appreciative of workshops, some even value them more than congresses, a matter of concern. While workshops are convivial, are ideal fora for sharing of information, and keep members informed of the most recent developments allowing them to update their knowledge and work together to solve common problems and discuss matters of mutual interest, congresses are vital for the development of ISSCT. As far as possible, members should endeavour to attend both.

**Initiatives at XXVth Congress**

To render Congress more enjoyable and attendance more meaningful, various initiatives have been taken of which three will be mentioned.
Managers’ Forum

After considering various options, including user group approach and networking, Executive Committee decided to set up a Managers’ Forum to cater for this specific category of members of ISSCT attending congresses, who are interested in not only scientific and technical matters but also those of management which are vital to their enterprises. To that end, a forum will be held at Congress with six presentations dealing with industry viability.

It is hoped that this initiative will meet with success and will pave the way for the setting up of a new section which will encompass management and managerial matters for the benefit of ISSCT members.

Cross disciplinary session

At the XXIVth Congress, two workshops were held in Molecular Biology and Processing. However, in the light of the results of this initiative and feedback from members, Executive Committee decided to discontinue with this approach and to keep workshops separate from Congress for many valid reasons too complex to elaborate upon. In lieu, it was proposed to have multidisciplinary sessions to encourage interaction among delegates and to cater for the fact that more and more matters to be addressed in the sugar cane industry pertain to several disciplines. To that end, a Cross Disciplinary Session containing 14 papers on six topics relating to the sustainability of the cane sugar industry has been organised. The future of such a session will be decided upon depending on the interest that it generates among members at Congress.

Awards

To encourage the presentation of high quality papers at Congress and, as a recognition of the sense of innovation showed by the authors, Executive Committee has decided, following a suggestion from COC and on a trial basis, to give awards to each Commission, named after prestigious scientists/technologists who have served ISSCT objectives. The awards have been named after Albert John Mangelsdorf (Biology), Lokkie Du Toit (Agriculture), Emile Hugot (Factory) and Maurice Paturau (Co-products). A committee consisting of the Chairman of the Executive Committee, the Chairman of the TPC and Chairman of the COC will decide on the awards, which will be handed over at the final session of the Congress in the form of a certificate. In the light of this first experience, appropriate decisions on the future of these awards, including new names to honour a larger number of prestigious scientists/technologists, will be taken.

Commemorative plaque

As the XXVth Congress is a landmark in the evolution of ISSCT, Executive Committee, in agreement with COC, has decided to have a commemorative plaque to mark this Silver Jubilee event. To that end, a bronze plaque will be unveiled at the end of the Opening Ceremony of the Congress by H.E. Oscar Berger, President of the Republic of Guatemala. The plaque will be subsequently placed at CENICAGA.

Post-Congress

The long established tradition of holding post-Congress tours was pursued thanks to the collaboration of the American Society of Sugar Cane Technologists (ASSCT) who have made arrangements for two groups of technologists interested in field and factory matters to have an overview of the industry in Florida, in spite of the fact that it has suffered a major setback in 2004 with the passage of severe hurricanes. The sustained collaboration of ASSCT, in particular of Dr James Shine, is acknowledged. In November 2004, further impetus was given to increase participation with appropriate publicity especially on the ISSCT web site and through a circular to all registered ISSCT members. As for Congress, and in the same spirit, costs have been kept minimal to the advantage of delegates.

Continuity at ISSCT

If an organisation is to stand the test of time, it must not only be able to adapt itself to an ever changing world but it needs to mobilise proper human resources capable of innovation and above all
willing to give their time to ensure that objectives are met and progress is constantly achieved. As stated earlier, many institutions, organisations and other bodies of the sugar industry world wide, especially research entities, have undergone major reviews with substantial cuts in human resources and facilities, while others will undergo this so-called process of rightsizing in the near future. These organisations have been the main supporters of ISSCT over the years, so the changes that they are undergoing or will undergo will inevitably impact on our organisation. As additional responsibilities are entrusted to remaining senior researchers who are also the main office bearers of ISSCT, their availability in future is cause for concern. Furthermore, with retirement, quite a number of positions, especially at TPC level will become vacant at the XXVth Congress. The task of finding replacements will be difficult as members willing and eager to undertake these potentially challenging roles will become evidently smaller. An approach to the problem is to ask members who have recently retired to take senior positions in ISSCT provided they either have the facilities to meet the exigencies of these posts, or research organisations undertake to provide them with such facilities. In the absence of these two elements, ISSCT should take responsibility but this has financial implications that have to be evaluated first. A major consideration is that these officers have to travel to MTM and to attend congresses if they are to fulfil their roles.

In addition, the position of Chairman of TPC has become so demanding in terms of time, energy and resources, that it is thought that it could be entrusted to a respected recently retired technologist willing to devote his time but who has to be provided with appropriate means to fulfil his responsibilities. This approach of course can be considered only if professionally active members are not available. Steps have also to be taken for the involvement of young members to give new blood to ISSCT if it is to survive.

**Constitution**

The Constitution was amended to cater for all changes made in Brisbane and at the MTM for formal approval by Council in Guatemala. Following a suggestion by a member of the Executive Committee, the draft document has been vetted by a respected Mauritian legal adviser at no cost to ISSCT and it has been found to be coherent and legally correct, with no amendment necessary. Given the changes at international level, further advice is being sought from an international legal adviser with the collaboration of the British Society of Sugar Cane Technologists.

**Manual for office bearers**

To allow office bearers to become knowledgeable and conversant of ISSCT and its procedures and to be more efficient in their actions and enterprises, steps have been initiated to produce a comprehensive manual, which will not only contain the updated Constitution, the Operations Manual of TPC, the Guidelines for Councillors, but also relevant information on the office bearers themselves and the Secretariat, to enhance communication. The Manual will be completed soon after the XXVth Congress for immediate use by newly elected, as well as seasoned office bearers.

**Bids for XXVIth Congress**

In September 2001, the Pakistan Society of Sugar Technologists had written to the then Chairman of ISSCT Executive Council indicating its interest in hosting the XXVIth Congress. At late October 2004, a formal bid for the XXVIth Congress had been received from SASTA for holding the Congress in August 2007 and from the Société de Technologie Agricole et Sucrière de Maurice in collaboration with MSIRI, for the post-Congress tour in Mauritius. It is of note that these venues were the same in 1974 for the XV Congress. The pre-Congress tour will take place in South Africa.

Executive Committee has decided at MTM to include in the application form relevant information on cost of Congress to delegates so as to ensure that they are within a certain threshold. Security will also have to be elaborated upon in the light of recent events across the world.

**Finances**

A Finance Committee was set up at the MTM consisting of Tim Murray as Chairman, with Paulo Nogueira, Claude Ricaud and me, with the main objective of ensuring maximum returns from
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Finances

A Finance Committee was set up at the MTM consisting of Tim Murray as Chairman, with Paulo Nogueira, Claude Ricaud and me, with the main objective of ensuring maximum returns from
ISSCT funds so as to keep our organisation viable. Given the uncertainty of financial markets and in order not to take unnecessary risks that could jeopardise ISSCT, it was decided to keep the funds in USD and to change into Mauritian Rupees whatever amount was needed to run the Secretariat and to pay for expenses until the XXV th Congress. It is anticipated that afterwards a portfolio of low risk investments will be created to increase revenues.

The audited accounts at 31 October 2004 show that the financial situation has improved over 2001. This will be commented upon by the Permanent Secretary. There is, however, a need to raise additional funds to allow the Secretariat to further play its role towards communication with members, especially if it is contemplated to make the website the reference site for sugar cane world-wide.

Funds have been judiciously used and, although all nine workshops were successfully held, only US$43 558 of the US$60 000 provided for, were used. The unused funds served partly to pay for the air tickets of three senior office bearers who had retired from the sugar industry to enable them to attend Congress, while COC took care of their local expenses. This co-operative effort from COC is appreciated and could serve as a model for future congresses and MTM.

Obituaries

Two prominent members of ISSCT passed away during the inter-Congress period, namely Dr James Irvine in May 2004, and Dr Colin Ryan in December 2002. Dr Irvine, one of the most knowledgeable scientists on sugar cane, has served ISSCT for several years in the Physiology Section and was instrumental in the creation of a Molecular Biology Section as well as for the International Consortium for Sugar Cane Biotechnology (ICSB) to which major ISSCT affiliated members belong. He has served as consultant to major industries around the world both for expertise and reviews. He was an authority who was well appreciated. He was involved in sugar cane molecular biology until his death as he intended to attend the ICSB annual meeting held in April 2004 but being seriously ill he could not make it. He passed away soon after but had the time to receive a tribute from the ICSB which pledged a sum of US$10 000 to perpetuate his memory.

Dr Colin Ryan, another famous scientist, passed away in December 2002. He had retired as CEO of the Bureau of Sugar Experiment Stations in late 2000 and was a member of the ISSCT Executive Council until the XXIV th Congress in Brisbane. He was a pathologist by training and has a large number of publications in this area. He had served ISSCT in various capacities and was involved in a few of the strategic actions taken at the XXIII th Congress, to which he contributed significantly. He was a forceful character who promoted sugar cane research not only in Australia but well beyond its frontiers.

Official tributes were paid to Drs Irvine and Ryan in the media including specialised sugar journals. Letters of condolences were sent to the bereaved families by the Chairman of the Executive Committee on behalf of ISSCT.

Acknowledgements

The various initiatives and actions taken since my election as Chairman of the Executive Committee would not have borne any fruit without the motivation of my immediate colleagues of the Executive Committee, the Chairman and members of COC, the Permanent Secretary and the Permanent Editor, as well as the Commissioners, Section Chairmen and members.

I would like first and foremost to express my sincere appreciation and thanks to Dr Vic Mason, the TPC Chairman, for his unfailing support, and who, in spite of limited resources available to him, has done a remarkable job. It is his assiduity at work and perseverance that have enabled the implementation of the Executive Council’s decisions concerning the Managers’ Forum and the Cross Disciplinary Session to be held at Congress. Thanks are also due to all the other members of the Executive Committee, particularly to Dr Claude Ricaud and Dr Peter Rein. My proximity with Claude Ricaud, owing to the Secretariat being located in Mauritius, has enabled efficient and fruitful partnership, while Peter Rein was also readily available for consultation and advice. The contribution of Mr Tim Murray was also appreciated for his sense of innovation, as well as the promptness of reply from Dr Alvaro Amaya and Dr Paulo Nogueira.
The experience acquired by Dr Mac Hogarth in the editing of the Australian Society of Sugar Cane Technologists proceedings and those of the ISSCT XXIVth Congress made him the ideal man for the first holder of the post of Permanent Editor. He and his colleagues, Peter Knight and Jorge Sanchez, also deserve our warmest thanks.

Dr Mario Melgar, as member of the Executive Committee, served as a link with COC and attended promptly and efficiently to all matters directed to COC for which he should be commended.

The XXVth Congress could not have been so well prepared and undertaken without the entire commitment of the COC. To all its members and in particular to Messrs Fraterno Vila, Chairman, Eugene Gonzalez, Vice Chairman, Mauricio Cabarrus, Secretary-Treasurer, Luis Rodriguez, ISSCT Councilor, Gustavo Sagastume, Chairman ATAGUA, Miguel Recinos, Congress General Manager, and Ms Ana Isabel Lopez Samayoa, Consultant, we would like to express our congratulations and sincere gratitude for their sustained support since 2001. I hope that the satisfaction that they will derive from the Congress will match the efforts that they have put in during the past three years.

As Chairman of the Executive Committee, I have attended to ISSCT matters nearly every day since September 2001 and this would not have been possible without the dedication of my secretary, Miss Evelyne Cox, to whom I am grateful. Finally, to my wife, Floryse, and my family, I would like to say a simple thank you for their support.

Conclusion

With all the changes that have taken place and are anticipated in the immediate future in the sugar cane world, as well as in science and technology, it is evident that ISSCT is at the crossroads as some of these will impact upon it. During the past three years, in line with previous actions, various initiatives have been taken to modernise ISSCT, to make it stronger, leaner and fitter to face the changing times. It is felt that a second round of strategic initiatives is now due. This is the challenge that the new Executive Committee, Council and TPC will have to conceive and implement soon after the XXVth Congress. The ISSCT is a unique organisation. No other crop worldwide has such an organisation and ISSCT is the apex one for sugar cane. It has the duty not only to consolidate its foundations but to cross new frontiers so as to make its membership attractive and meaningful and also to be a source of inspiration for other organisations. There is a promising future for sugar cane as high quality cane, energy cane, and fuel cane become available through innovation and, with biomass valorisation, sugar will become a co-product among many others. In addition, through bio-refining and genetic engineering, the range of products to be harvested or made out of this environmentally friendly plant and its co-products is only limited by our imagination.

Jean Claude Autrey
Chairman
ISSCT Executive Committee