



International Mineralogical Association

www.ima-mineralogy.org

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Ekkehart Tillmanns

At IMA's business meeting during the 20th General Assembly in Budapest, August 21 to 27, 2010, a new Council was elected:

PRESIDENT	Ekkehart Tillmanns, Austria
PAST-PRESIDENT	Takamitsu Yamanaka, Japan
1 ST VICE-PRESIDENT	Walter V. Maresch, Germany
2 ND VICE-PRESIDENT	Sabine Verryyn, South Africa
SECRETARY	Richard Goed, Austria
TREASURER	Robert T. Downs, USA
COMM. OFFICER	Frances Wall, UK
COUNCILLORS	Patrick Cordier (France) Joel Grice (Canada), Sergey Krivovichev (Russia), Anhuai Lu (China), C. Srikantappa (India)

Past-President Ian Parsons (UK) and Secretary Maryse Ohnenstetter (France) ended their terms on Council after 12 years of service. Councillors Nicolai P. Yushkin (Russia) Marcello Mellini (Italy) and Kari Kojonen (Finland) ended eight-year terms. IMA's thanks and great respect for their service was expressed by the General Assembly at the business meeting in Budapest. I want to emphasise that the great majority of the nearly 1700 participants from 77 countries enjoyed a very successful conference, which, in addition to its scientific value, incorporated a number of very useful organisational ideas, worthy of consideration by organisers of future conferences. Another point to be mentioned is the relatively low conference fee, which nevertheless allowed us to give nearly 200 grants to students and to young and retired scientists.

Directly involved in the organisation of IMA2010 were the national societies of seven European countries, which in alphabetical order were Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia; societies from Bulgaria, Serbia and Slovenia were associate members of the organising consortium. Even though the participating societies met in Budapest several times each year during the four years of preparation, and of course took an active part in the organisation, the heaviest load rested on the shoulders of our Hungarian colleagues. I would particularly like to mention Tamas Weiszburg from Budapest and Dana Pop from Cluj, Chairman and Secretary of the International Organising Committee, respectively. An impressive fact in comparison to other geoscience conferences I have attended was that out of 29 field trips which were offered, 28 actually took place.

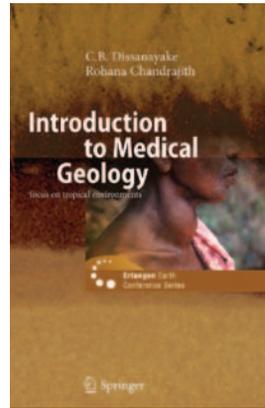
IMA is not a rich organisation, since it can only count on the modest contributions of the national societies. However, we are planning to improve our presence on the web by modernising the web page and by creating an e-mail talk list that can be used to transmit current news and provide an interactive platform for discussions. We are also deliberating the production of a periodical newsletter that could be distributed via this e-mail list. The IMA's work continues between the quadrennial meetings, mainly through the activities of the commissions and working groups (details at www.ima-mineralogy.org).

The next yearly Council meeting will take place at the 2011 Goldschmidt Conference in Prague, August 14 to 19, where several IMA commissions will also hold sessions. The next biennial business meeting will be held during the first European Mineralogical Conference in Frankfurt, September 9 to 13, 2012.

The very positive response which we carried home from our meeting in Budapest gives reason to hope that the future of the International Mineralogical Association will be fruitful and active.

Ekkehart Tillmanns, IMA President

INTRODUCTION TO MEDICAL GEOLOGY¹



The authors of *Introduction to Medical Geology* are to be commended for having undertaken the complex task of joining the geological and geochemical aspects of our planet with the geographical settings of people in the tropics. The subject is particularly pertinent to those who suffer inadvertently from the natural and often "silent" hazards of their environment. "Medical geology," an interdisciplinary science, is a new arena of cooperation in which numerous avenues of exciting research opportunities are opening up. The idea behind medical geology is to combine available geological, particularly geochemical, data on an environment with biological data typical of its habitats, with the

goal of determining the potential impacts of this environment on the human and animal populations. Through this overarching and basic approach, medical geology seeks to gain new understanding of the factors that contribute to human well-being and disease. It is possible, although difficult, to identify unique, direct causes and effects, as this book demonstrates. The interaction of geoscience specialists with medical/dental practitioners and researchers encompasses enormously diverse disciplines. These disciplines often have distinct vocabularies and approaches, so exchanges usually oblige the participants to learn new terminologies. Considering the Earth as a complex of systems is not unlike identifying the whole body, with its separate parts and systems, as normal or pathological. The approach integrates the contributions of natural Earth materials and processes and their potential to impact populations. The goals are to reduce exposure, morbidity, and death and to gain insights that can be applied around the globe. As a factor in our continued survival, the need to document and understand the characteristics and processes of our biogeochemical environment is just beginning to be appreciated. The study of the many aspects and factors involved in the interplay of the environment with health is in its infancy. This volume is a fine start.

The basic concepts of medical geology are outlined and discussed in the early chapters of *Introduction to Medical Geology*. After an introductory chapter that puts the subject in perspective, chapter 2, entitled "Geochemistry of the Tropical Environment," delves into subjects like the nature of the tropical environment, the mechanisms of rock weathering and soil formation in the tropics, and the hydrogeochemistry of this environment. These are important subjects to understand, because over 70% of the world's population live in tropical environments. These people often suffer from malnutrition because of highly weathered soils, a condition that leads to low agricultural productivity and a low availability of essential nutrients. Because most of the individuals are poor, they usually live close together, they may have little drinking water and what water they have may be polluted, and they may have minimal access to medical expertise and care. Their outlook is short life spans, and many families endure multiple childhood disasters. Understanding the geology, geomorphology, and lithology of a terrain; the soils in this terrain; its waters, including groundwater; and the cycles of essential and trace elements are prerequisites for improving the lives and lifestyles of these people.

Chapter 3 is entitled "Bioavailability of Trace Elements and Risk Assessment." It considers the themes announced in the chapter title, and also subjects like cause and effect, and epidemiology and homeostasis in medical geology. The presence of specific elements in soils and streams has been effective in locating concealed ore deposits. Similar

1 Dissanayake CB, Chandrajith R (2009) *Introduction to Medical Geology: Focus on Tropical Environments*. Springer-Verlag, Berlin, 297 pp, ISBN978-3-642-00484-1, \$169