

Editorial

As an introduction to this fourth newsletter, we would like to briefly review the most important progresses made in the last year, the first of our quadriennial mandate.

When we succeeded M. B. Cita and J. Halmai as Chairman and Secretary, we inherit a revitalized Subcommittee and a brand new Gelasian Stage that had been just approved by the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS) and ratified by the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) at the 30th International Geological Congress in Beijing (August 1996).

In addition, a postal ballot on a proposal by Cita et al. (1996) for the definition of the base of the Piacenzian Stage had taken place a few months before and the proposed boundary unanimously approved.

The first matter we faced was the formal submission of the recommendation of SNS to ICS for the acceptance of the voted base of the Piacenzian. This was done at the end of October 1996. We were notified of the positive vote of the ICS Full Commission and ratification of IUGS in January 1997.

So, we have now four boundary in the Neogene chronostratigraphic scale that enjoy a formal status: the base of the Miocene Series, those of the Piacenzian and Gelasian Stages, and the base of the overlying Pleistocene Series.

In this context, the next step was the preparation of two papers for the official publication of the Gelasian and Piacenzian GSSPs on the official journal of IUGS (Episodes). The two papers have been recently prepared and are now being submitted to the journal.

To have a clear picture of the opinions and preferences of our members concerning those boundaries of the Neogene that, instead, lack a formal status, we launched a questionnaire in February 1997 with specific questions on each chronostratigraphic boundary. The results of the questionnaire are thoroughly reported on in this issue. Let us only thank here those members that replied to the questionnaire (maybe after further requests!) and assure them that we will make precious use of their advice. We would also like to invite everybody, member or non member of the Subcommittee, to analyse carefully the results of the questionnaire and let us know their impression and comments (to the address of the Secretary).

Another initiative taken recently has been the organisation of a workshop of SNS during the "Neogene Mediterranean Paleoenvironment Conference", an international congress jointly organized by Maria Bianca Cita and Judith McKenzie and cosponsored by the Geological Society of Italy and the European Consortium for Ocean Drilling Program. The Conference was held in Sicily at the end of September and the workshop of SNS was run on September 30, at the end of the scientific sessions.

It was a very successful meeting, attended by over 40 people, as reported further on in this issue. We focused our discussion on the present status of Neogene chronostratigraphy, with particular emphasis on the Tortonian/Messinian and Miocene/Pliocene boundaries. These are the two boundaries on which, according to the questionnaire, a large consensus exists on the main criteria to be followed for the selection of a boundary-stratotype. We hope to submit to our members formal postal ballots on these boundaries in the next few months.

Entering the second year of our mandate, we wish ourselves to be able to show you, in the next issue of this newsletter, new important achievements towards a Global Standard Chronostratigraphic Scale of the Neogene.

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