



Report to the IUIS Council from the Federation of African Immunological Societies (FAIS)

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President, FAIS
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During the preceding period (November 2009 to December 2012), FAIS accomplished a number of activities based on set goals and priorities that we highlight below:

1. Functional FAIS central office at UCT

The FAIS Central office established at the University of Cape Town, in South Africa in 2011 has continued to offer administrative and fiscal support to the Federation and has helped to coordinate a number of other initiatives being pursued by the Federation. Currently Ms Alison September is the administrative officer at the Central office and spends 50% of her time on FAIS activities assisted by Dr Ben Kagina (UCT). The University of Cape Town has continued to assist in overseeing the fiscal aspects of FAIS, through its structures, without charging indirect fees to the Federation. This support is much appreciated and will allow continuity of the Federation activities without shifting offices with each new term of office.

2. Increased level of communication between member Societies

Optimal communication within FAIS, and within FAIS-affiliated national societies in Africa, remains a challenge. Since 2010 we have focused on regular communication between the executive board as the best way of achieving consensus and reaching critical decisions. We have regular telephone conferences, via Skype – we have also established structures that allow optimal internet access of all executive members for Skype, where these did not exist.

Second, the previous Secretary General Pa Tamba Ngom, and the new FAIS Board, has gathered wide email distribution lists, to try and reach immunologists throughout Africa. The FAIS central office, President and new Secretary General (Henry Mwandumba) are using these distribution lists to communicate with African immunologists. For example, see attached letter from the President announcing the new FAIS office bearers and setting priorities for the new office (Appendix I). Information regarding training, career opportunities and funding opportunities, are being distributed on a regular basis through these channels.

We have continued to maintain and revamp our website www.faisafrica.com. The website is a portal for regular communication about career, funding and conference opportunities, but also contains information about the FAIS, how to become a member, and links to multiple web-based immunology training options. The FAIS Central Office has taken up the role of updating information on the website on a regular basis.

3. FAIS conference, December 2012

The 8th Conference of FAIS was held from 2-5 December 2012 under the leadership of the immediate past President Willem Hanekom. The South African Immunology Society co-hosted the conference. Below, some detail about the conference, from a flyer:



The 8th Conference of the Federation of African Immunological Societies

2-5 December 2012, Durban, South Africa

Aims of the conference:

- To foster communication and networking among African immunologists
- To disseminate cutting edge research results
- To define how FAIS (www.faisafrica.com) can support African immunologists

Who should attend?

- Scientists, clinicians, technologists, students working in immunology

Special courses on the first day (register early, limited space!):

- Basic immunology
- Flow cytometry

Speakers:

- Abul Abbas
- Alan Aderem
- Ann Moormann
- Bongani Mayosi
- Cecil Czerkinsky
- Charles Wiysonge
- Christine Benn
- Chidi Nweneka
- Clive Gray
- Eleanor Riley
- Faith Osier
- Francis Ndung'u
- Henriette Farkas
- Henrik Boysen
- Henry Mwandumba
- Joanne Flynn
- Kanury Rao
- Keertan Dheda
- Marco Cicardi
- Maria Yazdanbaksh
- Moncef Zouali
- Monika Esser
- Murat Bas
- Nono Mkhize
- Ofar Levy
- Paola Zacccone
- Paul Potter
- Peter Aaby
- Pontiano Kaleebu
- Rafick Pierre Sekaly
- Rick Maizels
- Ridha Barbouche
- Thomas Hawn
- Thumbi Ndung'u
- William Bishai

Registration, accommodation, abstract submission (deadline: 19 September 2012) and conference programme: www.faisconference2012.com



The final report of the conference has not been compiled but the organising committee consisted of the FAIS executive, president of the SAIS, K-RITH director (local research group in Durban); the firm of Onscreen Conference and Events were hired as the conference organising group. Over 400 delegates attended the conference. There were special workshops on FACS training and Basic Immunology, respectively, followed by 3 days of standard programme, including Special afternoon breakout sessions; sponsored poster sessions on two evenings, which included cocktails and snacks. The opening session was graced by a well known musician from the Durban area. There was a colourful closing ceremony dinner where announcements of the new FAIS office were made.

Budget for the conference was 1.4million ZAR. Approximately 1/3 was raised from direct sponsorships with 80% of target achieved. Approximately 1/3 came from exhibitors and 1/3 from registration fees. As always the support of IUIS was forthcoming and critical to the success of the conference. An extensive marketing campaign was launched in collaboration with K-RITH in Durban which resulted in good attendance and publicity for the meeting. With regard to support for young African immunologists, 47 travel grants applications were received and 15 awards granted.

There was near unanimous agreement that the quality of both oral and poster presentations was outstanding, and that the conference can become even bigger and more significant in future

especially if we continue to focus on the important theme of human immunology. Feedback was requested from those attending the meeting and the following comments were received:

- The meeting was excellent, with very good quality presentations on research actually done in Africa.
- The structure of the presentations including co-locating the poster sessions with refreshments, lunch and evening meals, worked really well, allowing optimum poster viewing and interaction.
- A source of funding to cater for full attendance has been a problem; with many around Africa struggling to secure attendance for only a minimum number of scientists could be supported with travel grants.
- The absence of some very vibrant immunology groups (e.g. from Uganda) was noted, although the limited funding for scientists to attend meetings often means the more established meetings including Key Stone, ASTMH etc are chosen instead.

4. Support for new immunology societies to form and affiliate to the IUIS/FAIS.

FAIS has continued to support the formation of new national immunology societies and to revive existing ones. So far there are 13 FAIS-IUIS affiliated societies. In recent times we have supported the formation of national societies in Tanzania and Benin who have become members of the IUIS in 2012. We have also encouraged the revival of the Nigerian Immunology Society. We are in the process of assisting Mali to become the newest member of FAIS and IUIS. However there are still many other African countries potentially capable of forming national societies and our aim is to support 4 more to join, one in each of the regions of Southern, West, East and North Africa by next year. We still do not have any member from Portuguese speaking Africa. A key challenge however is what support and incentives FAIS can offer to national societies. This will be the focus of our strategic planning in the coming months.

5. New FAIS constitution

We have crafted a new constitution for FAIS that will become the governing document for the Federation when it is finally ratified by the IUIS. The new draft was presented to delegates at the Durban meeting in December 2012 by the immediate past President Willem Hanekom and thereafter circulated widely to all national societies requesting input. A key feature of the new constitution is that it requires all Chairs/Presidents of FAIS affiliated National Immunology Societies to serve as members of the FAIS Council (Clause 4.1.2) and to assist the FAIS Executive in making critical decisions. A final draft of the new constitution has been sent to the IUIS for ratification.

6. Hosting ICI in Africa

FAIS is still keen to bid for possible hosting of the International Congress of Immunology in Africa at a future date. However the enormity of the task and funding aspects require further discussions with the IUIS.

7. Other activities

We plan to keep focusing on the priorities outlined above but in addition we would also like to pay attention to the following issues:

- Develop a strategic plan for FAIS. The FAIS executive has already held two teleconference discussion forums on this issue and has agreed to make this a priority for the new office. This is due to the realization that FAIS needs to have a long-term strategy that guarantees continuity of its activities and programs, and which can also be used to approach partners and sponsors for support of various activities. The FAIS Board will hold a strategic planning meeting on the sidelines of ICI 2013 in Milan.

- Support more formal educational initiatives and workshops across Africa. For example FAIS would like to see more universities in Africa develop MSc programs in Immunology.
- Advocacy initiatives to raise the profile of the Federation with donors, governments and other partners.
- More formal links with other federations, for synchronous activities.
- Establishing a FAIS research communications journal.

TK/June 2013

Attachments:

Appendix I-Letter to FAIS affiliated Societies

Financial statement