

# JOINT DISCUSSIONS

# WOMEN IN ASTRONOMY

Chairperson and Editor: **S. Torres-Peimbert**

# WORKSHOP OF WOMEN IN ASTRONOMY

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This workshop was organized to analyze the present problems of women as astronomers and to focus on possible ways to improve the situation in view of the various contexts in the different countries.

To set up a framework for this analysis the statistical data from the IAU membership (Bergeron 1992) is presented in Table 1. This table only includes countries with 50 or more members and is ordered by the fraction of women participation; values for the overall membership are included.

TABLE 1. IAU Membership and Percentages of Women per Country (in 1992)

Country	Members	%	Country	Members	%
Argentina	65	30.8	USA	2069	8.6
France	561	26.2	Czechoslovakia	94	8.5
Mexico	55	20.0	Denmark	50	8.0
Russia	264	19.3	Netherlands	162	7.4
Ukraine	84	17.9	UK	481	6.7
Italy	373	17.4	Canada	206	6.3
Spain	161	14.3	Australia	173	5.2
Brazil	87	13.8	Sweden	84	4.8
Poland	94	12.8	Germany	429	3.7
Belgium	81	12.4	Switzerland	55	1.8
Greece	89	11.2	Japan	350	1.4
China PR	292	9.3	Total IAU	7301	10.5

In 1992 a workshop of Women in Astronomy was held in Baltimore, Maryland, USA where a charter with the following principles was drawn

(Urry et al. 1993):

“... We hold as fundamental that:

- *Women and men are equally capable of doing excellent science.*
- *Diversity contributes to, rather than conflicts with, excellence in science.*
- *Current recruitment, training, evaluation and award systems often prevent the equal participation of women.*
- *Formal and informal mechanisms that are effectively discriminatory are unlikely to change by themselves. Both thought and action are necessary to ensure equal participation for all.*
- *Increasing the number of women in astronomy will improve the professional environment and improving the environment will increase the number of women (in astronomy). ...”*

The present workshop was organized by presenting descriptions of the status of women astronomers in different countries and by comparing in more detail the opportunities for men and women.

A few words of my own. From Table 1 it follows that while the number of members in the Union is strongly related to the economic development of each country, the wide variation in the fraction of women is of a different nature and it depends on the social behavior of the local environments.

I believe that talent is equally distributed among men and women, and that we should aim at a social structure where the same opportunities are available to men and women, which will lead to similar percentages of men and women dedicated to astronomy.

My own experience has been that the differences arises at an early age where the emphasis in training is different for girls and boys, and society imprints goals that limit their own expectations. Therefore I want to encourage women scientists to reach the young population, (by appearing in public lectures, in radio and television programs, etc.) to promote the idea that science is a feasible career both for women as well as for men.

I also propose that within the IAU there should be more awareness of the need to have a fair representation of women among members of: the Executive Committee, Presidents of Commissions and Scientific Organizing Committees.

## References

- Bergeron, J. (1992) Membership within the IAU per Country, *IAU Information Bulletin*, **68**, 2
- Urry, C., Danly, L., Sherbert, L. and Gonzaga, S. (1993), editors *Women in Astronomy*, Space Telescope Science Institute, Baltimore, p. ix