

Preface

Special issue celebrating the 37th International Conference on Coordination Chemistry, 13–18 August 2006, Cape Town, South Africa

‘First time on the African continent’—this was the motto displayed in advertising for the 37th International Conference on Coordination Chemistry, held at the Cape Town International Convention Centre, South Africa, over the period 13–18 August 2006. The motto was also prominent in the minds of the Organizing Committee and of its indefatigable Chair, Prof. Klaus Koch (Fig. 1), in the planning and preparation for the conference. Strenuous efforts were made to compile an excellent scientific programme that would meet the expectations of delegates coming to Cape Town from around the world. This special issue of *Coordination Chemistry Reviews* provides an opportunity to reflect on the scientific programme, and it is a sure bet that any reader who was not in Cape Town for the conference will wish he or she had been!

The scientific programme comprised seven plenary lectures, 49 keynote lectures, 228 oral contributions and 325 poster presentations, all contributing to one or other of the conference themes:

- metals in biology and medicine;
- metals in materials, nano-structures and devices;
- metals in catalysis and industry;
- metals in self-assembly and supramolecular systems;
- metal complexes in solution: structure, mechanism and ligand design;
- precious metals, photochemistry and computational chemistry.



Fig. 1. At the opening ceremony: Prof. Klaus Koch, Chair of the Organizing Committee (left); Mr. Mosibudi Mangena, Minister of Science and Technology of the Republic of South Africa (centre); Ms. Helen Zille, Mayor of the City of Cape Town (right). Photo: Anthea Davison.



Fig. 2. A chemical ‘edutainer’ in action: Prof. Rudi van Eldik gives his plenary lecture. Photo: Anthea Davison.

At the formal opening of the conference (see Fig. 1) a special public lecture was presented by A.P. de Silva (Belfast), in which he enthusiastically described, and demonstrated, how molecules can gather information (as sensors) and process information (as computers), communicating the information as luminescence signals. In the audience, in addition to the conference delegates and invited dignitaries, were 150 learners and teachers representing some 30 local schools, and it was good to see the rapt interest inspired by this presentation reflected in these excited young faces.

The plenary lectures continued in the main conference sessions with Peter Sadler (Edinburgh) demonstrating the rich diversity of coordination chemistry for the design of novel therapeutic agents with unique mechanisms of action, and Helder Marques (Witwatersrand) elucidating the chemistry of the cobalt corrinoids as derivatives of vitamin B₁₂. Tobin Marks (North-western) described new materials and processes for inorganic transistors, organic transistors and printed electronics, while Nobel Prize co-winner Bob Grubbs (Caltech) discussed the use of olefin metathesis catalysts to synthesize large and small molecules that might be used in a variety of applications, ranging from pharmaceuticals to new materials. Dirk Kurth (Potsdam) stepped in at the last minute to replace an absent plenary speaker and gave a fascinating account of polyoxometalate clusters as components in functional materials, and Rudi van Eldik (Erlangen-Nürnberg) showed that fundamental insights into inorganic and bioinorganic reaction mechanisms enable the systematic tuning of reactivity for environmentally and biologically relevant applications, quite apart from providing suitable experiments for chemistry ‘edutainment’ (see Fig. 2).

In this special issue of *Coordination Chemistry Reviews*, we present a selection of invited reviews based on three of the plenary lectures and 20 of the keynote addresses, in the hope that the reader will glean a fair impression of a cross-section of the work presented at the conference within each of the above themes. Each article has been peer-reviewed and represents current thinking on the latest developments in a particular area of coordination chemistry. One is left with an overwhelming impression that the science of coordination chemistry is flourishing and, in its applications, making important contributions to our everyday lives. Sincere thanks are due to the participating authors for their timely contributions, and to Prof. A.B.P. Lever, Editor-in-Chief of *Coordination Chemistry Reviews*, who administered the reviewing of the manuscripts.

The 600 conference delegates came from 60 different countries and 35% of the participants were students, a good omen for the future of coordination chemistry. There was a rich social programme which gave some flavour of the culture of the coun-



Fig. 3. Table Mountain from the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, a short walk from the Cape Town International Convention Centre. Photo: Alan Hutton.

try and its people, and an impressive level of fitness was shown by some 90 delegates who climbed Table Mountain (1087 m, see Fig. 3) on foot, another 282 ascending by aerial cableway. The conference has been reviewed in the literature [1], and a photo gallery is available at the conference website [2].

While we all look forward to the next conference in this series, scheduled for Jerusalem, Israel, from 20 to 25 July 2008 [3], from South Africa we say ‘*Hambani kakuhle—niphinde nibuye kwangoko!*’ [4].

References

- [1] D.J. Robinson, M. Arendse, *Platinum Met. Rev.* 51 (2007) 36, doi:10.1595/147106707X173817 <http://www.platinummetalsreview.com/dynamic/article/view/51-1-36-41>.
- [2] 37th International Conference on Coordination Chemistry, Cape Town, South Africa, <http://webhost.sun.ac.za/pgm-group/>.
- [3] 38th International Conference on Coordination Chemistry, Jerusalem, Israel, <http://www.kenes.com/iccc38/>.
- [4] Xhosa: ‘Go well, and come back soon!’.

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