

Remarks by President of APCTP

Peter Fulde

President, Asia Pacific Center for Theoretical Physics

The merger of the Bulletin of the Asia Pacific Center for Theoretical Physics with the Association of Asian Pacific Physics Societies (AAPPS) Bulletin is a step forward towards the stronger mutual interaction between members of the physics community in the Asia-Pacific region. An MOU was signed with the Korea Physical Society to jointly publish this Bulletin. (see photo to next page) Cooperation and collaboration is the key to success in the rapidly growing and expanding fields of natural sciences and, in particular, in physics.



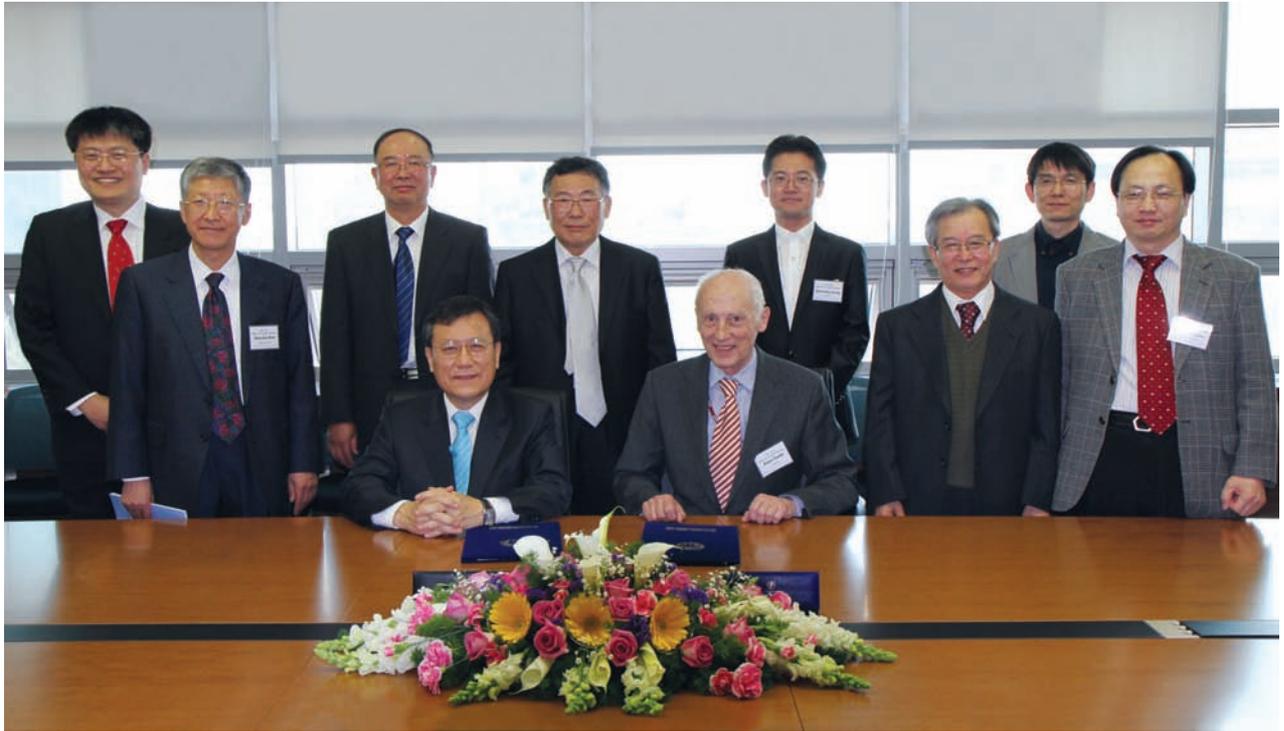
Thus, the aim of the Center is to serve the physics community; its motivating interest and identity is to promote and cultivate advancement in physics. As such, it is in a dynamic, ever-evolving state. The Center strives to be a motor for new developments and a magnet for young talent. It aspires to be recognized within the scientific community as a center comparable to the Kavli Institutes, the Max Planck Institute in Dresden, the Institute for Theoretical Physics in Trieste and other institutions of similar quality and reputation.

Nowhere in the world is basic research qualitatively and quantitatively increasing faster than in the Asia-Pacific region. With continued international cooperation and team work, the impact on our field, physics, will be significant. This precept has been long recognized by leaders of the different physics communities in the Asia-Pacific region and in fact, resulted in 1996 in the foundation of the Asia-Pacific Center for Theoretical Physics (APCTP) under the leadership of C. N. Yang. The aim was to create a center where scientists in the Asia-Pacific region could meet freely and frequently in order to discuss advancements in different fields of physics and where they could form new networks of collaboration. The aim was also to create a place where, for a certain number of years, particularly talented young theorists could realize their scientific visions in complete independence and free from other obligations.

Due to various circumstances, the start of the Asia Pacific Center was rather slow; consequently there is still quite a way to go before all the original goals are achieved. While the Center has been successful in organizing symposia and workshops, Junior Research Groups (a research program which attracts exceptional young physicists) were started only recently. Each Junior Research Group is established for a period of five years in cooperation with, and partially supported by, the German Max-Planck-Gesellschaft. There are presently six groups working at the Center but their number is expected to increase in the near future.

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So what are the plans and prospects for the future of the Asia Pacific Center for Theoretical Physics? One important issue is the amount of financial support provided by the 14 membership countries to the Center. Until now, their financial support to the Center has been minimal. There is the well-known problem that one cannot spend the money of tax payers of one country, in another country. Here, the solution is to make national stipends available for young scientists who want to work for some time at the Center. This is reasonable and possible and there are indications that progress can be made in that respect.

Another issue is that ultimately the Center needs its own small building in order to fulfill its duties. The workshops and symposia programs require proper lecture rooms, a small library for the participants, good computational facilities, and places for easy internet access. Moreover, the in-house research program needs much more office space. Again, we are optimistic that in due time we will acquire such a building; perhaps not today or tomorrow, but we trust we will eventually achieve this goal.

Most importantly, young physicists in the Asia-Pacific region have stated that they need such a Center. They are the future science leaders in this region and it is clear that they must have a place where they can meet freely, not in Europe or the United States, but rather much more conveniently in the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, the future of the Center looks bright.

Furthermore, the Korean government and the parliament have just announced a huge and extremely ambitious program for supporting and internationalizing basic research in Korea. We consequently expect that that program will strengthen the collaboration of physicists in the Asia-Pacific region, as collaborations among scientists with different areas of expertise enhance their ability to significantly contribute to their respective fields.

Therefore, let us plan and work together for the continued advancement of physics research in the Asia-Pacific region. There is no reason why this region should not be as significant and as important for the progress of physics than any other leading region in the world.