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A lecture tour through Hungary

Sigel, Roland K O

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Richard R. Ernst Lecture 2010

Kofi Annan: ‘Scientific Research and Society’
Short Lecture by Kofi Annan, followed by a panel discussion.
Friday, 18 June 2010
16.30–19.00
ETH Zurich
ASVZ Sport Hall, Main Building

The Richard R. Ernst Lecture 2010 will be delivered by Nobel Laureate and former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan. He will talk about ‘Scientific Research and Society’ and will focus on how university research and education can contribute to society.

The Laboratory of Physical Chemistry of ETH Zurich annually organises the Richard R. Ernst Lecture to honour Professor Richard R. Ernst, Laureate of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1991. The aim of the lecture is to strengthen the connection between science and society, and to raise awareness for the problems that society faces in the future. Every year a meritorious personality is invited to hold the lecture. At this occasion, the lecturer is awarded the Richard R. Ernst Gold Medal. This year the event is supported by ETH Sustainability, the Club of Rome and the Swiss Chemical Society.

More Information: <http://www.lpc.ethz.ch/richard-ernst-lecture/index>

Swiss Chemical Society/Hungarian Chemical Society Reciprocal Lecture Fellowship

A Lecture Tour Through Hungary

Roland K. O. Sigel, Institute of Inorganic Chemistry, Winterthurerstrasse 190, University of Zürich, CH-8057 Zürich

In 2008, the *Swiss Chemical Society* and the *Hungarian Chemical Society* introduced a reciprocal lecture fellowship to strengthen the scientific relationship between Hungary and Switzerland. As the first lecturer, Prof. Tibor Soós from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest visited Switzerland in 2008. In Summer 2009, I was invited by the Hungarian Chemical Society to visit Hungarian Universities. I was happy to agree and felt honored to be the first Swiss chemist invited for this special exchange lectureship to Hungary. Hence, on the last Sunday of October 2009, I flew to Budapest, where I was met by Professor Tamás Kiss (University of Szeged), the Vice General Secretary of the Hungarian Chemical Society, and his wife Ilona. He had organized everything perfectly and provided me with train tickets and all the necessary information after taking me to the exquisite Thermal Hotel on the central Margaret Island in the Danube river. Travelling by train during the next days enabled me to see parts of this beautiful country.

Monday morning I travelled to Veszprém, where I spent one and a half enjoyable days, giving a lecture at the Department of Chemistry of the University of Pannonia. There I had long and intense discussions with Professors Gábor Speier and József Kaizer as well as Dr. József Pap on model systems of various metalloenzymes like CO-releasing enzymes, catalase, or catechol oxidases, the main research areas of these colleagues. Tuesday afternoon I returned to Budapest, where the next day I met Professor Péter Mátyus from the Faculty of Pharmacy of Semmelweis University for a highly interesting scientific discussion on various aspects of pharmaceutical chemistry as well as on the different structures and education systems at our home universities. Wednesday afternoon I had some free time which allowed me to enjoy the



Tamás Gajda (left) and Tamás Kiss (right), both from the University of Szeged, together with Roland Sigel (middle).

tourist sites of Budapest, strolling through the center and looking down from the Halászbástia (Fisherman’s Bastion) on the river Danube and the two city parts of Buda and Pest.

Thursday morning I went by train to Szeged to meet again Professor Tamás Kiss. The Chemistry Department of the University of Szeged is beautifully situated in old buildings in the center of town. Here I spent the afternoon with Tamás Kiss as well as his colleague Tamás Gajda at the Department of Inorganic and Analytical Chemistry. We intensely discussed several aspects of coordination chemistry concentrating especially on the problem of calculating intrinsic affinity constants for systems with numerous binding sites. My host, Professor Kiss, a well known scientist with many international collaborations, and I share common interests in bioinorganic chemistry and metal complexes of bioactive molecules. The concluding lecture of my tour, entitled ‘Changing Metal Ions and Single Atoms: Influencing Structure and Function of RNAs’, took place in the late afternoon in the beautiful Regional Academy House of the *Hungarian Academy of Sciences*. I should add that the lectures were well attended and the students were very interested. The final highlight of these four days in Hungary was the yearly banquet of the University of Szeged, which by chance I had the opportunity to attend together with my host.

This was a very pleasant and interesting week, which gave me the possibility to gain better insight into the chemistry carried out by colleagues in Hungary. I was much impressed that overall knowledge on metal ion-coordination chemistry, encompassing thermodynamics and kinetics, is very broad and profound, especially among the students. Indeed, this opportunity for stimulating discussions may even lead to new collaborations.

In conclusion, I want to thank Professor Tamás Kiss for a perfect organization and all the colleagues I met during my stay for their extraordinary hospitality. I am grateful to the two chemical societies for having created these lecture series. I am strongly in favor of this kind of scientific exchange and I look much forward to meet Hungarian chemists during their visits to Switzerland in the future.