ILRS Fall Workshop 2007

25-28 September 2007

Welcome

Werner Gurtner
Chairman of the ILRS Governing Board

Dear Pierre Exertier, director of the Gemini Laboratory in Grasse, dear Francis Pierron, Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee, dear colleagues,

first of all I would like thank Francis Pierron and his colleagues here in Grasse for the tremendous work they performed during the last months and weeks and the work they will continue to do during and even after the workshop. I am convinced that our colleagues prepared everything necessary for us to have a very fruitful workshop and to be able to also enjoy our stay in this lovely area of France.

I am, of course, also eager to see the progress in the reinstallation of the Grasse lunar and satellite laser ranging station up on the Plateau Calern. However, before we can go for the ride up to the mountains next Friday, there is a lot of work to do:

We have quite a number of topics to address during this workshop. I just want to mention a very few construction sites we have to visit:

- Transponders and Time Transfer: The LRO mission and the T2L2 time transfer experiment will open up two completely new applications to the laser community. I especially hope that we will be able to successfully demonstrate our capability to extend our activities into the direction of interplanetary space.

- Support of the Global Navigation Satellite Systems: There is a certain probability that not only GLONASS and Galileo, but also the satellites of the modernized GPS (Mike is working on that…) and maybe even those of the Chinese Compass Navigation System will all be equipped with retro-reflectors. At the maximum about one hundred medium orbit satellites may want some tracking time allocated. Will we be able to do this?

- Last year’s realization of the International Terrestrial Reference System has revealed significant differences between the contributions of the various space techniques. Just a side remark: Without the recent improvements in the tracking and analysis techniques such tiny differences would not have become significant at all! Anyway, we know that due to the sparse and inhomogeneous laser tracking network and the weather- and, to a certain extent, also daytime-dependence our products are rather sensitive to systematic errors, mainly, but not only, originating at the stations. It is very urgent that we develop new processes to significantly improve the level of detection and to be able to reliably remove or parameterize such errors.

I wish you all an interesting week here in Grasse. Please do become engaged in the discussions during the sessions. The format of this event is a workshop, and it needs the active participation of all of us. I hope that the prepared presentations still leave enough room for such technical discussions.

Please allow me to remind the speakers of the English mother tongue to speak slowly, clearly and in not too complicated terms, in their presentations as well as in the discussions.

Thank you very much.