

**It seems like yesterday...**



My association with COSPAR started in 1996, on the occasion of the Scientific Assembly held in Birmingham, United Kingdom. Anny-Chantal Levasseur-Regourd had mentored me into attending the Assembly and the “small bodies” sessions, as per my research interests at the time. She also suggested that I submit a proposal for the next assembly, which I was very happy to do. Nagoya, Japan, in 1998 was therefore my first COSPAR Scientific Assembly as MSO, a fascinating experience renewed several times since then with a number of esteemed colleagues, either as MSO, DO, or OC member (these, and other, previously mysterious – to me – initials are, of course, all properly registered at the National Archives of Space Acronyms).

COSPAR Assemblies are a fantastic way for young researchers to embrace the space field(s), meet new colleagues in areas close to or beyond their own and get new ideas of research and even potential missions to propose. I have always been a strong advocate of multidisciplinary approaches and, well, in that sense COSPAR is simply the place to be.

Nagoya was also the moment where COSPAR decided to set up a new panel, one that was going to become vitally important for us and for the whole of future space activities: planetary protection. The PPP was officially set up the year after and has guided agencies and decision-makers since then on the critical subject of the protection of planetary bodies and the Earth for scientific research. In the context of the opening of space activities to a plethora of new actors, planetary protection is facing new challenges today that COSPAR is keen to engage in and continue its mission.

I feel very privileged and honored to have been asked by Len Fisk to become the next Executive Director, with the challenging task of succeeding my good friend Jean-Louis Fellous who has done a fantastic job in the past twelve years for COSPAR. This is especially true at a time where we have a new Strategic Plan, with the bold ambition to return the organization to prominence.

I look forward to interacting with all of you and bringing my contribution to the collective efforts. I am back in space research, and it feels good!