Opinion

Mathematical Congress of the Americas

The Mathematical Congress of the Americas (MCA) will be held, for the first time, in Guanajuato, Mexico, on August 5–9, 2013. It is anticipated that the MCA will be a quadrennial event held in different countries of the Americas. Its goals are ambitious: to highlight the excellence of mathematical achievements in the Americas, within the context of the international arena, and to foster the scientific integration of all mathematical communities in the two continents. This article contains a brief explanation of how the Congress came to be and an outline of the preparations to ensure that it will achieve the scientific excellence and the wide participation of mathematicians and students from all over the region that are necessary to attain such goals.

The decision to launch the MCA was made at a meeting held in New Orleans on January 6, 2011, at the invitation of the AMS. The meeting was attended by representatives of several mathematical institutes and societies including SIAM, the national mathematical societies of Brazil (SBM), Canada (CMS), and Mexico (SMM), and the Mathematical Union for Latin America and the Caribbean (UMALCA). Following the New Orleans meeting, the six founding societies (AMS, SBM, CMS, SMM, SIAM, and UMALCA) were invited to nominate representatives to form the MCA 2013 Steering Committee (SC). Support for the MCA initiative was then unanimously reiterated in a meeting hosted by the Brazilian Mathematical Society in Rio de Janeiro on May 9–10, 2011, which was attended by representatives of most national mathematical societies in North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean, as well as of major mathematical institutes in the region.

One of the SC's first tasks was to issue a call for proposals to organize the MCA 2013. By the April 7, 2011, deadline, the SC had received two excellent proposals: from the Universidad de los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia, and from the Centro de Investigación en Matemáticas (CIMAT) at Guanajuato, Mexico. Both locations were visited by SC representatives, to assess the facilities available for the Congress. After a long discussion, where all aspects were carefully weighed, the SC decided to award the realization of the inaugural MCA to CIMAT, Guanajuato. The SC also deliberated on the structure of the scientific program, which is to include five plenary lectures, twenty invited lectures, about twenty-five special sessions, and a number of additional activities, such as general public lectures.

The SC appointed the Program Committee (PC), whose task is to select the plenary speakers and invited speakers. The PC is chaired jointly by Dusa McDuff (Columbia University, USA) and Jaime San Martin (CMM, Santiago, Chile). The choice of speakers is based on excellence in research and very good expository skills. Five outstanding mathematicians have been selected as plenary speakers at the MCA 2013: James Arthur (University of Toronto, Canada), Artur

Avila (IMPA/Brazil and CNRS/France), Manjul Bhargava (Princeton University, USA), Luis Caffarelli (University of Texas, USA), and Ingrid Daubechies (Duke University, USA). The list of the invited speakers can be found at `http://www.mca2013.org`.

Proposals for special sessions should be submitted by email to `mca2013.sessions@gmail.com` by July 31, 2012. The topics should be broad and fairly well represented throughout the Americas. The co-organizers must represent at least two different countries in the region. Preference will be given to proposals whose list of suggested speakers represents diversity in various aspects. More information can be obtained at `http://www.mca2013.org`.

The SC established the following mathematical awards to acknowledge accomplishments that are of special relevance to the goals of the Congress:

The MCA Prize: Five prizes of US$1,000 each will be awarded to mathematicians who are no more than twelve years past the Ph.D. in August 2013. Eligibility for consideration of nominees requires that they either received their graduate education or currently hold a position in the Americas.

The Americas Prize: One prize of US$5,000 will be awarded to an individual or a group in recognition of work to enhance collaboration and the development of research that links mathematicians in several countries in the Americas.

The Solomon Lefschetz Medal: Two medals with an award of US$5,000 will be given to mathematicians in recognition of their excellence in research and their contributions to the development of mathematics in the Americas.

Nominations for these prizes should be made by email to `mca2013.prizes@gmail.com` by January 31, 2013. Complete information on the nomination procedures can be found at `http://www.mca2013.org`.

The realization of the MCA 2013 at CIMAT, Guanajuato, is made possible by a grant from the CONACyT, the national research council of Mexico. Other sponsors include the founding societies and such institutes as AIM, CAMS at USC, IMPA, and MSRI. The AMS has been providing support and publicity for the MCA 2013 through such means as the *Notices* and the AMS website. The Brazilian Mathematical Society and the Brazilian Society for Applied and Computational Mathematics have committed BRL30,000 (about US$17,000) to support the participation of Brazilian mathematicians and students. Other mathematical societies and institutes in North and South America are expected to follow suit. A proposal is being submitted to the NSF for travel support for U.S. mathematicians to attend the MCA.

We are optimistic that the MCA 2013 will be most successful and that such a quadrennial Congress will take place as a regular event in the mathematical calendar.

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