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# The Chemist, Facing the Structural Changes in Chemical Industry

International Meeting of the Chemical Society Presidents organized by the New Swiss Chemical Society (NSCS) on the occasion of IUPAC 97, Geneva, August 23, 1997

On the occasion of IUPAC 97 in Geneva, Switzerland, the New Swiss Chemical Society (NSCS) organized on August 23, 1997, an 'International Meeting of the Society Presidents'. The Presidents and the General Secretaries of all national Chemical Societies were invited. The topic of the meeting was 'The Chemist, Facing the Structural Changes in Chemical Industry'.

After a short opening and introduction (Prof. *A. von Zelewsky*, Dr. *R. Darms*) the two main presentations of the morning session were given by Dr. *H. Kindler* (Member of the Executive Committee, *Novartis AG*, Basel) and Dr. *H. Jucker* (Former Chairman of the Board of *Alusuisse-Lonza Group AG*, Zürich). A discussion followed both lectures (chairpersons: Prof. *F. Diederich*, Dr. *W. Graf*). In the afternoon session the discussion was continued (chairperson: Dr. *H.L. Senti*). The meeting was highly appreciated: 45 participants from *ca.* 30 different countries attented the meeting, representing all important chemical societies and thus *ca.* 80% of the chemists worldwide.

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# Presentation

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## Introduction

The significance and the image of the chemical industry and the position, the mission and the professional perspectives of the chemist have experienced significant changes over time. There were continual changes from the medieval alchemist, a magician searching for gold and immortality, the scientists of the early 19th century creating the modern sciences and striving to understand and control the elements and the processes of life, to the chemists of a hundred years ago, who produced the first man-made dyestuffs on a large scale. The beginning of medicinal chemistry in the 1920s, the increasing knowledge and understanding of chemical reactions and the new material sciences resulted again in a change of the position and the possibilities of the chemist and the scope, structure and environment of the chemical industry. The increasing knowledge about biological processes, the growing relevance of biochemistry and the rapid developments in the field of genetics, in data management and information technology have had again a remarkable impact on the role and the situation of the chemist.

In all these different eras, there was a common feature to the image of the chemists: For people who are not familiar with the profession, there existed always somewhat unclear and sometimes unrealistic notions about the activities, possibilities, limitations and the power of the chemists.

The working environment for the chemist, the mission and working conditions have also experienced important changes during the past few decades. The chemist in industry of the first half of this century was either working in a research laboratory at the bench or in chemical production. In either case, he was working in isolation with little communication and almost no flow of information across the organisation. The business was technology-driven, chemical research and manufacturing were the core competencies of the company, and production had a preferred central position.

Since the 1950s, the pharmaceutical/chemical industry became more and more market-driven. New and innovative products had to be developed and manufactured to satisfy customers. A good integration of R&D projects in the business strategy is important to manage the innovation process successfully.

In the same period the knowledge and understanding of biological and biochemical processes were increasing in scope and in depth at a rapid pace, leading to a stronger influence and position (Stellenwert) of biosciences in the discovery and development process. In manufacturing, the efforts to improve the production pro-

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