

Delegates from all ICO territorial committees will meet twice during ICO-21. They will review ICO activities and policies, admit new members and elect the new bureau, which will hold office during the next triennium, 2008–2011. At every ICO general meeting the assembly elects the president, secretary, associate secretary, treasurer and vice-presidents for a three-year term. Prof. René Dändliker, an ICO past-president and chair of the nominating committee, has written to the territorial committees requesting nominations and endorsements for all available positions (see *ICO Newsletter*, January 2008).

The positions on the ICO bureau are open to all members and it is hoped that a fair geographical distribution, as well as a good balance with regard to professional activity, will be achieved.

Details of the election procedure are in the ICO statutes and the ICO rules and codes of practice, both of which can be found on our website or obtained from the ICO secretary (mlcalvo@fis.ucm.es).

• For more detailed information on the ICO-21 2008 programme, go to the congress website, which can be found at www.iceaustralia.com/ico2008/index.html.

Award shows progress in African science

Mourad Zghal wins 2008 ICO/ICTP Gallieno Denardo prize



Mourad Zghal, a faculty member from the Higher School of Communications of Tunisia, is the recipient of the 2008 ICO/ICTP Gallieno Denardo award.

The ICO/ICTP Gallieno Denardo prize is awarded to young researchers from developing countries (as defined by the United Nations), who conduct their research in these countries. The award is given to scientists under 40 years of age who are active in optics research and who have contributed to the promotion of optics research activities in their own, or another, developing country. This year the prize has been awarded to Dr Mourad Zghal from the Higher School of Communications of Tunisia.

The citation of Zghal's award reads: "The prize is assigned for his original work in the development of numerical modelling techniques for photonic crystal fibres, microstructured optical fibres, polarization, and for his active commitment aimed at the diffusion of research in optics in Africa."

Starting this year, the ICO/ICTP award is named in memory of the late Gallieno Denardo, who was in charge of optics activities at ICTP for more than 20 years.

In 1995 Mourad Zghal obtained his degree in communication engineering from the Engineering School of Communications of Tunis (also known as Sup'Com) in Tunisia. He then received his MSc and PhD degrees in electrical engineering from the National Engineering School of Tunis in 1996 and 2000, respectively. While working for his PhD Zghal developed a sensor based on the tunable diode laser absorption spectroscopy technique for the detection of pollutants. The results obtained show a potential use of this system to measure methane concentration levels present in the urban atmosphere.

From 1995 to 2001 Zghal worked as a senior engineer at the Technical Institute of Telecommunications of Tunis. He then joined the electrical engineering department of the National Engineering School of Tunis, where he began to investigate modelling and characterization of a new generation of optical fibre,

such as photonic crystal fibre – which is at a particularly dynamic stage in Africa.

Since 2003 Zghal has been a faculty member of the Electronics and Physics Department at Sup'Com, which is the leading engineering school dedicated to information and communication technologies in Tunisia. Sup'Com embraces cutting-edge technological advances and has attracted outstanding faculty members and exceptional students from around the country, offering BS, MSc and PhD degrees as well as providing MSc programmes for continuing education.

The comprehensive undergraduate curriculum at Sup'Com encompasses basic science, engineering and laboratory experiments, as well as providing exposure to the humanities. The curriculum also offers social science subjects, teaching students how to create, protect and manage technology with regard to ethics, human values and social benefits. The MSc and PhD programmes are designed to educate and train future leaders in the high-tech engineering system, to serve as a model for broadening communication engineering science and manufacturing and to expand the scope and practice of high-tech engineering.

Zghal's research is carried out at the "circuits and advanced techniques for communication systems" laboratory at Sup'Com, where he founded, and is in charge of the new photonic devices for all optical network group. His current research topics include the theory, design, modelling and characterization of functional optical components, including photonic crystal fibres, polarization mode dispersion compensators, fibre delay lines and photonic crystal-based devices.

Zghal has published more than 70 articles as author and co-author, including international communications, and has served on numerous programme and steering committees of international scientific meetings.

In addition to his research, Zghal has been an



Participants at a young active training workshop in Tunis in 2004. The students are holding camera obscuras.

excellent teacher for more than 10 years, with 34 undergraduate and 14 postgraduate projects to his name. His lecturing fields include propagation and electromagnetism, optoelectronics, optical communication and systems, and optical networks. He has been active in promoting training and research in photonics and optical communications within Tunisia by proposing curriculums, teaching courses and by supervising undergraduate and graduate students.

Zghal has also established several international research collaborations and taken part in the organization of international meetings. He is the founder and treasurer of the Optical Society of Tunisia – a member of the ICO family. He also founded the African Laser Centre, an organization encouraging the exchange of researchers and students across Africa.

Through teaching and educational development, Zghal has been influential in encouraging people to learn, especially in Africa thanks to his international research collaboration initiatives. He received the diploma and cash award at a special ceremony at the Winter College of Micro and NanoPhotonics for Life Science,



Mourad Zghal (right), receiving the 2008 ICO/ICTP Gallieno Denardo award from Joseph Niemela, who is responsible for optics and photonics activities at the Abdus Salam ICTP in Trieste, Italy.



Mourad Zghal in the Gallieno Denardo lecture room at the Abdus Salam ICTP in Trieste in February this year.

held at the Abdus Salam ICTP in Trieste, Italy, on 18 February. He was delivering the invited ICO/ICTP Gallieno Denardo award lecture on “Modelling techniques for photonic crystal fibres and applications”.

• The ICO/ICTP Gallieno Denardo prize committee consists of A Wagué (chair), A Consortini, J Niemela and M Danailov. Nominations for the 2009 prize are now invited at www.ico-optics.org/awards.html.

RIAO/OPTILAS targets young scientists

Conference promotes Ibero-American and Latin-American contributions in optics and photonics.

The 2007 RIAO/OPTILAS conference, the sixth Ibero-American Conference on Optics (RIAO) and the ninth Latin-American Meeting on Optics, Lasers and Applications (OPTILAS), was held at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp) in Brazil on 21–26 October. It followed the precedent set by the last series held in Venezuela in 2004. This international conference is a traditional scientific meeting merging the two former independent conferences RIAO and OPTILAS. The conference focuses on research into optics, lasers and related activities, mainly from Iberian and Latin-American areas.

The conference was chaired by Professor Jaime Frejlich from the Gleb Wataghin Physics



Jaime Frejlich, a professor from the Department of Condensed Matter at the Gleb Wataghin Institute of Physics at Unicamp in Brazil, was the chair of the successful 2007 RIAO/OPTILAS conference.