

Dr. John H. Marburger
Director of Office of Science and Technology Policy

Dear Dr. Marburger:

The mission of IUPAP, the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics, is to assist in the worldwide development of physics, to foster international cooperation in physics, and to help in the application of physics toward solving problems of concern to humanity. IUPAP carries out this mission by sponsoring international meetings, fostering communications and publications, encouraging research and education, and fostering the free circulation of scientists. The free movement of scientists for scientific purposes is one of the most important aims of IUPAP, and it was very active in this area during the Cold War.

During the past year, the IUPAP leadership has heard increasing complaints about the difficulties that scientists from non-US institutions (especially Chinese and Russian colleagues) are having in obtaining US visas to attend scientific meetings and to participate in their collaborative activities at US laboratories. Furthermore, we have learned of students and postdoctoral fellows who have been unable to take up or continue their studies at US universities because of delays or denials of visas.

We understand that, after the tragedy of September 11, severe measures had to be taken, but we believe that overly restricting worldwide scientific interchange will have a damaging impact, both on the US and the other nations. In the past, communications among scientists have been beneficial in times of crises and have thereby enhanced rather than impeded security.

Following IUPAP statutes, if scientists are excluded from attending IUPAP-sponsored international conferences by a host country on ground of national origin, IUPAP should not sponsor any future events in that country until such exclusions have been eliminated. For this reason, IUPAP cannot guarantee that sponsorship will be given to future US-based conferences until improvements to the visa system have been made.

The US has played such a special role in the last few decades in the field of physics that many of us, including myself who has spent many years in US laboratories or universities, deeply regret this situation. We have always appreciated the American hospitality. For this reason, we urge you to try to solve this difficult problem.

Sincerely,

**Yves Petroff
IUPAP President**