Greetings

Maria Giovanna Arcamone
President
International Council of Onomastic Sciences

Madame Vice President of York University Professor Sheila Embleton, members of the Organizing Committee, members of the Scientific Committee, fellow onomasticians, Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of ICOS, the International Council of Onomastic Sciences, and particularly on behalf of the Board of Directors, I welcome you all to the 23rd International Congress of Onomastic Sciences which will be held here at York University in this modern and wonderful building.

In the next days "names will become persons and titles will become articles" as Bill Nicolaisen told me at the very beginning of the Twenty-Second ICOS Congress in Pisa.

I would like to remind you that three years ago, on the third of September, the case for York University, which had been very carefully presented by Professor Sheila Embleton, was approved unanimously by the General Assembly, and I can now say: we were right and the choice was very good.

After ten years of discussion, the General Assembly of ICOS in Uppsala in 2002 approved new Statutes. Article 3 of these Statutes says: "The aims of ICOS are the advancement, representation and coordination of onomastic sciences on an international level and in an interdisciplinary context, and the promotion of World Congresses at reasonable intervals". This last aim of ICOS is very important for the results it has achieved, and I would like to stress this: our World Congresses have ensured the other aims "advancement, independence and coordination of the onomastic sciences".

If we look also at the past, since it was born in Paris in 1938, with the help of its members and of their Universities, ICOS has organized twenty-two Congresses in seventeen different countries. Five countries have hosted two Congresses (France, Spain, Sweden, Germany and Italy), and now six, including Canada.

What does it mean? We have already about 3,000 papers (most of them in the three official ICOS languages), which study in depth a large variety of themes and methods.

Each of the countries and universities and each ICOS member too who prepare the Congress have their own privileged interests and features, and therefore different fields have been treated. That has produced an enormous growth and enrichment in Onomastics. The greater the diversity, the better. For instance in Pisa, where Literatures and Ancient Languages have a very long and special tradition, Literary Onomastics and Linguistic Aspects of "Names in Time and Space" were stressed.

Here in Canada, where so many different people have been living and are living and where modernity is obvious to everyone, we have had two conferences dealing with modern themes: in Quebec in 1987, we had "Proper Names at the Crossroads of the Humanities and Social Sciences" and now at York University in 2008, it is "Names in Contact: Names in a Multi-Lingual, Multi-Cultural, Multi-Ethnic World". So we will hear papers in subsections, such as "Aboriginal, Indigenous names"; another subsection is devoted to "Jewish Names", another to "Toponymy in cartographic language", another to "Business Names", and so on.

For some years more attention has been paid to younger onomasticians with the sections about New Projects.

Before concluding, I would like to underline the fact that these World Congresses of ICOS produce other smaller meetings: people meet here and discover affinities in their endeavours, and then meet again, thinking and working in their common field.

If you look at the Appendices of Newsletter 16, you will find advertisements for several meetings and conferences, where many ICOS members are involved. All this coordination produces advancement and increasing independence in onomastic studies, as the quoted article 3 of the statutes requires.

Onomastics is now an independent discipline!

There would be much to say about the positive aspects of our ICOS but, like Mats Wahlberg in Pisa, I too would like to end these words of greetings with two Latin words *maiora premunt*, i.e., Let's go!

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