

## **Prof. Giovanni Bignami: “The situation in science is in our hands”**

Professor Giovanni F. Bignami, president of COSPAR, visited Moscow upon invitation from Russian Academy of Sciences, on 11th of April just before the Cosmonautics Day. Despite an extremely tight schedule, Professor Bignami agreed to answer several short questions concerning upcoming COSPAR Scientific Assembly and current state of space science.

### **COSPAR was initiated more than 50 years ago in a situation quite different from what we have now. What role does COSPAR plays today in space research?**

It is still a very important role because now there are 45 countries in COSPAR and we take decisions jointly on all projects of scientific research of all kinds. I think it is extremely important in suggesting to space agencies which are the ones that actually do the missions, as COSPAR does not build satellites, but suggests which are the avenues of research that we have to pursue today and tomorrow. This is certainly very helpful.

But COSPAR is even more important if you look outside Europe. For example, the relationship with Russia and Europe in space is a great tradition, and we want to make it even stronger. Russia already participates with many projects of ESA and to make it more important the word of COSPAR can be very influential, for example, the fact that COSPAR says ‘Yes, ExoMars is a great mission and we have to do follow-up to it’. This is the role of COSPAR of doing predictions of what will be good to do in 20 years from now.

### **What do you expect from the 40th Assembly in Russia?**

It is going to be one of the major events of COSPAR. We already have a record number of attendees, over 4 thousand people have sent in their papers. It’s going to be a beautiful event here in Moscow.

Especially for Russia this will be extremely interesting because thanks to support that Russian people have given to us we can invite many more youngsters than usual. We will have new feature namely the program for physics teachers who will come and join the conference so that they learn how to transmit their enthusiasm to the youngsters. Then we will also have possibility for young students in physics and in science in general to attend and observe the spirit of scientific conference. So it will be extremely beneficial for Russian students and indeed all over the world.

### **How do you assess the situation in space science?**

The situation in science is in our hands. We have to make it good, we have to convince governments that future lies in research in general and in space research in particular, so that supporting space means supporting the future.

### **In your recent book «Imminent Science» you have tried to foresee the development of science by 2062, the time Comet Halley comes to Earth next time. What advances in space research are we to expect by that time?**

As I always say the child who will walk on Mars has already been born. So by the time Halley comes back your grandchildren will have walked on Mars and I believe we will have discovered a proof of some form of life in an extraterrestrial planet.