

Dear Friends, dear colleagues, old and new,

It is a great honour for me to open this Symposium at the conclusion of Council's 172nd session, to celebrate its first, held on 7 and 8 October 1954.

When I look at the programme, it brings to mind the currently fashionable management tool of a 360° appraisal. For those of you not fully up to speed with modern management styles, a 360° appraisal involves looking at an individual from all angles, with input from hierarchy, from supervisees and from colleagues to provide the full picture. We Council members will this afternoon find ourselves subject to a 360° appraisal, and I'm much looking forward to it. Almost every aspect of CERN is represented among today's speakers. I wonder, did CERN's Human Resources department influence this programme?

Whatever the case, a 360° appraisal also involves self-appraisal, so as President of Council, I would like to use my time to contribute a little to that.

I have decided to share with you my personal impression of Council, and how it has changed over the almost 40 years of my association with CERN, from being a young CERN user to becoming the Council's President.

The first thing I would like to say is that CERN has been an outstanding institution throughout, always oriented towards, and achieving, excellence. With the benefit of experience, I now know that a crucial ingredient of CERN's successes has always been the sustained support of its Member States through their Delegates to Council.

My first experience of CERN was in Krakow, where as a PhD student I worked on bubble chamber pictures. I first came here as a user in 1975, accompanying my husband, a theorist who had been awarded an Associateship.

For me back then, CERN Council did not exist, or I was not aware of it, and CERN was a benevolent mystery. We would install our experiments and the beams would arrive as if by magic. We didn't have to care what technical prowess or management skill made that happen, it just did. That's a great compliment to both CERN and its governing body – things that don't work tend to be more visible than things that do.

But this idyll could not last. As we moved from the 70s to the 80s, and I moved from a PS experiment to DELPHI, I started to get involved with the management of CERN. I learned that CERN had Divisions, that management was supported by committees... and that one has to prepare documents to be approved by them, like a proposal for the DELPHI Microvertex detector which I was "kindly asked" by the project leader and spokesman to take care of.

In 1991, Council made possible something of vital importance to any Polish physicist, particularly in the domain of high energy physics. Poland became a CERN Member State, followed by the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. For me, this meant setting foot in CERN committees – I became the Polish representative on ACCU, where I gained first hand experience of the interfaces between Council, management, staff and users.

By that time, I had discovered that Council existed. The structure behind the magic started to become clear. And I started to appreciate how clever the people who had set up CERN must have been to create such a flexible and robust management and governance model the likes of which I had not seen before. I learned that, far from being some unapproachable God-like body that pronounced from on-high, Council took an active interest in everything from the welfare of working families, to the cutting-edge science and technology that are CERN's bread and butter.

As the years rolled by, I found myself involved in the SPSC committee, learning how beautiful and rich was CERN's scientific programme in the 90s and reporting back to Poland about initiatives such as CNGS – CERN science reaching, literally, beyond the limits of the laboratory. It was also an occasion to learn how different the spokespersons of CERN's experiments are...

In this century, I have served on the Research Board and on the Scientific Policy Committee – advising Council.

One incident taught me a lot about how Council works. In March 2010, SPC had submitted a paper to Council on a strategy for neutrino physics in Europe, requested by Council under the agenda item: “Scientific Policy Committee, new questions from delegations”, and, being the chair of the SPC panel delegated to produce the answer, I anticipated that our work would attract a lot of discussion. So, I was apprehensive when I asked Enrique Fernandez, the SPC chairman at that time, how it had gone. It took a while for me to understand that his reply of ‘no comments’, was good news. It meant that our work was appreciated, and Council simply moved swiftly on to the next point in the agenda.

In 2010, I also became Poland's scientific delegate to Council, and I soon learned it is not like the scientific committees. It is much more business like and formal – that explained the reaction to our neutrino strategy. A Council meeting is very different from a physics committee meeting, although I have seen the same level of passion in both!

Since 2013, I have been President of Council, and I see it as my job to serve the delegates, so I have more than 40 bosses. But thanks to the way that Council works, when I speak today, I hope that speak for all of my bosses.

To close where I began, my contribution to the 360° evaluation of Council is largely positive. I would like to thank everyone who has served on Council for remaining true to the spirit in which this body was created 60 years ago; for having the vision to pursue a dream of excellence; for having the courage to reach out to new members; and for having the flexibility and humanity to see this wonderful organisation through good times and bad.

And now, let's see what the others have to say!

Thank you.