



# CATALYZER

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## Greeting message from the Chairperson of the National Organising Committee of the 35<sup>th</sup> IChO

On behalf of the Organising Committee, it is my pleasure to send my warm greetings to the participants, mentors, observers and guests from all countries to the 35<sup>th</sup> International Chemistry Olympiad, which will be held in Greece for the first time in July 2003. The IChO will be under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Education and the Association of Greek Chemists. The Chemistry Department of the National and Kapodistrian University will host the competition. We hope it will be entertaining and enjoyable, but mainly we hope to foster the forging of friendships among the competitors. We are planning many social and cultural events and wish all the participants a very good time in Greece.

Dr. Andreas Tsatsas

## Greece, the Land of Gods and Goddesses

It is hard to imagine what civilized life would be like today without the influence of ancient Greece. It also is hard to imagine what the world would be like without the geometry of Euclides or Pythagoras, the logic of Aristoteles, the unique architectural style that has influenced architects all over the world, or even the fables of Aesopos known to children around the globe. Let us not forget also the Olympic Games, with their spirit of world-peace and brotherhood, first conceived and organized by the Greeks; or the Greek language which has enriched other languages with so many words and concepts, like philanthropy, harmony, music, sophistication, architecture, ecology and thousands of others.



Variety is, in fact, the hallmark of the geographical landscape of Greece. On the other hand, there are high mountains and entire mountain ranges such as the Pindus range (also known as Greece's backbone) or Mount Olympus (with its summit the Pantheon, the highest peak in Greece at an altitude of 2,917 metres) and the mountains of Macedonia and Thrace intersected here and there by a few valleys through which relatively small rivers flow. On the other hand, the endless lacework of the coastline produces a series of scenic surprises. It is these heavily indented shores that give Greece such rare beauty, quite unique in the Mediterranean.

Greece offers travellers a unique blend of most beautiful Mediterranean landscape, overwhelming history and culture and a people of great hospitality.

### **Athens, the symbol of freedom, art and democracy**

Athens, the capital of Greece since September 18, 1834, is the oldest inhabited city in the world. The archaeological findings reveal almost 70 centuries of history. According to mythology god Poseidon and goddess Athena (the goddess of wisdom and knowledge) competed, as to who would become protector of the young and rising city. Finally, goddess Athena won, offered a branch of the olive tree as a gift and the city was named after her. In the city of Athens were for the first time the basic principles of life revealed: respect to the human being, isonomy and freedom. These principles, not as ideas, but as a way of living, led to democracy (5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), the first in history. The situation described above provided the ideal environment for art, drama and philosophy to develop, so Athens became the centre of civilisation of the ancient world. It gave birth to some of the greatest artists (Phidias, Praxitelis), writers (Sophocles) and philosophers (Socrates, Plato), whose work is an invaluable heredity for all the generations: buildings, the most famous being the architectural wonder of Parthenon, the temple dedicated to goddess Athena, and sculptures, theatrical plays, speeches and teachings, which have not been overcome by the years, as far as their style and morals are concerned.



Although Athens is most known for its ancient history, the later one is also rich and interesting. It is influenced by the spreading of Christianity, since one of the first and most hearty

Christian communities was formed in our city. There are a lot of Byzantine (Kapnikarea, Ag. Theodoroi) and posterior churches (the Cathedral of the Greek Orthodox Church) that indicate a close relation to Christianity. After the liberation from the Ottoman suzerainty and as the capital of the newly established Greek state, Athens started growing again in population, area and culture. New buildings gave a different look to the city. Some of them are the House of Parliament, the National Library, the University and the Academy of Athens.

Nowadays Athens is a modern and alive city, which offers the foreign visitor unlimited possibilities for sightseeing and nightlife. In the Commercial Centre, Plaka or the Sunday Flea Market of Monastiraki one can take an enjoyable walk, or go shopping. Another wonderful place, sitting right in the centre of the city, is Lycabettus hill, a quite high hill that provides a panoramic view of the city, which is especially attractive in the night. As far as entertainment is concerned, one can choose among a great variety what interests one more. The highlights of summertime are the open theatres, where performances of ancient tragedies and comedies or concerts are given, and the open cinemas.

It is up to the visitors to choose how they spend their time in Athens. We can assure them that they will in no case be bored and that time is never enough for a city like this one!

## **National and Kapodistrian University of Athens**

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens was founded on 3 May 1837 and was housed in the residence of architect Stamatis Kleanthes, on the north east side of the Acropolis. It was the first University, not only in the newly established Greek state, but also in all the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean in general.



The "Othonian University", as it was called before taking its present name, consisted of four Faculties: Theology, Law, Medicine and Arts (which included applied sciences and mathematics). It had 33 professors, 52 students and 75 non-matriculated "auditors". New classes began in a new building, which was designed by the

Danish architect Christian Hansen, in 1841.

A major change in the structure of the University came about in 1904, when the Faculty of Arts was split into two separate Faculties: that of Arts and that of Sciences, the latter consisting of the departments of Physics and Mathematics and the School of Pharmacy. In 1919, the department

of Chemistry was added, and in 1922 the School of Pharmacy was renamed a Department. A further change came about when the School of Dentistry was added to the Faculty of Medicine.

In this first and "heroic" period for Greek education, the University faculty made great efforts to fill the gap between the newly founded institution and older ones in other countries.

Between 1895 and 1911, an average of one thousand new students entered the Faculties each year, a figure which rose to two thousand at the end of World War I. This led to the decision to introduce entrance examinations for all the Faculties, beginning in the academic year 1927-28. Since 1954 the number of students admitted each year has been fixed by the Ministry of Education, on the proposal of the Faculties.

In the 1960's construction work began on the University Campus in the suburb of Ilissia. The Ilissia campus now houses the Schools of Philosophy, Theology and Sciences.

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