Rio de Janeiro 2000

The organization of the 31st International Geological Congress, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 6 to 17 August 2000 is in full progress. Being the first IGC in over a century to be organized in South America, Brazilian earth scientists are aware of the great responsibilities of this enterprise but also very proud of the opportunity to show to our colleagues a little more about the geology of South America. Furthermore, this is also the year in which Brazil commemorates the 500th anniversary of its discovery, making this time even more special.

As part of the organization of the 31st IGC, *Episodes* is publishing a special volume fully dedicated to geological aspects of South America, particularly of Brazil. This publication will be distributed among the participants of the Congress as well as to the regular subscribers of this important scientific magazine.

There are twelve articles that synthesize the research and advances achieved in some geological areas regarding South America. The topics include studies of the Brasiliano-Pan African cycle, the crustal evolution of the South American Platform, the geochronological provinces of the Amazon Craton, and the plate tectonic setting of the Andean Cordillera. Other articles deal with the Paleozoic interior basins, the sedimentary basins of the Eastern Brazilian continental margins, the Neogene of the Llanos-Chaco-Pampa Depression, and the groundwater resources of South America. The remaining papers are more focused on Brazil, discussing the state-of-art of the Precambrian granitic magmatism, Quaternary geology and tectonics, and the vertebrate fossils found in this country. These articles not only provide new data, but also present an overview of what has been and still has to be done in Brazil and South America.

Regarding the program of the 31st IGC, the main topic is "Geology and Sustainable Development: Challenges for the Third Millennium". This topic was chosen to remind us that we are living in a critical time for humanity. Water supply, agricultural and energy resources are only some of the problems that we have to deal with in order to face the continuous population growth on our planet. The Organizing Committee of the 31st IGC hopes to stimulate a serious reflection and discussion about these and other issues, for which geoscientists can offer contributions that, combined with solutions presented by other professionals (e.g., economists, engineers, agronomists, biologists, ecologists, politicians), will ultimately result in a better planning and management of the natural resources of our planet. Nine *Colloquia* are being promoted to address some of the crucial issues of these subjects.

In addition, a total of 74 *Special Symposia* are being organized. These are grouped into topics that range from the origin and evolution of the Earth to the geosciences and human survival, environment, and natural hazards. Almost 160 *General Symposia* that cover approximately the entire spectrum of the geological sciences have been scheduled.

With this program — and the present special volume of *Episodes* — we hope to provide a scientifically enriched and very pleasant meeting to everyone from around the world who is attending this important event.

See you in Rio!!

Alexander Wilhelm Armin Kellner
Executive Editor of this special volume