A new term for *Episodes*

The year 2001 is the first year of the new century and also the first year of the second term of Chinese editorship of *Episodes*.

The Editorial Office in Beijing has taken the responsibility of producing *Episodes* since 1997, following a Memorandum of Agreement between IUGS and the former Ministry of Geology and Mineral Resources of China. As *Episodes* is the "flagship" publication of IUGS, a great effort has been made in the past four years to better serve the international geological community. Just in slightly more than half a year after the office moved to China, the regular rhythm of a quarterly journal and a normal size of approximately 80 pages per issue was restored. Attention then turned to the improvement of the academic and printing quality of the Journal. A number of internationally respected earth scientists from different countries agreed to serve as Associate Editors, and they have played an important role in ensuring acceptable quality and reliability in all published material. The whole process of publication, from manuscript collecting up to final production, has been computerized. Thanks to the constant guidance and support of IUGS, its Advisory Board of Publication, and the Ministry of Land and Resource of China, the quality of the journal is now distinctly better than that in its initial stage of production in China. However, there is still room for further improvement, especially in comparison with top-level scientific journals. In the new four-year term, the Editorial Office will try its best to strive for a step forward.

The commencement of the new four-year term coincides with the change in IUGS leadership and with the adoption of new missions for the Union. As stated by Prof. Ed de Mulder, the new IUGS President, in the 'Editorial' of *Episodes* (September 2000): "In the next four years, our team will work hard towards an International Year of the Earth. In conjunction with this ambition, IUGS, with its sister organizations in the International Council of Sciences, will develop new initiatives for joint projects on applied or fundamental sciences". Following the recommendations of the IUGS Strategic Planning Committee, *Episodes* will concentrate on publishing

authoritative review articles, covering subjects of broad interest to earth scientists, other scientists, and society in general. The Editorial Board will strive to offer to our readers high-quality review papers and articles on high-priority issues, such as reducing vulnerability of communities to natural hazards, mitigating the effects of waste and pollution, understanding global environmental change, biodiversity, and managing resources and protecting the environment. *Episodes* will also continue to function as a newsletter for IUGS, with news, results of work by commissions, projects etc., calendar of events, and will serve as a forum of discussions of key issues. While maintaining the current sections, some new columns will be introduced.

To begin with, 20 abstracts are assembled in this issue under the title "*Perspectives for geosciences in the 21st century*". These have been selected from the Abstract Volume of the 31st International Geological Congress held in Brazil in 2000, and the authors are active at the frontiers of their disciplines. Despite the incomplete coverage of academic fields we are presenting them here as a message for the new century.

A new section "Profile" will be added from this issue. We plan to introduce readers in this way to the officers of the IUGS and its various member organizations. We hope that this new section will enhance our readers' understanding of IUGS.

The Editorial Office wishes to express its sincere gratitude to all the authors, readers and other earth scientists for their support in the past. We anticipate an even closer cooperation with them in the future.

Zhang Hongren

Editor, *Episodes*