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PREFACE

„QUO VADIS?” – „WHERE ARE YOU GOING” PLANT BREEDING?

Today, this question is more timely than ever, especially in Poland. In view of the more and more rapid changes in the development of plant breeding technologies, tightening competition and increasing demands expressed by largely misinformed and GMO (Genetically Modified Organisms) scared societies, we are forced to ask in which direction plant breeding is moving and what it offers for the more and the less developed world.

Research Institutes, institutions and organizations, and among those IHAR, in Poland, active in the field of plant breeding, germplasm conservation and enhancement, are directly affected by the socio-economic change, which has taken place in 1989. For the time being, the change affects us more domestically than internationally. However, when Poland will join the European Union Polish plant breeding will get exposed to all positive as well as negative factors and trends the EU societies and their plant breeding organizations deal with. We need only ponder the demographic changes that have taken place in the last few years. The over 6 billion world's population, the declining birth rate in the industrialized nations, and the aging of the population present sets of new challenges for genetic crop improvement through plant breeding to be met. And, in the plant breeding research especially, we have seen advances that just a short time ago would have been unthinkable.

The present conference might thus stand for a new direction which the Institute of Plant Breeding and Acclimatization has taken in recent years. The changes sooner or later will affect other institutions in Poland dealing, like IHAR, with crop improvement and agricultural research. The pathways of consolidation and plant breeding concentration that we have entered in Poland are ones that we, together with our authorities, are determined to follow. Conquering new pathways is the

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purpose of structural changes in Poland's plant breeding as well as it is a prerequisite to set new priorities for innovative research. And even though it requires courage and persistence, we must be prepared to leave the well-trodden, familiar path, to set up a new organization structure of plant breeding in Poland and to continue the transformation for the future. In doing this, we, like all scientists, strive never to lose sight of large measure of responsibility we have towards our consumers and the environment.

So, where the world of changes will take us? None of us can predict it for certain. But, in our daily activities, every one of us can make a contribution to better meeting of demands set up by our societies, to combat hunger, which is not, so far, present in Poland, nor in any European country. But, it really is present not so far from our continent. We are not allowed to lose it from our sight and if necessary to make the second "green revolution" based on crop plants improved with the use of biotechnology. Therefore, through the improvement of crops done in more and more efficient market economy organization structures and with the use of more and more sophisticated tools we should be committed to the above indicated goals, and to the well-being of everyone in Poland, Europe and on this planet. Today and in the future, for which the transformations of crop improvement and socio – economic systems are being done.

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