

Dunkirk,

29th of May, 2017

Mrs President of the European Foundation for Plant Pathology (EFPP) and President of the French Society for Plant Pathology (SFP),

Dear Diana,

Mr. President of the American Phytopathological Society (APS)

Dear Tim,

Dear members of the EFPP and the SFP boards

Dear members of both societies,

Dear colleagues and dear participants,

It is of course a great honor, it is of course also an even greater pleasure to welcome you all today and here for this joint 12th EFPP-10th SFP conference.

But to be honest, even today, it is difficult to realize that such a large community of scientists dedicated to all aspects of Plant Pathology and from so many different places in the world is gathered here in Dunkirk. How did we end up here in the Kursaal, this so nice conference center located between a wide and white sandy beach and a casino, in this French coastal region so closely bordering Belgium, and situated just opposite the cliffs of South-East England ?

The idea of an EFPP meeting in France actually cristallized since Pr. Malgorzata Manca, former President of the EFPP contacted me after the Cracow meeting that was held three years ago, in 2014, in Poland to ask whether the French community felt ready to organize the next EFPP meeting.

When I transmitted such a nice proposal to the SFP board, the idea of organizing

- for the first time a meeting in Northern France and

- at the same time - and also for the first time - a joint meeting between SFP and EFPP,

such an idea arose almost instantly, after the Colmar meeting that took place two years ago, in 2015 in France. European and French planets became aligned, we then just had to make the dates coincide by organizing a joint conference this year.

Another great and unprecedented step has then been performed thanks to Diana Fernandez, President of SFP, and Tim Murray, President of the APS, who considered during last year's APS meeting the possibility for the French and the American societies to collaborate closer and had the idea of taking the opportunity of this conference to organize a joint session with the APS. Thanks to the collaboration of Linda Kinkel, associate Editor-in-chief of the new Phytobiomes journal, the joint session has been designed and dedicated to the phytobiome, and this French meeting, after being enlarged to an European one, became an intercontinental one.

Thank you then to our four American colleagues, also including Marilyn Roossinck, Pennsylvania State University and Johan Leveau, University of Davis California for accepting our invitation to join our conference with both their expertise and enthusiasm.

Thank you to all the European colleagues who responded positively and enthusiastically to the invitation to participate in the Scientific committee of the conference, as well as to all the colleagues from the EuroRegion and partners in the INTERREG SMARTBIOCONTROL project portfolio for their willingness to participate in the Organizing committee, with a specially warm thank you to Pr. Monica Höfte from the Ghent University in Belgium who kindly accepted to chair the Scientific committee.

Considering all their greatfull help in the most recent days – even and mainly the most desperate-looking situations – thank you so much to the Dunkerque Tourist Office and all my colleagues from both the Littoral Côte d'Opale University and the Unit of Environmental chemistry and Interactions with Living Organisms for their vital support and their help essential to the realization of this event.

If innovative science and deepen knowledge are both clearly vital issues for us as researchers and scientists, agroecology and the way it could benefit from them are not necessarily as obvious for all of us. Because agroecology is a global paradigm supposed to lead to plant production efficiency at both the economical and environmental level, it specifically aims at plant protection strategies that will allow to control crop diseases in a more sustainable manner. And we are here together today to make the demonstration that progress in science and permanent efforts in innovation are the key determinants for such a combination of food security and a safe environment. Biodiversity (of soils, of crops, of pathogens), biocontrol and integrated disease control strategies, innovative and sustainable seeds, the integration of epidemiological data into agronomic practices, new emerging diseases and global knowledge of mechanism interactions are all major concerns for us, plant pathologists, and are to be exemplified here during this conference thanks to all of you.

I will now briefly present some of the main features of this conference :

First of all the PhD students poster awards: more than 50 abstracts submitted by PhD students have been accepted for poster presentations. A specific tag, with this lovely golden-looking wheat head on it, is to be displayed on the corresponding posters, and an ad hoc committee has been established, which gather a total of 7 colleagues whose mission of evaluation will be coordinated by Alia Dellagi from AgroParisTech. Two types of awards are actually to be offered :

- one for French-speaking students, with 3 copies of the Fingerprint of the Living Book dedicated to Environmental Genomics, kindly offered by our colleague Denis Faure (CNRS, IPS Paris-Saclay) ;
- one for other students, with 3 copies of the Essential Plant Pathology book edited by APS and kindly offered thanks to Tim Murray.

This will allow us to reward a total of 6 students, and we are delighted about this.

In addition, thanks to the contact we established with Mike Jeger, Editor-in-Chief of the European Journal of Plant Pathology, the conference will lead to the production of a special issue focusing on the conference's title, *i.e.* "Deepen knowledge in plant pathology for innovative agroecology".

Again, an *ad hoc* team of six guest editors was built, with our colleague Ali Siah from the Charles Violette Institute in Lille in charge of the coordination. These editors will invite speakers to submitted papers corresponding to their talk, and here are listed the main deadlines Ali established with Mike Jeger and the six guest editors :

Opening of the submissions: June 15, 2017

Closing of the submissions: September 30, 2017

Closing of the reviewing process: January 31, 2018

Online publication: March 1, 2018

We also remind you that as one of the editors of the book „Plant Diseases and Their Management in Organic Agriculture”, our colleague Maria Finckh from the University of Kassel, Germany, was offered the possibility by APS Press to sell the book at the best possible rate at the conference.

If you are interested in this offer, please get in touch with her.

Concerning our Societies, both an assembly and boards are also scheduled:

An SFP general assembly: Tuesday 30th of May, Salle Jean Bart, 6.20 PM
and SFP and EFPP boards meeting : Wednesday 31st of May, Salle des conseils,
7.00 PM

And finally my last words before I leave the stage to Diana and then to Monica :

Two opening lectures will be given this afternoon, which are listed here and will introduce some major concepts and issues linked to the emergence of plant health risks and to the central importance of biodiversity as a whole in plant protection, given respectively by our colleagues Charles Manceau, head of the Plant Health department in the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health

& Safety – Anses in France and Philippe Lemanceau, head of the Agroecology Research Unit at the INRA Bourgogne-Franche-Comté.

After these lectures, do not forget to come to the welcome cocktail offered at the Dunkirk city hall by the Dunkirk Mayor, and to which you will be welcome by Pr. Pierre Hardouin, our University's vice-Président for Research.

On behalf of the organizing committee, on behalf of the scientific committee, of the EFPP and of the SFP, I warmly welcome the 257 participants to this conference who come from France and from the whole of Europe, but also from different American continents, from the Middle East and even from Asia.

We wish you the most rewarding and enjoyable conference and together ... we'll make Dunkirk more than a movie ... !

Prof. Philippe Reignault

Program Secretary of the 12thEFPP-10thSFP conference