

DECISIVE PLEA RAISES \$10,000

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By Chahe Tanachian, Montreal, Canada, 12 December 2009

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In July 2009, I made a general plea to help avoid Armenia's suspension as a member of the International Astronomical Union (IAU). In the past, the IAU had waived Armenia's membership fees up to 2002. In 2007, one year before Victor Hampartousmian's centennial, Armenia's membership was in danger as the dues had not been paid for the last 5 years. The IAU's regulations stipulate that if a member country does not pay its dues for a period of 5 years, the membership becomes suspended. At that time, Armenia's Byurakan Observatory succeeded in paying the dues for the year 2003 with the help of VivaCell, a mobile communications company in Armenia. In 2008, the IAU once again informed Armenia that all its membership dues must be paid in order to remain a member of the Union. The IAU's triennial general assembly was to take place at the beginning of August 2009 in Rio de Janeiro and Armenia received a final notice in June 2009 with a final deadline to pay all arrears by July 31st, 2009. Failure to pay by this date would result in the suspension of Armenia as a member of the IAU.

Within hours and days after my appeal on July 19, 2009, many people started getting in touch with me to confirm readiness to make donations for this undertaking. One of the first individuals who

reached me directly was Armineh Garabedian, President of GlobVison Inc. from Montreal. She asked for some details related to this issue and she instantly made a pledge to pay the full amount for the year 2004. Her generous donation was the first payment that was transferred and reached the IAU before the July 31, 2009 deadline. Then, with the intervention of the President of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia, Radik Mardirosian, the dues for the year 2008 were also paid before the deadline. At this point, 4 years of dues remained to be paid.

During the IAU's triennial assembly at the beginning of August 2009, it seemed like the Executive Committee was going to discuss Armenia's membership suspension issue and also to most likely reject financially sponsoring the upcoming summer 2010 International School of Young Astronomers to be held at the Byurakan Observatory in Armenia. The following intervention came at the highest level. The Prime Minister of Armenia himself instructed his Minister of Science and Education, Mr. Armen Ashodian to resolve this matter immediately. Through the Minister, the Executive Committee members of the IAU were informed that Armenia will pay all of its remaining dues within a period of one week. Based on this information and the fact that some payments had already been done to the IAU account, the Executive Committee withdrew Armenia's membership issue from their current agenda and also agreed to reconsider sponsorship of the 2010 International Summer School for Young Astronomers in Armenia.

In the meantime, based on my plea, the donations were coming in literally from all across the world. Dozens of individuals sent in their gracious donations for a purpose they believed in. At this point, another important donation came in, not from an individual, but from an organization. The ARF Armen Karo Student Association contacted me through their President Kevork Kazanjian to inform me that they will donate the equivalent of one full year of membership to help out Armenia in this matter.

At this point, the AGBU transferred directly to the IAU account the sum of all donations received, bringing the total amount of contributions to 10 000\$.

By the end of August 2009, Armenia transferred the remaining 2 years of dues to the IAU and thus completed all the payments up to 2009.

Armenia became once again a fully instated member of the International Astronomical Union.

Finally, Armenia's authorities have indicated that from now on the IAU's annual membership fee will be including in the State Budget.

I would like to sincerely thank all the donators who contributed to this decisive plea. Their support in this matter is highly significant for Armenia's astronomy community.

I truly believe that their momentous gesture was a true demonstration of devotion towards the ultimate values that maintain the spirit of the Armenian People and also demonstrates our collective duty to remain faithful to the spirit of a mastermind, Victor Hampartsoumian.

A special thank you to Dr. Dikran Abrahamian from Toronto who posted my plea on his website (keghart.com) by which many readers got the opportunity to get acquainted with this issue. Finally, I would like to thank the AGBU Montreal Chapter for their unwavering support towards the AGBU Manuel Keusseyan Armenological Studies. Without that Program, all of this would not have become reality.

Every accomplishment starts with the decision to try.

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