“A virtual bridge between two Millennia”

During the Dresden Conference in 1973, Dr. Lester Goodman, President of I.F.M.B.E., and the Administrative Council of the Federation invited the affiliated Societies to organize Regional Meetings on Medical and Biological Engineering like those already held in Great Britain, in Scandinavian Countries, in United States and so on.

Israeli Society (I.S.M.B.E.) and Italian Society (A.I.I.M.B.) following those suggestions, studied the possibility to start with the initiative to organize a Mediterranean Conference on Medical and Biological Engineering.

During the Edinburgh Conference (1975) the general program was prepared and French (S.E.E.) and Yugoslavian (Y.S.M.B.E.) Societies accepted to cooperate to the initiative, while the I.F.M.B.E., through the suggestions of the Secretary General Jan Kuiper, offered suggestion and assistance.

Finally during the Ottawa Conference (1976) the final program of the Conference was defined: the First Mediterranean Conference has been sponsored by the "International Federation for Medical and Biological Engineering" (I.F.M.B.E.), and organized by the "Associazione Italiana di Ingegneria Medica e Biologica" (A.I.I.M.B.) in co-operation with Israeli (I.S.M.B.E.), French (S.E.E.) and Yugoslavian (Y.S.M.B.E.) Societies. The first Conference was held in Sorrento, September 1977.

The Conference takes place at three yearly intervals, generally in the year following the I.C.M.B.E.
At the time of MEDICON '92 in Capri, unfortunately, our meeting was sadly affected by a number of international conflicts and, in particular, in the Balkan area. While we respect the different ideologies and expectations of all those Countries, we are happy that, Peace won and now under the scientific flag of I.F.M.B.E. and MEDICON, our Friends from Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Slovenia are here in Ischia to participate to MEDICON and HEALTH TELEMATICS 2004. At the moment, there is only the longing for peace and the sincere wish that, as Science has no political frontiers, the right peaceful solution, reflecting the expectations of other Countries in the World and their people, will be found.

The 2004 is a particularly important year because, it is also the 37th anniversary of the foundation of A.I.I.M.B.; for this reason, we are especially honoured to have received the High Patronage of the President of the Republic of Italy, jointly with those by Italian Ministry of Education and Scientific Research, Italian Ministry of Health, Regione Campania, Polo delle Scienze e delle Tecnologie - University of Naples Federico II, and also by European Federation of Organizations for Medical Physics (E.F.O.M.P.), Società Italiana di Radiologia Medica (S.I.R.M.), Associazione Italiana di Fisica in Medicina (A.I.F.M.) and Associazione Italiana di Telemedicina e di Informatica Medica (@.I.T.I.M.).

The new Millennium will be an important milestone for communications and relationships between people: the industrial and post industrial societies will give way to the Information Society. This new Society is already changing our lives, our social behaviour, our relationships, our culture, and probably it will create new kind of differences between the social classes. It is extremely important to understand this revolution now that we are still in time to consider all the opportunities: the implications of the tremendously rapid technological development and the new
resources available for modern kinds of organization, not only for our work and activities, but also for our life as a whole.

The future barriers between individuals and countries will not be only in terms of gaps, but mainly in terms of culture, technological innovation, infrastructures and modern new organization. Telematics is reducing geographical distances and will change time scales. But this will be true only where the infrastructures, the organization of the activities, the educational level and attitudes of people will adapt to meet the new conditions. The scenario for the Health Systems is almost science fiction. However, in many European countries, we already have very important examples of real applications.

With these considerations and for the importance of Information and Communications Technologies in the modern health care systems, MEDICON 2004 adopted the theme “Health in the Information Society” and took the name “MEDICON and HEALTH TELEMATICS 2004”.

The Administrative Council of A.I.I.M.B. and myself are honoured to welcome Prof. Joachim Nagel, President of I.F.M.B.E., the Secretary General Prof. Ratko Majarevic, and all the Administrative Council of I.F.M.B.E., jointly with the National General Secretaries Committee of I.F.M.B.E., with its chairman Prof. Akos Jobbagy, for their presences here in Ischia.

A warm welcome and thanks are due to the International Academy for Medical and Biological Engineering (I.A.M.B.E.), which has planned a meeting of its Council, chaired by prof. Guenter Rau.

A particular welcome and wishes are devoted the new born institutional organization E.A.M.B.E.S. “European Alliance for Medical and Biological Engineering & Science” with its President Prof. Niilo Saranummi and all the
Committees of the two Divisions, which have scheduled their meetings during the Conference.

A warm welcome is due also to other two important scientific Groups supported by European Commission and which have planned their meetings during the Conference: CHART “Cartography of Biomedical Engineering in Europe: Advancement of Medicine and Health Care Through Technology”, chaired by Prof. Niilo Saranummi and Mark Van Gills, and the EU project “MyHeart” chaired by Dr. Josef Lauter.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the International Scientific Committee and particularly the I.F.M.B.E. Liaison Officer Prof. Ratko Majarevic, for their valuable suggestions and all the support given to the preparation of the programme.

Finally, I should like to express my sincere appreciation to the groups of young volunteers and students who, many of them, for the first time, will undertake this important experience of organizing and participating to an international event. A Conference is also an educational moment. Particular thanks to all the supporters and sponsors and the exhibitors for their participations.

Personal warm thanks are due to the Regione Campania and its President, to the Municipality of Ischia, to the E.R.S.A.C. “Ente Regionale di Sviluppo Agricolo in Campania”, to the Ente Provinciale del Turismo E.P.T. in Naples and to the General Direction of S.E.P.S.A. “Società per l’Esercizio di Pubblici Servizi Anonima”.

The Organizing Committee and myself express our gratitude to SOGEI “Società Generale di Informatica” and also to TELECOM Italia and CISCO for their strong support also for the networking and all the technical facilities.
Special thanks are addressed to Dr. Fausto Arrighi and Roberto Mugnai by RAIS MULTIMEDIA, who supported us in the preparation and the assistance of all the multimedia technical facilities.

We have organised a number of social gatherings during the Conference to unite us in this warm and cordial atmosphere on this wonderful Mediterranean Island.

Finally, my thanks are due to my wife Rita, my daughter Renata, my son Umberto, my scientific Secretary Gabriella Boscaino and all the co-workers, who have helped me in all the preparation.

I wish to thank cordially the local Administration for their hospitality and all the distinguished Authorities for their presence here.

To conclude, a heartfelt thanks to all the participants with the wish for every success in their work at the Conference.