

President of EURO, Chair of the award committee, Executive and Council Members of EURO, Colleagues and Friends.

When about 4 months ago the president of EURO, our colleague Gerhard Wäscher emailed me with news of this award, I was, to say the least, filled with surprise, amazement and disbelief. Why me?

I looked back to the acceptance speeches of my predecessors in receipt of this award. The same sense of surprise at being honoured in this way appears in every one of these presentations. Nevertheless, I feel that I can claim greater cause for surprise and bewilderment than any of them, who surely had greater claim than I to this recognition. After all, what is a South African doing receiving an award for service to EURO!

Some of this audience may not even be aware that the South African OR Society (ORSSA) is a member of EURO. When in the later 1980's IFORS recognized the initiatives of EURO in setting up a regional association of OR societies, they moved to structure the international body on regional lines. But where did that leave South Africa? There were no other societies to form an African region. I am pleased to say that I was able to play a role, both in convincing ORSSA to seek affiliation with EURO as the natural home for our OR approach, and to convince EURO that we could make meaningful contributions.

The link between ORSSA and EURO has been mutually beneficial in many areas. I should like in this context to make specific mention of the OR in Development thrust of IFORS and EURO. I believe this to be a vital thrust in making OR relevant to the needs of the developing world. This is not the time to expand on this theme, but is here that the role ORSSA in EURO has been particularly relevant. A number of my South African colleagues have made significant contributions to these EURO initiatives, and I have been thrilled to have some part in this activity.

I must use this opportunity to acknowledge with deep gratitude the role of my dear wife Sheena. The distance and cost of travelling from Cape Town has been such that she has only rarely been able to accompany me to EURO and IFORS events. In any case, for many years we could not both leave our 4 lovely children, now of course well grown up. So she held the home together while I participated in EURO and other professional activities, maintaining the support base for me to return to. If anyone really deserves a "distinguished service medal", it is she. This for you love.

To all my colleagues and friends in EURO (and INFORMS), many thanks again for this deep honour.