Guidelines for Speakers, Chairs and Discussants at an International Symposium on Forecasting (ISF)

I. SPEAKERS

An ISF is organized for exchanging ideas. Its professional success is measurable by the amount of new ideas you get and how much you are able to attract peoples’ attention to your own work. These guidelines are intended as support for those who are planning an oral presentation at an ISF and for session chairs.

Salespersons are masters in presenting even quite poor ideas in a way that excludes the possibility that a normally informed person would not get the message. More amateurish speakers, on the other hand, may make presentations that nobody understands. One doesn’t need to participate in too many meetings before one encounters speakers with the following characteristics:

- the voice is too low
- the pronunciation is hard to follow
- the speaker speaks too fast
- the overhead (OH) text is unreadable, usually too small
- tables contain 40x30 entries of 7 digit numbers
- tables and graphs are poorly explained
- speaker has planned for a much longer talk and what he/she manages to say during the allotted time doesn’t make sense when the talk has had to be stopped prematurely.

1. Preparing the texts - An abstract of the presentation has to be submitted to the Program Chair at date given in the Call for Papers. At that time you should have at least a sketch of the paper to be presented. The paper can then be worked upon so that at least a provisional paper can be distributed to those who ask for it at the ISF.

2. Rehearsal - Remember that many points sound differently when presented orally than when the reader can go back and forth over the printed words and symbols. Rehearse with some colleagues present, preferable persons who know nothing in advance about your presentation. Pay attention to time. Plan your talk so that you are able to choose in advance what you are going to say, so as to avoid an arbitrary cut at the session presentation.

3. Visual aids - Your visuals are to convey the information in an understandable form to the audience. Remember that at a keynote session people with very different backgrounds may be present. Avoid complex mathematical texts and use Power Point type OHs. In specialized sessions, OHs can be more technical, but remember that most people will not be able to digest many complex derivations during a 20-30 minutes talk. Tables and graphs should be as simple as possible.

4. At the ISF - Try to find your session chair and inform him/her about your arrival. Check the location of your room, so that you can arrive there in time, preferably 5-10 minutes in advance and be sure that the session chair knows you are there. Stay aware
of the time for your presentation. The chair will stop your presentation at the end of the allotted time, regardless of whether or not you are finished.

Speak clearly and loud enough to be heard in the back of the room. Be aware of the fact that the ISFs are truly international; often more than half of the audience has another first language than English. If you yourself belong to this group, try to speak slowly and as clearly as possible.

Stay for the entire session, for the courtesy and benefit of your audience.

II. CHAIRS

1. In advance - Check with the speakers in your session that they will come and ask them for their handouts.

2. At the ISF - Be in the session room 5-10 minutes before the session starts. Check the condition of your meeting room, especially the projector and the microphone (if necessary). Check speakers’ names and pronunciation, titles and affiliations.

During a session Start by stating the time rules of the session. Save five minutes after each talk for questions and comments. Keep introductions very brief. Insist that all speakers use microphones -when one is provided. Make sure the presenters do not block the screen. Hold each speaker to the allotted time as printed in the program. Remind speakers about remaining time. Prepare flash cards for five minutes and one minute remaining. Do not allow even one extra minute, because then you will deprive the next speakers of time that was promised to them and for which they have prepared their talks. If a presenter ends early, use the time for discussion. Do not start the next presentation early, because someone from another session may have planned to listen to selected talks in your session.