

**Herman B. W. M. Koeter****Thomas Hartung****Dear WC7 participants,**

since we took on the challenge, in an euphoric moment during WC5 in Berlin, to organize the 7th World Conference on Animal Use and its Alternatives, in short WC7, a lot has changed both in the world of alternative methods and in our private lives. Both of us changed jobs and moved our families away from beautiful Italy: Thomas took the position of Director of CAAT and professor and chair of Evidence-based Toxicology at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, USA and Herman went to Brussels to head a new non-profit scientific organization (Orange House Partnership) with the aim of to provide scientific assistance in the area of chemical and food safety to developing countries.

More importantly, however, we have seen, since the start of REACH and the animal testing ban for cosmetic ingredients in Europe, the milestone publication of the National Research Council for toxicity testing in the 21st century in the US and the creation of JaCVAM in Japan to mention only a few highlights. We have had the successful WC6 in Tokyo and we have experienced that the field of the 3Rs has expanded, with more and more methods available, validated and accepted. We have witnessed that globalization is at work, that our wish to see more formal international collaboration has come true. We are aware that what was until recently termed “alternative” has become mainstream science and an integral part of the life sciences. These developments have created business opportunities and can solve regulatory problems, most notably in priority settings. All together the field is moving to the forefront of scientific developments, leading the path towards improved quality assurance and predictive usefulness.

Thus, it seemed appropriate to give WC7 the motto “CALLING ON SCIENCE”, both in the sense of challenging established sciences with new approaches and in calling for a sound scientific base for innovative technologies and concepts. A substantially increased number of sponsors, a record submission of abstracts and the support of many individuals and friends have made it possible to welcome you in this beautiful part of Rome. We strongly believe that we can offer you an outstanding opportunity to meet with colleagues and friends and to share, discuss and return inspired to your offices and laboratories at home. On the occasion of the 50th birthday of Russell & Burch’s renowned 3R principles you will experience a flourishing field ready for the challenges of the life sciences in the 21st century.

We hope you will enjoy WC7 as much as we intend to.