

## PREFACE

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The School of Geology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki accepted with pleasure the proposal of the Academic Prof. Gernot Rabeder, Director of the Paleontological Institute of Vienna University, for the 12<sup>th</sup> International Cave Bear Symposium (ICBS) to be held in Thessaloniki in 2006. It was an honour for the School and at the same time a challenge for the colleagues who were ready to organize and participate to the Symposium. The School of Geology not only accepted the organization of the Symposium but also contributed financially to its success. The ultimate proof is the present volume of the proceedings of the Symposium which is hosted in the Scientific Annals of the School of Geology.

The participation of thirty five European Universities and Institutions, the relatively high number of participants, the enthusiasm of our students, the high level of the scientific contributions and the interesting and well-organized excursions undoubtedly place the 12<sup>th</sup> ICBS among the successful paleontological events in Greece. Of particular interest were the visits to the Almopia Spelopark in the Aridea Natural History Museum and to the Loutra Physiographical Museum, where findings of the excavations of the last 16 years regarding the Cave Bear are displayed.

The Symposium gave the scientists the great opportunity to present and discuss their research on the Cave Bear, one of the best known Pleistocene mammals worldwide.

One of the most positive contributions of the 12<sup>th</sup> ICBS was the holding of the main part of it in Aridea, a lovely small town of the area in which materials of the Cave Bear were found. The local authorities participated in the Symposium and addressed it, making known to the local people and particularly to the politicians their will and their attempt to sensitize the society to geoparks and geotourism. The Symposium became a very good example of the development of collaboration of scientists with local authorities and local societies regarding this matter.

The prevalent opinion is that the 12<sup>th</sup> ICBS was very successful and very fruitful and of course its success is mainly related to the hard work of all the members of the Organizing Committee. A major part of the success is due to the enthusiastic group of our students, both under- and post-graduate, who made their best for the Symposium. The warm hospitality of the Aridea Municipality was among the factors which added greatly to the successful organization.

To all those who in whatever way offered their assistance to the Symposium, the School of Geology would like to express its gratitude and its sincere thanks. Special thanks are due to the President of the Organizing Committee, Mrs. Evangelia Tsoukala, Assistant Professor of the School of Geology, who spent valuable time to offer us the unforgettable 12<sup>th</sup> ICBS. I would also like to thank Prof. George Eleftheriadis, who, from the post of the President of the Committee of the Scientific Annals of the School of Geology, did his best for the publication of the volume of the Proceedings of the Symposium in the Scientific Annals.

In addition to the efforts of the Organizing Committee the Symposium benefited greatly from the financial support of Schools, Institutes, Organizations, Ministries, Prefectures, Municipalities and Museums. Since the economic support of a Symposium plays a major role in its success, on behalf of the School of Geology, I would like, at this point, to warmly thank all the sponsors.

Lastly, hoping that the present volume of the 12<sup>th</sup> ICBS Proceedings will be a valuable tool for the students and the scientists dealing with the Cave Bear research, I would like to thank all the participants who contributed, each with his/her on presentation, and altogether with their discussions and remarks, that the Thessaloniki - Aridea Symposium be considered as an outstanding Cave Bear Symposium.

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