

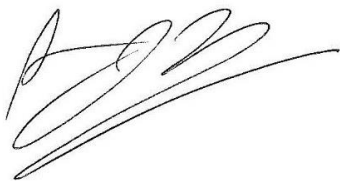
26 April 2021

Dear colleagues,

It is with sadness that I write to you for the first time as Chair of IARU in response to the terrible fire that occurred in Cape Town last week. As you have no doubt seen, the blaze damaged several buildings of the University of Cape Town. It is truly fortunate that no lives were lost, but it does appear that parts of the library have suffered extensive damage and that a portion of UCT's irreplaceable collection of documents, artefacts and specimens has been lost. The botany building and fossil-plant laboratory have also sustained severe damage.

The loss of such priceless heritage is a blow to the UCT community and to all of us in turn. The IARU community stands in solidarity with UCT in its shock and grief. I have already written to Vice-Chancellor Phakeng, to express both my deep sadness and my confidence that this event will not delay or diminish the courageous and creative work of UCT in research and education throughout the world. IARU's own librarian contact group is in communication with colleagues at UCT and I know that you share my eagerness that, in the face of this loss, IARU members offer our support to our friends in Cape Town. I hope that you will stand ready to respond however you can, in the coming weeks and months, as the full extent of the damage is ascertained and UCT shares its plans for recovery.

With very best wishes,



**Professor Stephen J. Toope**  
**IARU Chair**  
**Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge**