INVITATION

The organizers warmly welcome your participation in the 12th Symposium of the International Association for the study of fossil Cnidaria and Porifera, which will be held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman. Young scientists and established colleagues are motivated to present and discuss their research results.

A good opportunity is offered to experience state of art results on fossil cnidarian and porifera, Phanerozoic bioconstructions and the interplays to fields like palaeoecology and palaeogeography, sedimentology and biology. Experience the unique geology in Oman and join us on field trips to famous locations in the Hajar and Huqf Mountains.

Hoping to see you in Oman in February 2015!

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Michaela Bernecker (GUtech Muscat, Oman)
Michel Claereboudt (SQU Muscat, Oman)
Markus Aretz (UPS Toulouse, France)
Wolfgang Kiessling (FAU Erlangen, Germany)
VENUE
Muscat is an ideal meeting place situated SE of the Arabian Peninsula with a very welcoming and friendly atmosphere for visitors from all countries.
Seeb International Airport is directly connected to many cities in Europe and Asia.
The German University of Technology (GUtech) was established in 2007 and is offering internationally accredited BSc and MSc programs according to German standards. The new Halban Campus offers a conference venue in a modern architectural setting.

TENTATIVE PROGRAM
Thu 5th – Sat 7th February 2015: Preconference fieldtrips
Sun 8th – Wed 11th February 2015: Scientific Sessions
Thu 12th – Sun 15th February 2015: Post conference fieldtrips

SCIENTIFIC TOPICS and SYMPOSIA
IASFCP symposia have traditionally a focus on taxonomy, palaeobiology, paleoecology and paleobiogeography. Related to the coral bearing strata that can be found in Oman from Permian to recent and we would like to suggest a focus at the 12th Symposium in Muscat on scleractinians and bioconstructions from the Meso- and Cenozoic.

The general session topics are planned:
Biology and Palaeontology
Cnidaria and Porifera through time
Cnidaria and Porifera through space
Phanerozoic bioconstructions

In addition the following Symposia are suggested:
Biomineralisation
Corals and sponges in reef crisis
Corals in mixed carbonate /siliciclastic settings.

TECHNICAL SESSIONS
Oral presentations will be scheduled for 20 minutes including 5 minutes for discussion. Only power point presentations are possible. The conference language is English. Poster sessions with sufficient time for discussions will be planned and participants are encouraged to display posters (A0 format).
SULTANATE OF OMAN

Muscat is the capital of the Sultanate of Oman. It is bordered on its North and West by the Al Batinah plain and the Western Al Hajar Mountains. The Gulf of Oman forms the eastern periphery of Muscat. Since 1970, with the ascension of Qaboos bin Said as Sultan of Oman, Muscat has grown rapidly to a pulsating economy and a multi-ethnic city, with over 700’000 inhabitants.

Currency
1 Omani Rial (OR, OMR) is divided into 1000 Baisa. All major credit cards are accepted, including - although to a lesser extent - American Express. ATMs are widely available throughout the country.

Language
Arabic is the official language, but English is widely spoken. German and French are spoken by some hotel staff.

Temperature
February is characterized by temperatures ranging from 19° to 25°, whereas the relative humidity lies around 73%. Average precipitation is 18mm. The water temperature will be around 23°.

Clothing
Oman is a Muslim country and visitors should be sensitive to its customs. Women should not show bare shoulders or low cleavage. Shorts and skirts should be below the knee. Covering the head is required when visiting mosques. Men should were trousers and a shirt.

Electricity
In Oman the standard power source is 240V 50Hertz AC. The Type G British 3-pin Electrical Adapter Plug is used.

TRAVELLING

The Muscat International Airport (MCT) can be reached by air via the major hubs in the Gulf region. Direct flights are offered by Oman Air from Europe (Frankfurt, Munich, Milan, London, Paris and Zurich) http://www.omanair.com/en/

Travelers arriving at Muscat International Airport can travel to any destination within the city by Taxi. Details about taxi rates can be found here: www.omanairports.com

Additionally, there are several car rental companies available in the arrivals concourse: omanairportcarrental.com

The following websites may be helpful when planning your travel to the Sultanate of Oman:
http://www.omantourism.gov.om
http://www.destinationoman.com
http://eng.bigbustours.com

www.gulfventures.com are offering guided tours and activities for accompanying persons, that can be booked via website.

VISA

Passengers from many countries can receive their visa at the airport on arrival by 5 OMR payment for a 10 day visa. Passport holders of the nationalities, who are eligible for visa on arrival are listed at http://www.omanair.com/uk/en/travel-info/tourist-visa-to-oman.
For more details on Visa requirements as well as customs regulations see www.omanairports.com.
All participants of nationalities, who need to apply for visa in advance have to check for formalities and arrange visa application by themselves.
FIELD EXCURSIONS
The field trips will start and end in Muscat.

Pre-conference field trips
FT 1: 5. Feb. 2015: 1 day Permian limestones with sponges and corals in the Baid area. Fieldtrip leaders: Aymon Baud, Switzerland & Oliver Weidlich, Wintershall & TU Berlin. 4WD trip in the Hajar Mountains SW of Muscat. Lunch included, ca. 65 OMR.


Mid-conference fieldtrip
FT 3: 1 day Geology of Oman in the western part of the Capital area: Ophiolithe and sedimentary cover. Fieldtrip leader: Frank Mattern (SQU & FU Berlin). Bus trip including lunch, ca. 10-20 OMR depending on the number of participants.

A minimum number of participants is necessary to run the fieldtrips and the number of participants per trip is limited for safety reasons.

Post-conference field trips
FT 4: 12, Feb. 2015: 1 day modern corals and reefs in the Muscat area. Marine biology trip leader: Michel Claereboudt, SQU. Boat trip to the Daymaniyat islands including diving or snorkeling. Costs will be calculated on the number of participants for the boat trip and additional costs for the divers apply. 30-50 OMR.

REGISTRATION AND CONGRESS FEES
The registration deadline for all presenters is July 15th, 2014. The information to be provided needs to include your topic/title of presentation and your Passport copy for submission to the Ministry for approval. Late submissions cannot be accepted.

The registration fees cover the costs of organization, abstracts volume, coffee breaks and lunches during the conference and ice-breaker reception.

Formal participant: 150 OMR
Students and PhD students: 100 OMR
Accompanying persons: 50 OMR
Congress gala dinner: 50 OMR

Current exchange rate (04/07/2014):
1 Omani Rial = 1.87Euro = 2.60 US Dollar

ACCOMMODATION
Conference participants are responsible for making their own accommodation arrangements. As the Sultanate of Oman is a growing tourist destination the Capital area offers a wide selection of hotels in any category.

We will negotiate with reasonable priced hotels in the area and provide details via the congress website when registration is open. Prices will range from
A) 30 OMR per room; B) 45-50 OMR, C) 70-75 OMR for single/double occupancy including breakfast.

The suggested hotels are expected to offer a shuttle bus service to the conference location.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS
Abstracts will be published as a volume of the GUtech Conference Publication Series. Conference proceedings are planned for publication as a special volume by Springer, Heidelberg, Germany.

IMPORTANT DEADLINES
Registration:
-- July 15th, 2014
All fees (registration, fieldtrips):
-- September 1st, 2014
Abstracts:
-- September 1st, 2014
Manuscripts for proceedings:
-- February 2015

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