FOREWORD

Professor Tim de Zeeuw
Chairman of the ING Board

It is a pleasure to follow in the footsteps of the previous Chairman, Carlos Frenk, and write the foreword to the 1999 Annual Report of the Isaac Newton Group of Telescopes, on behalf of the ING Board.

The past year has been another excellent one, scientifically and operationally for the ING, with high scientific output, low downtime, improved scientific atmosphere within the ING and excellent prospects for the immediate future.

ISIS and UES continue to be workhorses on the WHT. The WFC is in strong demand, and so is the infrared camera INGRID which was recently completed by ING staff. Unique private instruments, such as the ESTEC STJ-based camera, and the F/NL/UK wide-field integral-field spectrograph SAURON, produced their first scientific results. UES studies of extra-solar planets attracted world-wide press coverage. The INT produces high-quality wide-field survey data, and also the JKT is used effectively.

The ING has very recently started the commissioning of the natural guide star adaptive optics system NAOMI, which will exploit INGRID. The Board has agreed an exciting medium term development plan for the WHT which is supported by PPARC and by NWO. This includes funding for a coronagraph to work with NAOMI, design studies towards a multi-object spectrograph (MOSAIC) and adaptation of OASIS (an integral-field spectrograph currently on the CFHT) for use on the WHT with NAOMI. The new ING Newsletter is a very effective way of informing the astronomical community of all that goes on at the ING.

The ING is continuing to adapt to changing scientific and financial conditions and has, through the Director's good management, coped well with the changes imposed by the closure of the RGO and constraints placed upon the Joint ING Operations Budget. Maintaining scientific output has been possible through major improvements in the mode of working and model for operations and is assisted by specific investments in new computing networks for the facilities, and restructuring resources, allowing new and more efficient systems be put in place. The addition of postdoctoral fellows funded by PPARC has had a very positive effect on the scientific environment of the ING.

The astronomical landscape in Europe is changing rapidly, with the coming on line of the VLT, the prospect of UK membership in ESO and the start of the construction phase of the GranTeCan.

The Board encourages the on-going efforts to find ways in which the ING might collaborate with the GranTeCan project. These include the development of a joint sea level facility and the possibility of collaboration in instrumentation. The Board is convinced that the ING's present success and status is a good reflection on the energies and skills of the Director who has worked very hard to take the programme forward and to develop the strategies which are needed to ensure that the ING continues to provide key astronomical facilities for many years to come.