

Dear Reader,

Looking forward, reflecting the year past

At the end of the year, reflecting the year past and drafting wishes and hopes for the year to come have become a tradition. Looking back in the year, where science in general

and physics in particular have been in the spotlight, few events stand out. The Nobel Prize awarded to Jim Peebles *"for contributions to our understanding of the evolution of the universe and Earth's place in the cosmos"*, and to Michel Mayor and Didier Queloz *"for the discovery of an exoplanet orbiting a solar-type star"* is a landmark standing out in our understanding of and our place in the universe, touching the deepest questions of human culture. In the name of SPS, I congratulate deeply the laureates.



Special highlights of the past year in the life of the society mark the George Lemaître symposium in Bern and the symposium on the 150th anniversary of the periodic table in Zürich. Lemaître proposed in 1927 the idea of an expanding universe. Further, the understanding of how the elements came into existence is again based on our understanding of cosmology and its further evolution. Starting with Big Bang nucleosynthesis the abundancies of light elements can be settled, whereas heavier elements are cooked inside stars and emerge in cataclysmic events such as supernovae explosions and neutronstar mergers. Cosmology and astrophysics did set the stage in 2019, which is also clearly underlined with the first-ever image of a black hole cast in April using the Event Horizon Telescope and by the successful launch of the CHEOPS mission yesterday.

Looking forward to the new decade, nobody can tell what it will bring. Physics advances in all fields it engages in, offering insights - sometimes unexpected - and new results, also contributing to the solution of important societal problems like diminishing natural resources and climate change. Strategic thinking, driven by deep and fundamental questions to resolve, will pave the way for gaining insights at the smallest and up to the largest scales; allowing advances in a deep human quest.

I wish you in the name of the SPS Board to you and your loved ones happy holidays and a healthy, peaceful and successful New Year 2020.

Hans Peter Beck

President

Image: *Event Horizon Collaboration* [\[more\]](#)

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