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Bigger Telescopes and Better Instrumentation: Report on the 1992 ESO Conference

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The Conference "Progress in Telescope and Instrumentation Technologies" took place in Garching on April 27–30, 1992. This meeting is one in a series of Conferences organized every other year alternately by Kitt Peak National Observatory and by ESO. The next one should take place in two years in Arizona.

The Conferences organized by ESO have a twofold purpose. First, as a meeting at the worldwide level to present and discuss recent advances in telescopes and instrumentation. Second, for the general ESO community to inform themselves of technological progress both at ESO and other observatories. This Conference was attended by 270 external participants and 69 ESO participants. There were 110 posters and 61 talks.

The first two days were devoted to large telescopes, mirror fabrication, and enclosures (51 posters, 32 talks). Adaptive optics was the subject of the third day. The fourth day saw a review of a number of optical and infrared instruments for the VLT and other telescopes. A brief outline of these topics follows.

1. Telescopes and Mirrors

At the present time thirteen individual telescopes with diameter larger than or

equal to 6.5 m are under construction or are planned with various degrees of funding (see Table 1). The total collecting area of these telescopes is 675 m² or 70 times that of a 3.5 m telescope.

This shows the intense activity taking place now in all major observatories not only to build these telescopes but also to equip them. Among these groups building large telescopes, the most suc-

Riccardo Giacconi – ESO's Next Director General

In its 67th meeting in Garching on June 4 and 5, 1992 the Council of ESO appointed Prof. Riccardo Giacconi as Director General for the period 1993 – 1997. He succeeds Prof. Harry van der Laan whose five-year term ends this year.

Prof. Giacconi was born in Genova (Italy) in 1931 and got his education in Physics at the University of Milano, before emigrating to the United States. In his activity he has been associated with several leading institutions including Princeton University, American Science and Engineering, Harvard University and has received many honours for his achievements in science.

Prof. Giacconi is famous for his pioneering work in the development and application of X-ray technologies in astronomy, leading to the discovery of the first extra-solar X-ray source. The X-ray satellites UHURU (launched in 1970) and the Einstein Observatory (launched in 1978) are associated with his name.

Since the establishment of the Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore in 1981, Prof. Giacconi has been its Director, while holding a professorship at the John Hopkins University and, more recently on a part-time basis, also at the University of Milano. The ST Scl has been central to the Hubble Space Telescope's success in spite of its optical flaw and serves a world-wide community of HST users. At ESO his association with the HST will continue, because ESO Headquarters is the host of the European Coordinating Facility for the HST. The ECF is a joint venture of ESO and the European Space Agency (ESA).

The prime assignment of the new Director General will be the completion of the Very Large Telescope (VLT) Observatory which ESO is constructing with European industry in Chile's Atacama desert, while at the same time operating the world's largest infrared/optical observatory, the La Silla Observatory for the astronomy community in ESO's member states.