

## **Celebratory Symposium for Gerhard Bringmann**

With a celebratory scientific symposium, the University of Würzburg and the "Gesellschaft Deutscher Chemiker (GDCh)" (German Chemical Society) is going to celebrate the 65<sup>th</sup> birthday of Gerhard Bringmann, chemistry professor from Würzburg. The colloquium takes place on Friday, November 4, at 2:15 p.m. in Lecture Hall B of the Chemistry Central Building on the Hubland Campus.

With the symposium, the University of Würzburg and the GDCh acknowledge a renowned and committed scientist who has, simultaneously, made great contributions at the humanitarian level.



### **Gerhard Bringmann's Career**

Bringmann studied chemistry and biology in Gießen and Münster, where he got his PhD in 1978. After a postdoctoral research stay at the *Institut de Chimie des Substances Naturelles* in Gif-sur-Yvette in France, he returned to Germany and did his habilitation in 1984.

Of the two calls to the universities of Vienna and Würzburg, he accepted the latter and has been the holder of the Chair of Organic Chemistry I at the University of Würzburg since 1987. In Würzburg, he found ideal conditions and excellent cooperation possibilities in his field of research – the chemistry of natural products – so that he declined an attractive offer to become the Director of the Leibniz Institute of Plant Biochemistry in Halle, and stayed at the University of Würzburg.

### **His Great Passion – The Chemistry of Natural Products**

During his time in Würzburg, Bringmann has been working on natural products from marine organisms,

bacteria, and fungi, mainly from tropical plants. Together with his research group, he searches for new bioactive molecules from nature, elucidates their three-dimensional architecture, investigates how these – sometimes complex – structures are 'synthesized' by the living cells, and tests their biological activities.

Another focus lies on the chemical synthesis of these natural products in the laboratory, which aims at improving their pharmaceutical properties through chemical modification. Bringmann works on different classes of compounds, among them novel alkaloids (i.e. nitrogen-containing natural products) from tropical plants that act against cancer cells, or, depending on their individual structures, against pathogens of severe infectious diseases like malaria, African sleeping sickness, or AIDS. Bringmann's pioneering work is documented in more than 700 publications and patents.

### **His Second Great Passion – the Excellence Scholarship Program BEBUC**

One of his particular endeavors is the promotion of future academics. During his numerous trips to Africa he saw that many young people there have no chance to achieve an academic career – even though these countries would urgently need new professors. For this reason, Bringmann founded, together with Prof. Virima Mudogo (alumnus of the University of Würzburg and later Vice President of the University of Kinshasa), the Excellence Scholarship Program BEBUC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, supported mainly by the foundation Else-Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung.

The program presently supports about 180 outstanding young Congolese from 25 partner institutions of the University of Würzburg during their academic careers – at 16 universities, seven secondary schools, and two primary schools. A unique feature of the scholarship program is the combination of excellence and internationality with private sponsorships and a mentoring throughout the entire studies, also abroad, until achievement of a professorship in the Congo.

Together with the other two members of the committee, Prof. Karine Ndjoko Ioset (Lubumbashi and Würzburg) and Dr. Hypolite Mavoko (Kinshasa),

Bringmann and Mudogo have evaluated, each single scholar personally. By the program, Bringmann and his colleagues want to provide the Congo with a new generation of excellent young professors. In his talk, Prof. Mudogo will report on the scholarship program.

### **Awards and Distinctions**

Bringmann's most successful scientific work, during nearly 30 years of research and teaching in Würzburg, has been awarded many times, among others by the *Prize for Good Teaching of the Free State of Bavaria*, the *Adolf-Windaus Medal*, and the *Paul-J.-Scheuer Award for Marine Biotechnology*, and, in the humanitarian field, by the *Civic Medal 1st Class of the Congolese People in Gold* and the *Gusi Peace Prize*.

Furthermore, he was awarded two honorary professorships in China and even four honorary doctorates in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Moreover, Bringmann is a member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts and of the African Academy of Sciences.

### **Further Activities: Initiating Networks**

During his time in Würzburg, Bringmann has participated in numerous research networks, among them four DFG-funded interdisciplinary collaborative projects (in German *Sonderforschungsbereich*, SFB). From 2003 to 2015, he was the speaker of the SFB 630 "Agents against Infectious Diseases".

Furthermore, he launched or coordinated numerous other activities in the research of bioactive natural products. Thus, he chaired, over many years, the Program Committee of the Natural Product Meetings in Irsee (*Irseer Naturstofftage*) and initiated regular mini-symposia for PhD students in this field, which have continuously, taken place since 1991 (meanwhile over 50 times). Moreover, Bringmann founded, in 2006, the *Africa Circle at the University of Würzburg* (today *Forum Africa Center*), of which he was the speaker during the first years.

### **Commitment for the University of Würzburg**

Bringmann was a member of the Senate of the University during 10 years, among them two as the Chairman and two years as the Vice Chairman, and a member of the University Council (also two years as the Vice Chairman). And he was, for two years, the Vice Dean and, for another two years, the Dean of the Faculty of Chemistry and Pharmacy.

### **Program of the Event**

After a welcome address by the Chairman of the GDCh Local Committee of Lower Franconia, Prof. Bernd

Engels, the President of the University, Prof. Alfred Forchel, the Dean of the Faculty of Chemistry and Pharmacy, Prof. Christoph Lambert, and the present Managing Director of the Institute of Organic Chemistry, Prof. Frank Würthner, will acknowledge Bringmann and his merits in their presentations.

This will be followed by scientific contributions by four of Bringmann's former PhD students, who are working in the research on bioactive natural products: Prof. Mathias Breuning (University of Bayreuth), Dr. Tanja Gulder und Prof. Tobias Gulder (both at the Technical University of Munich), and Prof. Dirk Menche (University of Bonn).

After that, Prof. Mudogo will present the Excellence Scholarship Program BEBUC, followed by the key-note lecture by Prof. Lutz F. Tietze titled "Fascinating Natural Products and Much More from Würzburg and Göttingen". Tietze is, so to say, Bringmann's "academic brother". Like Bringmann, he has done his PhD studies with Prof. Burchard Franck in Münster and has also passed his habilitation there. The two scientists have known each other for more than 40 years and have also done research together. Tietze has been holder of the Chair of Organic Chemistry in Göttingen for many years and is presently a Distinguished Research Professor of the State of Lower Saxony (*Niedersachsenprofessur*).

### **Future Plans**

Although formally reaching his pensionable age, Bringmann is far from thinking of his retirement. As a senior professor, he wants to further pursue his research, giving lecture courses on natural products chemistry, and will, above all, further extend the Excellence Scholarship Program BEBUC. "During the past years, I have very much enjoyed this nice combination of high-ranking science in Würzburg and promotion of the academic youth in the Congo, as a highly disadvantaged country, and I'm looking forward to further setting trends, in these fields", says Bringmann.

### **Contact**

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On the Scholarship Program BEBUC and the NGO *Förderverein Uni Kinshasa e.V.*:  
[www.foerderverein-uni-kinshasa.de](http://www.foerderverein-uni-kinshasa.de)

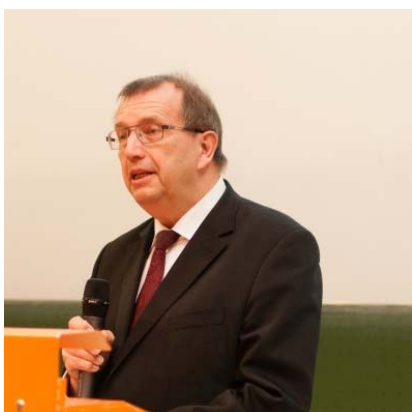
## Photos of the Celebratory Symposium on November 4, 2016, part 1



*Prof. Gerhard Bringmann with his predecessor Prof. Siegfried Hünig, and former member of the Bavarian Provincial Parliament ('Landtag') Walter Eykmann*



*With the Chairman of the German Chemical Society (GDCh) of the section of Unterfranken Prof. Bernd Engels*



*Prof. Alfred Forchel, President of the University of Würzburg*



*Prof. Christoph Lambert, Dean of the Faculty of Chemistry and Pharmacy*



*Prof. Frank Würthner, Managing Director of the Institute of Organic Chemistry of the University of Würzburg*



*With the University Chancellor Dr. Uwe Klug*

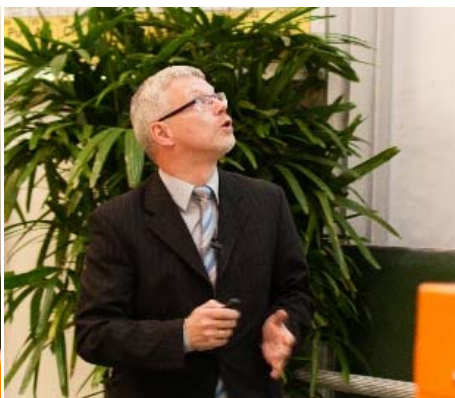


*With the President Prof. Alfred Forchel, Chairman of the Institute Prof. Frank Würthner, and Dean Prof. Christoph Lambert*

## Photos of the Celebratory Symposium on November 4, 2016, part 2



*Prof. Dirk Menche (University of Bonn)*



*Prof. Matthias Breuning (University of Bayreuth)*



*Dr. Tanja Gulder (Technical University of Munich)*



*Prof. Tobias Gulder (Technical University of Munich)*



*Prof. Virima Mudogo, Congolese cooperation partner of Gerhard Bringmann and co-founder of BEBUC*



*Keynote speaker Prof. Lutz Tietze (University of Göttingen)*



*With the speakers (from the left): Dr. Tanja Gulder, Prof. Dirk Menche, Prof. Matthias Breuning, and Prof. Tobias Gulder*



*Dr. Hypolite Mavoko Muhindo, new BEBUC re-entry scholar*

## Photos of the Celebratory Symposium on November 4, 2016, part 3



*With the keynote speaker Prof. Lutz Tietze*



*With the experts from Haemato-Oncology (from the left): Prof. Hermann Einzel (also Vice-President of Research), Prof. Gernot Stuhler (Wiesbaden), and Heidrun Bönig*



*All together: The Panel of the NGO Uni Kinshasa e.V., which organizes the Scholarship Program BEBUC (from the left): Coco Mvumina, Justin Monsenepwo, Prof. Karine Ndjoko, Prof. Gerhard Bringmann, Christine Wolf, Dr. Hypolite Mavoko, and Prof. Virima Mudogo*



*With the speakers (from the left): Prof. Virima Mudogo, Prof. Lutz Tietze, Dr. Tanja Gulder, Prof. Tobias Gulder, Prof. Dirk Menche, and Prof. Matthias Breuning*



*With Dr. Claudia Waldhorn and Dr. Ulrich Schunke*



*From the left: Prof. Ulrike Holzgrabe (Pharmaceutical Chemistry), Dr. Heike Bruhn (Faculty of Biology), and Prof. Barbara Sponholz (Physical Geography and Vice-President of the University of Würzburg for Equality)*