

The AIBS Awards

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The AIBS Awards

Excellence in environmental diplomacy.

ROBERT E. GROPP

During the annual meeting of the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) Council of Member Societies and Organizations in Washington, DC, last December, 2012 AIBS president Susan Stafford recognized Marta Szigeti Bonifert with the 2012 AIBS President's Citation. This award is presented by the AIBS president to recognize meritorious accomplishments by individuals or groups in the biological sciences.

Szigeti Bonifert is the executive director of the Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC). In this capacity, she leads a program tasked with building large-scale cooperative programs among policymakers, the public, non-governmental organizations, and business to address environmental issues across the European Union. Stafford selected Szigeti Bonifert for the honor because of her exemplary work building these collaborations to advance science through complex and politicized environments.

Under Szigeti Bonifert's leadership, the REC has worked on sustainable development, health, biodiversity, green transportation, and a sustainable education program for students, noted Stafford. "She is recognized as an international environmental diplomat," Stafford continued. She works on climate change and biodiversity and on increasing coordination among regional countries.

After receiving her award, Szigeti Bonifert delivered a compelling talk to the AIBS Council. Her remarks highlighted the challenges and opportunities that arise from collaborative action. Drawing on the accomplishments of the REC, she showcased how science can be used to inform sound public policy decision-making, including on those issues that transcend geopolitical boundaries.

Szigeti Bonifert was born to Hungarian parents in London and has traveled and studied extensively throughout the world. She worked for the Environment Institute, the Hungarian Ministry for Environment



Photographs: Julie Palakovich Carr.

and Water, and various multinational companies for 10 years before joining the REC, of which she became executive director in 2003.

Szigeti Bonifert earned a degree in management from the International Management Center of Central European University (CEU) and a bachelor's of science degree in psychology and biology from the University of Kuwait, then went on to earn a master's of business administration degree from the Katz Graduate School of Business, at the University of Pittsburgh, with a focus on strategy and human resources.

Szigeti Bonifert is currently a member of several environmental organizations, including the Environmental Management and Law Association, of which she was the first managing director; AGROINNOVA (Torino University's Center of Competence for the Innovation in the Agroenvironmental Field), of which she is a scientific adviser; the Hungarian Business Leaders Forum, for which she is head of the environmental committee; the ROMASTER Foundation, of which she is president; the

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's Environmental and Social Advisory Council; the Board of Trustees of the CEU Business School Foundation; the Europe-China Clean Energy Centre management board, for which she is the 2011–2012 chair; and the Environment and Security Initiative, of which she is also chair. She has also been a member of the Global Energy Prize jury since 2009 and is a trained presenter for Al Gore's Climate Reality Project.

To view Bonifert's presentation or to listen to a recording of her talk, please visit www.aibs.org/events/2012_council_meeting.html. From this page, you may also view the agenda for the 2012 Council meeting and access recordings of other presentations.

Prior President's Citation Award recipients are listed at www.aibs.org/about-aibs/award_aibs_presidents_citation.html.

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