Introduction of the Conference Chair
Nicoletta Calzolari

Let me first express to His Excellency Dr George Abela, President of Malta, the gratitude of the Program Committee and of all LREC participants for his Distinguished Patronage of LREC 2010. We thank him also for having kindly offered us the Presidential summer residence, the beautiful Verdala Palace, for our welcome reception.

This is the 7th LREC. LREC is still young in comparison to other conferences of the field, but after only 12 years we have established a new record: we received 930 submissions and have accepted 662 papers. We have 22 Workshops and 9 Tutorials. These figures are a confirmation that the field of Language Resources and Evaluation is flourishing more than ever. In support of this statement is the fact that also ACL and COLING this year decided to have a specific Track called "Language Resources".

So far more than 1100 people have already registered. LREC thus continues to be – as many say – "the conference where you have to be and where you meet everyone". The high acceptance rate is an important characteristic that gives LREC its special flavour, even more important considering the flaws of the reviewing system of main conferences. But mostly we don't want just the "peaks" (if we can speak about peaks), we want to provide a global vision of the field (the "lay of the land"), with its many features (and for many languages): LREC is therefore the event where we gather a broad representation of the current trends of the field. The preparation of this year program was as usual a challenge, like a big puzzle, but also quite an interesting task giving the perception of the huge range of topics in which our community is engaged. Some of this year main trends:

- Semantics and Knowledge, in all its variations, from annotation of anaphoric, temporal, spatial information, to ontologies and lexicons, to disambiguation, named entities recognition, information extraction, and so on.
- Subjectivity, declined in various nuances: emotions, opinions, sentiments. It becomes almost a workshop track inside the main conference.
- Machine Translation and multilingualism, almost another track.
- Infrastructural initiatives, strategies, national and international projects are of major interest, as usual inside the LREC community.
- Both Lexicons and Corpora keep their strong position.
- Tools and systems for text analysis at many levels.
- Dialogue and discourse, with contributions from both the Speech and Text communities.
- Speech and Multimodal databases, tools, systems.
- And finally evaluation and validation methodologies, as a topic per se and as an important part of quite many papers.

A problem we still have to face is the relatively small number of submissions from the Speech and Multimodal communities. We have always thought that it is important for the field to integrate work from the Written, Spoken and Multimodal areas, and to have a conference where these communities may come together. But the tradition of separate conferences makes this objective difficult to meet. We need to do more in this respect.

It is interesting to notice how, while all the other topics occur in all major conferences (maybe in different proportions), a characteristic of LREC is the relevance of what we can call "meta-research" issues. I think this reflects a peculiarity of the Language Resources and Evaluation community, which has recognised since some time the importance for the field of promoting infrastructural activities. These are considered not so rewarding from the typical researcher viewpoint, but are of extreme importance for the field as a whole. Using an ecological metaphor, the majority of researchers tend to look after their individual tree (individual benefits), but some must take care of the forest (the best for the field)! I think this is a great merit of our community, which is now starting to be recognised also outside. Why this? Probably because language resources and evaluation themselves have an infrastructural nature, they are in need of cooperation, and this reinforces the awareness of the importance of joint efforts and coordinating actions. It is a fact that initiatives towards standardisation, distribution, reusing, integration and now sharing mostly come from this community.

LREC has also introduced innovations in the style of our conferences: posters (previously used mostly in Speech conferences and used at LREC since its first edition, thanks to the insistence of Joseph Mariani) are now used in every conference. Many colleagues even like poster sessions more than oral sessions.
This year we introduce other innovations. We make an experiment of two "special sessions" on hot topics – Temporal and spatial annotation, and Emotion and sentiments (this is even a special track) – where the last slot is left for discussion, to be introduced, stimulated and moderated by the chair. If successful we may have more special sessions in the next edition.

The LREC Map

This year's biggest innovation is the LREC Map, which finds its proper place inside the infrastructural actions. I was thinking about this already two years ago, but it was too late to introduce it. Somehow it is even better to start now because of the coincidence of new important initiatives around Language Resources in the last years and of new windows of opportunities. What is the Map? As all the authors know, we have asked to provide some basic information about all the resources (in a broad sense, i.e. also tools, standards, evaluation packages, etc.) – either used or created – described in their papers. Without all the authors' efforts the Map wouldn't exist, but now they gain much more: the whole Map will be available to everyone!

Lack of information and documentation about resources is, in the e-science paradigm, a very critical issue. With the Map we aim not only at starting to fill this gap, but also at encouraging the needed "change in culture". We need in fact to make each and every researcher aware of the importance of his/her personal engagement in documenting resources. It is a task as important as creating new resources and is not an accessory to be disregarded. It is the necessary service to the whole community that we all have to provide (again, the forest and not only the tree!).

Even if it is a simple idea, it has a great potential for many uses, in addition to being an information gathering tool:
- It may become a great instrument for monitoring the evolution of the field (useful also for funders), if applied in different contexts and times.
- It can be seen as a huge joint effort, the beginning of an even larger cooperative action not just among few leaders but among all the researchers.
- It can thus become also an "educational" means towards the broad acknowledgment of the need of meta-research activities with the active involvement of many.
- It is also instrumental in introducing the new notion of "citation of resources" that could provide an award and a means of scholarly recognition for researchers engaged in resource creation.

I am proud of the fact that the Map is already being adopted in other contexts. The *Language Resources and Evaluation* Journal will also make use of it, as announced in the new Special Issue *LREC 2008: Selected papers* (freely accessible to all LREC participants). And quite recently also COLING 2010 has decided to make use of the Map. The Map is taking its first steps outside home!

Acknowledgments

The final section is dedicated, as usual, to the acknowledgments to all those who made this LREC possible and hopefully successful.

I thank first the Program Committee, and recognise their dedication in the huge task of selecting the papers, but also in the various aspects around LREC. Among them a particular thanks goes to Jan Odijk and Joseph Mariani, who have been very helpful in the preparation of the program. And to Khalid Choukri, who is in charge of so many organisational aspects around LREC.

I thank ELRA, which is the promoter of LREC, its own conference.

I am particularly grateful to Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, for his support to LREC2010 and his interest in multilingualism, a great topic in LREC

I thank our impressively large Scientific Committee, composed of 537 colleagues. They did a wonderful job, succeeding to complete their reviews on time for so many papers. Also on behalf of the Program Committee, I warmly thank all the various Committees that have provided support to this LREC, the International Advisory Board and the Local Advisory Board.
A particular thanks goes to the Local Organising Committee, and especially to Mike Rosner and Claudia Borg, who have worked very hard for many months to find the best solutions to many local issues.

I am grateful to authorities, associations, organisations, committees, agencies and companies that have supported LREC in various ways, for their important cooperation.
I express my gratitude to all the sponsors that have believed in the importance of our conference, and have helped with financial support.
I thank the workshop, tutorial, and panel organisers, who complement LREC of so many interesting events.
A big thanks goes to all the authors, who provide the "substance" to LREC, and give us such a broad picture of the field.

I finally thank the two institutions that have provided economic support and dedicated so much effort, in terms of manpower, to this LREC, as to the previous ones, i.e. ELDA in Paris and my group at ILC-CNR in Pisa. Without their commitment LREC would not have been possible. The last, but not least thanks, are thus devoted, with all my sympathy, to the people of these institutions who have worked so intensely to make this LREC possible in all its details: Roberto Bartolini, Olivier Hamon, Vincenzo Parrinelli, Valeria Quochi, Sergio Rossi, and in particular Irene Russo (substituting this time Sara Goggi in maternity leave) and Hélène Mazo, a pillar of LREC. I can say for sure that without their daily work and real commitment for many months, LREC would not have happened. We have solved together the many big and small problems of such a large conference. They, together with other young researchers of these two institutions and with a number of volunteers, will assist you during the conference.

Now LREC is in your hands, the participants. You are the protagonist of LREC, you will make this LREC great. So, at the very end, my greatest thanks go to you all. I may not be able to speak with each one of you during the Conference (I'll try). I hope that you learn something, that you perceive and touch the excitement, fervour and liveliness of the field, that you have fruitful conversations (conferences are useful also for this) and most of all that you profit of so many contacts to organise

new exciting work and projects in the field of Language Resources and Evaluation, which you will show at the next LREC.

I particularly hope that funding agencies all over the world will be impressed by the quality and quantity of the initiatives in our sector that LREC displays, and by the fact that the field attracts practically all the best groups of R&D from all continents. This is a sign they must take into account in their programmes and funding strategies, and I recognise that they have started to do so. The success of LREC for us actually means the success of the field of Language Resources and Evaluation.

The tradition of holding LREC in wonderful locations with a Mediterranean flavour continues, and Malta is a prototype of the typical LREC location! I'm sure you will enjoy Malta during the LREC week. And I hope that Malta will enjoy the invasion of LRECers!

With all the Programme Committee, I welcome you at LREC 2008 in such a wonderful country as Malta and wish you a fruitful Conference.

Enjoy LREC 2010 in Malta!

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Nicoletta Calzolari
Chair
7th International Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation
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