**DRAFT**

**CEI Presentation to ACS Council, 08/22/2018**

**J.H. Exner, Interim Chair**

**Mr. President, fellow councilors. Fifteen years ago I spoke to you about several environmental problems and climate change. At that time, a few of us on the Committee on Environmental Improvement (CEI) also began to work on sustainability: to define it, to explain it, and to educate about it. In short, to put sustainability in everyone’s thoughts, to make it part of everyone’s decision-making. Because of the efforts of many chemists, then and now, we are now closer to this goal. Other organizations have picked up the theme, and this year the United Nations formulated 17 sustainable development goals for the year 2030.**

**A sustainable world requires generational transitions: in attitudes, in practices, in technology. Existing technology and chemicals challenge us today. Evolving technology and chemicals will challenge us tomorrow. We all know that. CEI’s duty, as it was 15 years ago, is to address these. With other committees, we are completing policy statements on energy and hydraulic fracking. We are examining the crucial issue of clean water. We are preparing a fact sheet on the emerging field of synthetic biology, subject of Monday’s Presidential Symposium.**

**All of us must remain alert to what I call “science hubris”, by which I mean “we already know so we don’t need to look into it very much.” Recall that it was common to dispose of solvents on the ground because, after all, they would evaporate. They didn’t. But we were so sure that we managed to contaminate trillions of gallons of precious ground water. Nor did we grasp that flame retardants, tailored for plastic TV cabinets, could migrate and eventually cause harm. Yet they did, in the Arctic: to humans and to the ecosystem. We will continue to be surprised by scientific findings about the global environment. We have talked about them at our meetings, we have read about them in our journals.**

**Mr. President, fellow Councilors. Practicing sustainability and vigilance about problems will benefit the environment, earth, and its people. Thank you.**