



Un livre retraçant 150 années d'événements marquants dans le domaine de la mesure

What does the science of measurement look like through the lens of a camera?

From a kilogram prototype to satellite-synchronized quantum clocks—and the people behind them—the newly published book *The International Bureau of Weights and Measures, 150 Years of Measures for the World* is a richly illustrated history that brings the evolution of international metrology to life through photographs, stories and archival insight.

Launched at the Palais des Congrès in Versailles during the BIPM's 150th Anniversary Scientific Symposium on 21 May 2025, this commemorative publication celebrates the long, complex and profoundly human story of building a global measurement system.

Written by Céline Fellag Ariouet, Head of the Executive and Meetings Office at the BIPM, who is completing her PhD on the history of the BIPM, the book blends institutional access with personal perspective—capturing both the scale and soul of the international metrology community retracing 150 years of BIPM history.

A Story in Images



Photo: Pages from *150 Years of Measures for the World* showcasing rare archival photographs of key figures and historic CGPM sessions held at the Pavillon de Breteuil.

Far more than an illustrated history, this is a narrative told through archive documents, photographs and historical reflection—charting 150 years of scientific diplomacy and cooperation. Inside, readers will find:

- Rare archival material from the BIPM's own collections
- Behind-the-scenes glimpses of the BIPM laboratories
- Historical and modern portraits of the metrology community and famous scientists like Pierre and Marie Curie, Albert Einstein, Gustave Eiffel who have been involved in the work of the BIPM
- Accompanying stories that give voice to the people, instruments and events that shaped the global measurement system

The book also includes a series of unique and historic images of the BIPM taken by the world-famous French photographer [Robert Doisneau](#) in 1942. These photographs had been stored in the BIPM archives until they were recently re-discovered by Céline Fellag Ariouet, the book's author. Doisneau is probably best known for his 1950 image *Le baiser de l'hôtel de ville* (The Kiss by the City Hall), which was taken for the magazine *Life*.

The BIPM also commissioned contemporary photographer [Raphaël Dallaporta](#) to take a series of modern images at the BIPM to echo the work of Doisneau.



Photos: Top: The measurement campaign at the Simplon tunnel, March 1905, BIPM archives (page 48). | Bottom Left: Albert Bonhoure handling a mass standard with pliers, under the watchful eye of Charles Volet, Henri Moreau, and George Leclerc, 1942. Photograph by Robert Doisneau (page 206). | Bottom right: The international prototype of the metre, BIPM archive (page 101).

Notes from the Community

Measurement may be one of the most invisible forces in our lives—but it is also one of the most essential. What this book reveals is not only the technical progress of metrology, but the human endeavour behind it: the collective commitment to build something enduring, together, at a global scale.

Among those who have spoken most eloquently about the BIPM's broader significance is palaeontologist and member of the Académie des sciences, [Philippe Taquet](#), who in 2014 described it as:

“The BIPM is an organization that is a perfect and magnificent example of a work of peace. It symbolizes in a unique manner what people are able to achieve when they pool their wills, their knowledge, their talents and their abilities.”

From a historian's vantage point, the challenge of establishing such global uniformity is not to be underestimated. In his foreword to the book, internationally renowned scholar and Professor of History at Northwestern University, [Ken Alder](#), writes:

“Extracting uniformity from nature... is no simple task. And enlisting nations to join a common endeavour is more difficult still.”

This commemorative volume brings that very struggle into focus—tracing the path from the fragmented chaos of Old Regime France, where more than 800 units of measurement once coexisted, to the creation of a unified system that now connects economies across the globe through shared standards.

As [Dr Martin Milton](#), Director of the BIPM, reflects, the book is:

“a narrative told through the achievements” of the institution—and a reminder of what can be accomplished not through competition, but through cooperation. Its legacy is all around us: in the time we keep, the medicine we take, and the trust we place in the world working as one.

Author's Note



“It has been an incredible privilege to work on this book. I hope that everyone in the metrology community—past and present—who has helped shape the BIPM over its 150-year history will see it as a reflection of their own contributions.

Metrology, too, has its heroes—dedicated individuals whose stories deserve to be told—and I hope this book honours them. I also hope it opens a window for the wider public into the fascinating world of measurement science, highlighting the BIPM's role and the essential, often unseen, importance of measurement in every aspect of our lives.”

– Céline Fellag Ariouet

150 Years of Measures for the World is available now in French bookshops and on the internet.

[PLAN DU SITE](#)

[COPYRIGHT](#)

[CONFIDENTIALITÉ](#)



Pavillon de Breteuil
F-92312 Sèvres Cedex FRANCE

Copyright © BIPM tous droits réservés