

FOR EVERY YEAR SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 1983, TWAS CAN POINT TO SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENT. SOMETIMES THERE ARE MOMENTOUS EVENTS, AND AT OTHERS THE IMPACT RESULTS FROM THE STEADY ACCUMULATION OF EXCELLENT WORK BY THE MEMBERS, AFFILIATES AND OTHER RESEARCHERS WHO ARE A PART OF OUR GLOBAL FAMILY.

But by any measure, this has been a remarkable year for TWAS. It has been a year of milestones, and a year of change. Now, as it comes to a close, it is a natural time to reflect on our immense good fortune and on the challenges of times ahead.

Jacob Palis is finishing his second three-year term as president, leaving a legacy of impressive growth and profound impact. Our young affiliates programme and regional prizes for young scientists were initiated under his administration. Fellowships and research grants have

Reflections on a Time of Change

increased dramatically. Our five regional offices are playing a more prominent role in the Academy's work. Though his time as president is done, we know that we will continue to benefit from Jacob's expertise in the years ahead.

Also this year, TWAS Public Information Officer Daniel Schaffer retired. For more than a decade, Dan's writing and energy helped to raise TWAS's public profile and inform the world about the importance of science and technology to developing nations. Dan has returned to the United States, but we are hopeful that he, too, will continue to share his experience with us on special projects.

Our 23rd General Meeting, held in Tianjin, China, was a great success. Chinese President Hu Jintao, nearing the end of his term, defined our shared challenge in an address before some 2,000 researchers, heads of academies, science policy leaders and top officials from international organizations.

CONTENTS	2	REFLECTIONS ON A TIME OF CHANGE	5	JACOB PALIS:
THE MEASURE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT	9	CLOSING THE GENDER GAP IN SCIENCE		
13	TEACH SCIENCE, CHANGE THE WORLD	16	GMOs AND SUSTAINABLE	
DEVELOPMENT	22	HEALTHY WETLANDS, HEALTHY PLANET	26	TWAS PHOTO
CONTEST: SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR ALL	28	A FRESH APPROACH TO NORTH-		
SOUTH COLLABORATION	33	PEOPLE, PLACES, EVENTS		

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Soaring population growth is creating extraordinary challenges in food security, energy demand, and environmental protection, Hu said. But, he added: “Take a look at the history of human development, and you’ll see that science and technology have been with us throughout the rise, growth and prosperity of civilization.”

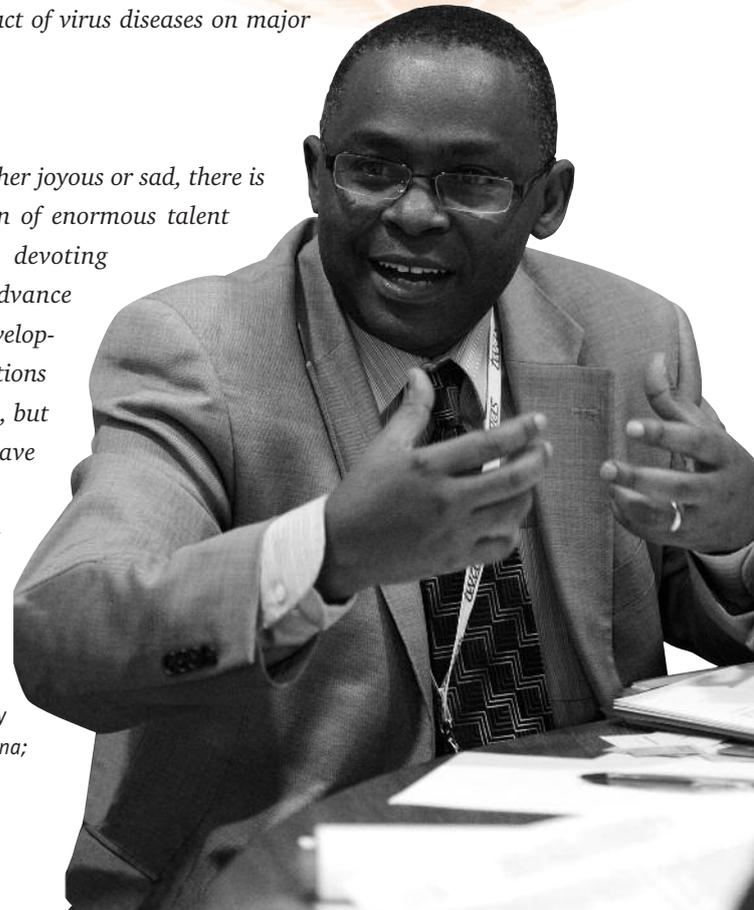
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Mohamed H.A. Hassan, our former executive director and current treasurer, this year won the Abdus Salam Medal – named after the Academy’s visionary founder – for a career of contributions to science in the developing world. He, too, sees science as a powerful force for good, with TWAS playing a vital role. “TWAS plants the seeds of seminal shifts in the way that science and scientific cooperation are conceived at the international level”, Hassan said. “It has the enormous potential to forge a new course in history.”

2012 also has brought us regrettable losses. Italian Nobel laureate Rita Levi-Montalcini, TWAS Associate Fellow 1992, passed away at the age of 103. She was a pioneering scientist and a woman of great courage, and she was a committed friend of TWAS. George Thottappilly, TWAS Fellow 1997, also passed away this year, after an influential career that explored the impact of virus diseases on major crops in developing countries.

In each of these milestones, whether joyous or sad, there is a common theme: Men and women of enormous talent have joined TWAS in its mission, devoting great portions of their lives to advance science and sustainability in the developing world. And so today, our ambitions and energy are focused on the future, but we never forget the friends who have sustained us across three decades.

When Abdus Salam was working to bring the idea of TWAS to life, the Canadian International



Photos clockwise from top left: Tianjin City Hall; TWAS General Meeting in Tianjin, China; Romain Murenzi, TWAS executive director; Mohamed H.A. Hassan, TWAS treasurer; Jacob Palis, outgoing TWAS president.



From left: TWAS General Meeting in Tianjin, China; Bai Chunli, incoming TWAS president.

Development Agency provided a small but critically important contribution. From the beginning, the Italian government has provided significant and steady financial support and encouragement, even in difficult economic times. In a very real sense, Italy deserves credit for all of our accomplishments.

Following their lead, countries including Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa and Sweden, as well as the European Union and others, have provided additional funding and other support, allowing us to expand our programmes and slowly build our endowment fund.

This year, we have been grateful to receive two major new streams of funding. At our meeting in Tianjin, President Hu announced that the Chinese government would donate USD1.5 million to TWAS. And we have received two grants from Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. One will allow our partners at the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD) to support additional fellowships for women in science; the second will provide five years of support for our long-running research grants in the basic sciences programme as well as initiatives in science diplomacy.

Such developments create great expectations for the year ahead. Bai Chunli, an accomplished and influential scholar in chemistry and nanotechnology who also serves as the president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, begins his term as TWAS president at the start of the new year. He has already shown great interest in TWAS, and he will help us to realize ambitious goals.

In the months ahead, we will be adding new staff at OWSD and in our Public Information Office. Already, we're planning for the 24th General Meeting, which will be held from 1 to 4 October 2013 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with the help of our partners at the Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) and the Argentinian Ministry of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation.

Clearly, as we prepare to celebrate TWAS's 30th anniversary in 2013, the future appears promising. We have much cause for optimism – and much important work to do. ■

✦ Romain Murenzi
TWAS executive director

