



# ITALY & TWAS: A FRUITFUL PARTNERSHIP

*TWAS and three other international science organizations based in Italy were the focus of a high-level presentation involving top officials of the Italian Parliament and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

 by Cristina Serra

Science and technology are a common language that unifies people. Higher education shapes future generations and is critical for economic growth. Together they can build prosperity and help cross geographical and political borders, to act as a tool for global peace.

These feelings and beliefs were the core elements that characterized a public event held 10 June 2015 at the Italian Parliament, in the capital city of Rome, where TWAS and three other international institutes presented their work to Italian ministers, parliamentarians and scientists.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with Undersecretary Mario Giro, organized the event that was hosted by the Chamber of Deputies, with the title: "The international science centres in Italy for the system of research and for the country".

TWAS was joined by two other Trieste-based centres – the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics [ICTP] and the International Centre of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology [ICGEB], along with the International Center for Relativistic Astrophysics Network [ICRANet] based in Pescara.

"These four centres represent a major point of strength in the Italian plan that envisions the internationalization of 'Made in Italy'," said Giro, undersecretary for foreign affairs and international cooperation. He stressed that their presence and scientific activity in Italy have important, positive impacts on Italy's international image. In fact, they help shape the

global agenda of Italian research and help Italy to establish and maintain strategic alliances.

Romain Murenzi, the executive director of TWAS, surveyed the Academy's successes in building a respected global academy that supports science in the developing world. This progress, he added, would not have been possible without Italy's "steadfast" support.

"Through every step, the government of Italy was a partner in our mission to build science in developing world," Murenzi said. "It is no exaggeration to say that, without Italy, none of our accomplishments would be possible."

Among the participants, representatives for the policy institutions were: Marina Sereni, vice president of the Chamber of Deputies; Stefania Giannini, minister of education, university and research; and Loredana Panariti, assessor of the

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▼ Nobel laureate Carlo Rubbia [standing, right]. Seated, from left to right: Vincenzo D'Antuono, prefect of Pescara; Stefano Gresta, president, National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology; Luciano Maiani, president of the ICTP scientific committee; Diassina Di Maggio, director, APRE [Agency for the European Promotion of Research]. [Photo: Studio Luxardo, Rome]





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▼ Marina Sereni, vice president Chamber of Deputies, and Mario Giro.



Friuli Venezia Giulia region in charge of employment, training, education, equal opportunities, youth policies, research and universities.

As Giro noted, Italy’s annual investment of approximately 30 million euros in the science institutions generates an important return on investment, both in terms of production and employment, and in terms of collaborations with other organizations, countries and private entities such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. “The Italian administration will continue to support these systems as a global resource,” Giro told the audience.

Presentations from the international research institutions were given by Fernando Quevedo, director of ICTP; Mauro Giacca, director general of ICGB; and Remo Ruffini, director of ICRANet. Among the attendees at the Chamber was Nobel Prize winner Carlo Rubbia, a 1992 TWAS Fellow.

Speaking on the over 100,000 foreign scholars who visited ICTP since its founding in 1964, Quevedo said that many today consider themselves informal ambassadors of Italy in their home countries.

◀ Opening of the event. From left to right: Loredana Panariti, Friuli Venezia Giulia assessor; Marina Sereni, vice president, Italian Chamber of Deputies; Undersecretary Mario Giro; Stefania Giannini, minister of education.

Giacca commented on the frontier research of its centre, including investigations into myocardial infarction and the identification of the site within the cell where the HIV virus hides. Ruffini, the director of ICRANet, presented some of the most recent discoveries in astrophysics.

These four centres, as Minister Giannini noted, have in common scientific excellence, international scope and focus on cooperation. And speaking on science at the Chamber of Deputies, to discuss the Italian frontier research, carries a strong political message.

In his concluding remarks, Murenzi highlighted how the TWAS network has grown over the past three decades to encompass the world. Today, TWAS has nearly 1,150 Fellows from 90 countries, and has three partners that operate under the Academy’s umbrella: the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD); IAP, the global network of science academies; and the InterAcademy Medical Panel (IAMP), a network of the world’s medical academies.

However, “our work is far from complete”, he reminded the audience. “Eighty-one nations remain classified as lagging in science and technology. Of the world’s 48 Least Developed Countries, 34 are in Africa. And indeed, Africa has only begun to tap its potential in science and engineering.

“Italy has provided life-giving contributions to our work, in good and bad times,” he added. “This is why I say that, among scientists in the developing world, the beautiful city of Trieste is seen as a leader, and as a beacon of hope. When you talk about TWAS – and about the other international centres – our scientists inevitably think of Italy with admiration and with the deepest gratitude.”

Speaking on Africa, a young continent with so much promise, Murenzi said it will take commitment to fully develop this potential. But TWAS, OWSD, IAP and IAMP, he maintained, are focused on building stronger African nations through science and science education. ■