



◀ Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan of Jordan, a globally respected science advocate, spoke with top-level science diplomacy leaders and others participating in the AAAS-TWAS Summer Course in Science Diplomacy in Trieste, Italy. [Photo: Demis Albertacci]

PRINCESS SUMAYA: SCIENCE FOR HOPE

by Edward W. Lempinen

Despite the historic challenges confronting much of the Arab region, science can provide a path to progress, Jordan's Princess Sumaya told TWAS.

Regional tensions, armed conflict, the flight of desperate refugees – the Arab world is confronting an historic crisis. For Princess Sumaya bint El Hassan, president of Royal Scientific Society of Jordan, a sustained commitment to science and education can provide a path to progress and perhaps even peace.

Even in difficult times, science gives people a way to talk about such shared values as clean water, public

health, environmental protection and sustainable economic growth. These discussions can lead to a shared vision for the future.

Science gives people “that proverbial light at the end of the tunnel.” Princess Sumaya said in a recent interview with TWAS. “In a region that’s going through so many troubles at the moment, I think that ultimately what we’re talking about is science for hope.”

Princess Sumaya is an influential advocate for research and science education in the Arab region, and she has earned global respect. She visited TWAS in Trieste, Italy, for the third Summer Course in Science Diplomacy, organized with the American Association for the Advancement of Science [AAAS]. The course was held 11-15 July.

Princess Sumaya was appointed president of the Royal Scientific Society

of Jordan in 2006. She also chairs the Board of Trustees of the Princess Sumaya University for Technology. She has been instrumental in bringing the 2017 World Scientific Forum to Jordan, and she’s a passionate advocate of archaeology and the conservation of historic sites in her country.

During the interview, she described her own path to scientific leadership, the value of science and engineering in addressing the refugee crisis, and the importance of good relations between scientists and policymakers.

In particular, she cited the potential positive impact of regional science cooperation.

“It’s very clear in the Arab world that we’re good at talking to international organisations, but we’re not so good at talking to one another,” Princess Sumaya said. But “if you look at the investments that have been made into science centres, or to universities that have large scientific research areas, I think we could be a very strong force to be reckoned with – if we would start talking to one another.

“When we talk about issues like seismic mitigation,” she added, “we really can’t start looking at countries around the fault line which might not have a peace agreement with one another. At the end of the day, we’re talking about lives and we’re talking about protecting and safeguarding people. That’s the most important thing that science can do.” ◼

[Read the full TWAS interview with Princess Sumaya: www.twas.org/node/11864](http://www.twas.org/node/11864)

[At the same site, view a film of the interview and a film of her keynote address to the TWAS-AAAS Summer Course in Science Diplomacy.](#)