



ICTP: A HALF-CENTURY OF PROGRESS

For 50 years, the Trieste-based research centre has supported science in developing countries. At an anniversary celebration, world policy and science leaders – and many TWAS Fellows – shared memories and visions for the future.

 by Edward W. Lempinen

Sean Treacy contributed to this report

The presidents of Italy and Rwanda, joined by Nobel laureates, global science leaders and many TWAS Fellows, celebrated the illustrious past and ambitious future of the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics at 50th anniversary festivities in Trieste.

The four-day event, from 6 to 9 October 2014, featured visits from Rwandan President Paul Kagame, UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova, and Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan. There were leaders from such prominent science bodies as the International Atomic Energy

Agency (IAEA), the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission and the World Meteorological Organization. Also attending were at least three Nobel laureates, former presidents and prime ministers of other nations, and, from Italy, top officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the province of Friuli Venezia Giulia and the city of Trieste.

In a letter from Rome, then-Italian President Giorgio Napolitano joined the others in praising ICTP's global impact. The Centre's "history

▼ Rwandan President Paul Kagame speaks at ICTP's 50th Anniversary celebration. [Photo: ICTP]



of excellence transcends national borders,” Napolitano wrote, “and now embraces an international panorama, allowing scientists and experts from different countries to compare and share experiences for the benefit of technological progress in the entire world.”

TWAS also had a prominent role in the celebration and basked in ICTP’s glow. Some two dozen members of TWAS attended, many of whom have had close ties with ICTP and its founder, Abdus Salam. Many speakers regarded TWAS as ICTP’s younger sibling, both sprung from the vision and energy of founder Abdus Salam of Pakistan, himself a Nobel laureate. TWAS founding Executive Director Mohamed H.A. Hassan and current Executive Director Romain Murenzi were featured speakers at the event.

SCIENTIFIC GENIUS, TRUE HUMANIST

Salam and his contemporary, Italian physicist Paolo Budinich, received broad praise in the opening ceremonies. In the early 1960s, they were among a small corps globally who recognized the importance of science and technology for the progress of the developing world.

Salam and Budinich “had a dream more than 50 years ago, to create an institution that can bring scientific excellence to all corners of the world”, said ICTP Director Fernando Quevedo of Guatemala. “They managed to turn this dream into a reality.” Over the years, Quevedo added, ICTP “has become more and more relevant to the needs of our planet and its inhabitants, for science as a key component of our culture, science for development and as one of the most effective means of our survival.”

On behalf of Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, I tell you we are proud – we are very proud – to have you all here. ”

Mario Giro, under-secretary of state in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs



▲ From top: Irina Bokova, C.N.R. Rao and Fernando Quevedo

See ICTP’s collection of articles, photos and videos on the event: www.ictp.it/ictp-50th-anniversary.aspx

Read an interview with ICTP Director Fernando Quevedo: www.twas.org/node/6413

Read more about ICTP’s 50th anniversary: www.twas.org/node/6583

Others joined in praising Salam – his vision, his character and his political skill.

Bokova called him “a scientific genius (and) a true humanist, because science is also about humanism.”

“There is one scientist who really stood for the right things in the world and worked for it and created institutions”, said former TWAS President C.N.R. Rao, the renowned Indian chemist. “Salam is a man who cared for the poor, cared for equality and cared for the well-being of all.”

Kagame, a strong advocate for science and technology in Rwanda and other developing nations, echoed those themes at the opening ceremony.

“The tools pioneered at ICTP, which have since been adopted more widely, aimed to stem the brain drain by bringing young scientists from developing countries into top-notch research networks”, Kagame said. “This made the beneficiaries better able to build scientific communities in their own countries, and helped to reduce the isolation that caused precious talent to be wasted. The ICTP’s strategy also recognized that, at the end of the day, what is important is to use science to speed up social and economic transformation in the developing world.”

THE POWER OF MULTIPLICATION

While ICTP was applying itself directly to research and training, it was also helping to generate a new family of science centres in Trieste – including TWAS – that were focused on the developing world and on global cooperation.

“In the future, that will certainly create more synergies for the development of science for sustainable growth”, said Mario Giro, under-secretary of state in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. “On behalf of Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, I tell you we are proud – we are very proud – to have you all here.”

Giro, Bokova and others also singled TWAS out for praise. Added Jordan’s Prince Hassan: “TWAS believed, and believes, in science diplomacy and the importance of effective partnerships between scientists, policymakers and diplomats.” ■