



BAI: RAISING THE NEXT GENERATION

Young researchers want opportunities to apply their creativity, idealism and skill to important challenges, President Bai Chunli said in his opening address at the 25th General Meeting in Oman. TWAS, he said, must work to support them.

 by Bai Chunli

[The following is an abridged text of TWAS President Bai Chunli's address to TWAS members and Young Affiliates at the start of the 25th TWAS General Meeting in Oman.]

Esteemed colleagues, dear friends, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Muscat, in the Sultanate of Oman, and welcome to the start of the 25th TWAS General Meeting. It is an honour to share this morning with you, and I am very pleased to see all of you with us this year.

I want to give a special acknowledgement to some of our past and current leaders who are here with us today: the Academy's third president, C.N.R. Rao of India. The immediate past president, Jacob Palis of Brazil. Founding Executive Director and current Treasurer Mohamed H.A. Hassan of Sudan. Greetings also to our vice presidents and our Council members; Secretary General A.K. Sood; and Executive Director Romain Murenzi. And I would like to offer a very special welcome, and sincere thanks, to two TWAS Fellows who work in Oman and who have been instrumental in bringing this meeting together: Professors Salma Al-Kindy and Ibrahim Eltayeb, both of Sultan Qaboos University. And special thanks also to Arab Region Vice President Fayzah M.A. Al-Kharafi of Kuwait, who has played an indispensable role in organizing this meeting.

In the classic literature of China, one of the highest social values is to show respect

to elders. But it is also an important value to recognize the potential of young people, and to educate them. *The Analects* quote Confucius on this topic: "A youth is to be regarded with respect. How do we know that his future will not be equal to our present?"

Many other cultures hold similar values. The Arab world, I know, has a similar view: You honour the experience and wisdom of elders. And you respect the promise and potential of youth.

It seems to me that, in our time, similar values apply to the world's scientific enterprise. Certainly it is true for a global science academy like TWAS. TWAS founder Abdus Salam holds a position of the highest respect among our members. Our elected Fellows are typically elite senior scientists, with long careers and many impressive achievements. We regularly call upon their experience and insight to guide us.

Our relationship to young scientists is equally important. As a central part of our mission, we recognize our responsibility to nurture a new generation. Our support takes many forms, but we should recognize that young scientists want substantive opportunities to apply their creativity, their idealism – and their considerable skill – to address important challenges. This can help to advance scientific knowledge, and it can contribute to the well-being of communities everywhere.

► TWAS President Bai Chunli speaking on the opening day of the TWAS General Meeting.

A DILIGENT SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE

In his 1979 Nobel Prize lecture, Salam offered a simple insight that has come to define his legacy: “Scientific thought is the common heritage of mankind”.

While it may be a common heritage, scientific capacity is distributed very unevenly in our world. Therefore, if we want to nurture a new generation of scientists and engineers, we must search more diligently to find scientific excellence. Last year, I talked to you about two crucial goals for the Academy: To increase membership in countries where we have few or no members, and to increase the number of women among our members. I am pleased to



“ Emerging nations, or emerging economies, are taking positions of science leadership for the developing world. ” Bai Chunli

See the full text of President Bai Chunli's address at www.twas.org/node/8475

report that we have pursued these goals with positive initial results.

This year we have a total of 178 candidates nominated for election into TWAS membership. Of these candidates, 33 are women; 67 are nationals of 36 countries that have five or fewer members of TWAS. Among these countries are

Algeria, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Oman and its neighbour, Yemen and Tanzania.

I believe these numbers represent progress. Much work has gone into finding these candidates, and this is the scale of effort that we need every year.

LEADERSHIP FROM EMERGING NATIONS

Despite all of our talent and experience, we cannot achieve these goals by ourselves.

If you take a look around this beautiful conference centre, you will see that our colleagues from Oman have invested a great amount of energy and resources in this meeting. They are committed to science, and they have shown a very generous commitment to our Academy. In years to come, we expect this relationship will grow and prosper.

We know well, of course, the importance of our friends. From the Academy's earliest days, the government of Italy has provided core funding for our programmes. The International Centre for Theoretical Physics, too, has been an essential partner from start. UNESCO has brought vast experience to help guide us and a solid administrative framework to support us.

Today, new partners are emerging. Lenovo, the world's largest personal computer company, is providing highly valuable support by sponsoring the TWAS-Lenovo Science Prize and by pledging support for our Young Affiliates. At the same time, many long-time partners are increasing their support for TWAS. India, South Africa and Brazil in recent months have made new investments in our work. That followed new pledges earlier from Argentina, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan and Sweden, and my own country, China.

We're seeing a significant trend: Emerging nations, or emerging economies, are taking positions of science leadership for the developing world. They have learned lessons about building scientific strength in their own countries, and now they are sharing their experience with other developing nations, especially the Least Developed Countries. This is a very promising trend, and it is a gratifying expression of solidarity with TWAS and our shared mission.

Thank you very much. ■