



*The Abdus Salam*  
**International Centre for Theoretical Physics**

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Director



**Remarks on the occasion of the visit  
of the President of Italy to ICTP**

**March 27, 2008**

Mr. President:

By honoring us with your visit today, you have given additional meaning to the Italian commitment towards International Science. I am pleased to report that International Science is alive and well in Trieste not only in my Centre — the International Centre for Theoretical Physics, now named after its founding Director, Nobel laureate Abdus Salam — but also in other institutions, such as the University of Trieste (from where you have just arrived); our neighbor, the International School for Advanced Studies, or SISSA; another neighbor, the Academy of Sciences in the Developing World, or TWAS; Sincrotrone Trieste (which you will visit tomorrow morning); those in the Area Science Park such as the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, or ICGB; the International Centre for Science and High Technology, or ICS; and a number of other institutions in the city, and the region. Your visit inspires us — at the Centre, and at other scientific institutions I have named — to rededicate ourselves to the task of discharging our respective missions diligently.

I wish to take a minute to recall the origins of our Centre, and the role that it has played. The Centre, created in 1964, now operates under a tripartite agreement between the Italian Government on the one hand and the two United Nations agencies, UNESCO and IAEA, on the other. Through this action, the first International Scientific Centre of excellence was created in Italy; most other international and national scientific initiatives in Trieste have followed — always with the support of Italy, and always with the dedicated efforts of Italian scientists. These actions have transformed Trieste into a City of Science; they have enhanced the scientific links within Trieste, the region,

and Italy as a whole. This work has been possible in part by the support of regional and local governments, some of whose representatives are here today.

Through our collective work, Trieste is known in all countries, especially in the developing world. Tens of thousands of scientists from all over the world have visited Trieste, in particular our Centre, and have created links between their home universities and Italian scientific institutions — some of whose representatives are also here today. It would be fair to say that, roughly half of the Center's visitors from developing countries would not have been able to do high-level science, if it were not for their participation in our Centre's activities. Italy and its generosity are known everywhere, and its impact is felt likewise.

In an era in which altruism is often thought to be naïve, in an era in which it is fashionable to project self-interest as a virtue, the Trieste institutions have been an exception. It is my belief that they are living proof of Italy's long humanistic tradition spanning many centuries, and its tolerance and respect for diverse civilizations and belief systems. Our Centre is first and foremost a scientific institution, and its duty is to generate new knowledge at the frontiers of science, and to disseminate it freely to those in need; but we remember that, by espousing the universal values of science, we also strive towards a common bond among all nations, and towards a more peaceful society for posterity.

In this connection, please allow me to mention two specific actions from last year. Keeping in mind the fact that education, scientific research and innovation will have to be woven together to solve the many problems facing the sustainability of our planet, we organized a high-level forum on this interrelationship, jointly with the G8 countries and UNESCO, with particular focus on Africa. The recommendations of this Forum were followed up during the German Presidency of the G8, but we are really looking forward to reaching fruition on these recommendations, during the Italian Presidency of G8 in 2009.

Mr. President, you are well aware that the climate of our planet is changing its patterns, and a center like ours cannot ignore challenges in modeling and predicting these changes. Thus, while maintaining our traditional strengths

at the forefront of theoretical physics and mathematics, we have been paying increased attention to the study of global change, which might have a stronger impact on the life of large populations in the South of the world. One of our scientists is a vice president of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, or IPCC, which, as you will recall, shared the Nobel Prize for peace for the year 2007.

In the last fifty years, Trieste has built up several vibrant scientific institutions. They have done a lot of good in Italy and elsewhere, especially in developing countries, as I have tried to outline. We now believe that this effort should be carried to the next level of effectiveness, from supporting excellent individual scientists to building centers of excellence that allow creative work to flourish, uninterrupted, in needy countries. One way of doing this is for all the scientific institutions in Trieste to join hands in adopting a few well-chosen universities, particularly in Africa, and bring them to world-class standards. It is by this means that one may ignite the talent of creative individuals. Because of the goodwill that exists among all the scientific institutions in Trieste, I am quite confident that this dream will be realized sooner than later.

Your moral support for our collective endeavor is very important to us all, and your presence here today is an ample demonstration of that support.

Thank you for your kind attention.

K. R. Sreenivasan