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WELCOME ADDRESS

First, let me say that I am very pleased to be here — my first time in Montenegro.

I was due to come two years ago, but a torn shoulder ligament and subsequent operation meant that I couldn't travel.

Thank you also to Prof Djurovic, President of the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences, for the opportunity to address you all on behalf of IAP during this opening session.

I want to start by referring to the establishment of the InterAcademy Partnership, which was formally endorsed by the member academies of three international academy networks — IAP, IAC and IAMP — at the IAP General Assembly in Hermanus, South Africa, on 2 March this year.

This Partnership should now enable us and our member academies to receive greater visibility for our efforts as we work in a more coordinated manner under a single banner.

It also provides a strength as we go seeking funds for projects. Indeed, we already have three major ongoing projects.

Already active since a year ago, we have funding from the German government for a series of regional studies on 'Food and Nutrition Security and Agriculture'. The four regional reports will then be capped with a final global report — a model for future IAP activities that can build on efforts of individual academies and our affiliated regional networks.

Two other projects are just beginning to get under way. In the past few weeks, those of you representing IAP member academies should have received an invitation to nominate experts to guide the two projects: 'Harnessing SEM to address Africa's challenges' and 'Improving scientific input to global policymaking' — which will provide training and help build the capacities of academies to provide science advice to governments.

Indeed, immediately prior to the IAP General Assembly that I just mentioned the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) hosted the IAP Conference on Science Advice — perhaps our most successful yet, based on the quality of the speakers and the record number of academies in attendance.

One of the recommendations that emerged from Hermanus was that IAP should forge close links to the UN system — indeed that IAP and its member academies should be seen as „tools” for use by the UN rather than „stakeholders”.

We are already acting on this, building on engagements such as with the UNISDR — as a member of the scientific community (led by ICSU) providing guiding the input of S&T into the implementation of the Sendai Agreement on disaster risk reduction — and the ongoing efforts of the IAP Biosecurity Working Group into the deliberations of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention.

And in these very days, IAP for Health (formerly IAMP) has convened a group of its Young Physician Leaders alumni at the World Health Assembly in Geneva — some of whom have been integrated into their national delegations. Likewise, on 22 May, a statement from the IAP for Health co-chairs will be read out at the opening of the UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi.

And we have a fantastic opportunity for further engagement as the UN Scientific Advisory Board will be meeting in Trieste next week — hosted by IAP along with the other international organizations based in Trieste: TWAS, ICTP and ICGEB.

These are examples of IAP engaging in science for policy — but we have also been working in the arena of policy for science. Most notably with partners ICSU, ISSC and TWAS, under the banner of Science International. The result of the first Science International meeting was the release of an accord on ‘Open Data in a Big Data World’.

Again, academies and other organizations should have received an invitation to review the text of the accord and to consider endorsing it. If your academy has not yet done so — there is still time.

Now, coming back to the theme of this conference, ‘Science + Technology = ? Future’, the different topics that I have mentioned — plus synthetic biology, which I will speak on tomorrow, as well as others such as antimicrobial resistance, climate change, water management and sustainable energy — are all areas where the scientific community can have an influence and help model ‘the future we want’ — as per the resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 27 July 2012 and the stimulus for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It is up to us as scientists, as academicians, and as a global network of academies, to ensure that the future we want is the one that actually arrives.

Let us work together to ensure that. — Thank you.