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### *Opening Remarks*

I am delighted to be here in Montenegro to speak on behalf of the InterAcademy Panel (IAP). IAP is glad to be a major sponsor of this important *International Conference on the Role of Academies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

It is indeed an honour to have with us here this morning H. E. Milo Djukanovic, the prime minister of Montenegro.

Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister for gracing our opening session. We certainly enjoyed your insightful remarks in this opening session, and we look forward to your continuous guidance and support.

Mr. Prime Minister, we are indeed grateful to the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts for hosting this meeting. For us, it is a symbol of the importance that your country is placing on science and technology in its efforts to promote sustainable economic growth.

As many of you may know, IAP is a global network of science academies that recently welcomed its 100<sup>th</sup> member institution, the Kosovo Academy of Sciences.

IAP is located in Trieste, Italy, and operates in close cooperation with my organization, TWAS (the academy of sciences for the developing world), which is also located in Trieste. For those who do not know, Trieste is located on the picturesque coast of the Adriatic Sea in northeastern Italy, several hundred of kilometres north of here.

TWAS likes to describe itself as the ‘voice of science in the South.’ We focus our attention on building scientific capacity and promoting scientific excellence in the developing world, especially in those countries that are lagging behind in STI.

IAP’s role complements the role of TWAS. IAP focuses its efforts mainly on assisting merit-based national science academies. In many nations, academies of science are among the most intellectually formidable, yet least utilized, institutions.

Pursuing goals similar to those of TWAS, IAP aims to raise the public profile of national science academies among citizens, and to increase the influence of academies among decision makers.

On an even broader scale, IAP seeks to address critical regional and global issues that beg for regional and global solutions. IAP does so by working together and by forging strong links among its members, particularly at the regional level.

IAP’s flagship programme focuses on building the capacity of science academies in countries where they are weak through science-based programmes that emphasis not just academic research but social impact. We have, for example, examined issues related to scientific capacity building, science education, science and the media, biosecurity, and the health of women and children.

What IAP seeks to do in these efforts is to marshal the knowledge of some of the world’s most eminent scientists in order to have them render informed insights on the most crucial issues of our day. It is our strong belief that it is critical to have a nation’s most knowledgeable citizens speak their minds about how to effectively address the increasingly complex issues that our society faces.

If I were asked to summarize IAP’s purpose in a single sentence, here’s what I would say this: The organization and its members seek to provide – both jointly and individually – independent, objective and timely advice on critical issues related to science and technology to a broad public and particularly to policy makers.

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As I mentioned earlier, a primary objective of IAP is to work closely with regional networks of academies to ensure that these networks have the capacity to address science-based issues of regional concern.

IAP has played a major role in the formation of regional networks of academies on every continent: in Americas, Africa, Asia and Europe. If circumstances warrant in the future, I am sure that IAP would be keen to lend a hand in creating a regional network in Antarctica too.

In April 2007, IAP helped to organize a session at the annual meeting of the Central and Eastern European Network (CEEN) in Sofia.

I was delighted to attend that meeting and to be given an opportunity to explain how IAP works closely with both its own member institutions and regional networks of science academies around the globe. The meeting proved productive and led many of us to conclude that there was much common ground between CEEN and IAP that would be worth exploring and that could possibly serve as the basis for future collaborations.

This conference, appropriately titled “The Role of National Academies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, is a follow-up to our 2007 conference. We look forward to building on what we have accomplished and hopefully on agreeing to a set of concrete measures that will help turn our good intentions into good deeds. I should add that IAP is again delighted to serve as a cosponsor of this event.

The opportunities that lie before academies of science have never been greater. Today, thanks in some measure to the work of IAP and its academy members, governments around the world have been turning to their national science academies, with increasing frequency, for advice on vital matters related to science-based sustainable development.

At the same time, the budgets of science academies have been increasing. This is a sure measure of their growing importance, especially among national governments.

The academies themselves have begun to leverage this new-found influence by turning to other academies not only to exchange ideas but also to benefit from the enduring strength that is created by working with others.

The experience of IAP shows that national academies have much to gain when they join together to address crucial societal issues by drawing on their collective wealth of scientific and technological expertise.

But new opportunities also mean new challenges, and it remains to be seen whether science academies, which have long been accused (with some justification, I might say) of being old men's clubs lost in earnest discussions of issues that scarcely matter to others, can meet these challenges.

The average age of scientists who have been elected to academies, according to surveys conducted by IAP and others, is 65. Allowing for the fact that eminence in any field takes time, it is still fair to ask where, among the science academy members, are the young scientists of accomplishment, and where among them are the growing numbers of women scientists who are doing world-class research. These are some of the challenging questions for all merit-based academies around the world.

Academies must also be willing to address the critical challenges of their societies where science and technology are playing key roles.

The relevance of science academies to their society has never been more apparent. But their past irrelevance to society raises doubts about whether these venerable institutions can rise to the occasion.

IAP is determined to erase those doubts not just with words but with actions. Together with others, like those in this audience, IAP is confident that strategies and programmes can be devised to help science academies reach their full potential – as agents of reason, as drivers of change and as institutions of social responsibility.

Thank you.