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Remarks

at the occasion of the acceptance

of the Golden Honorary medal

of the National Academy of Sciences of the

Republic of Armenia

**Yerevan
5 October 2010**

President of The Academy of Sciences (Greetings in Armenian)

Dear Mr. President, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to accept, on behalf of the International Science and Technology Center, ISTC, the Golden Honorary medal of the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia.

This is an award that we value as one of the highest accolades ISTC has received during our 16 years of existence and today is another very proud day for my organization.

I would like to sincerely thank the Armenian Government and the Armenian scientists, engineers and heads of institutes for the many years of successful work that we have undertaken together.

I recognize that our Branch Office in Yerevan has also has played a crucial role in bringing forward the valuable research activities taking place in Armenia and I would like to pay special tribute to their contribution and dedication.

Personally, of course, I am honored to lead ISTC at this time and to be here today to receive this award, but all of us know that successful work in science is best carried out in true partnership and is built with time and trust. This award, I believe, is recognition of such a partnership and such a relationship between Armenia and ISTC.

National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia

Here in Armenia, I am fully aware that the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia is a scientific and engineering center with the highest reputation that it has earned since 1935.

The President of the National Academy of Sciences, Academician Radik Martirosyan, has been especially supportive of our work together and for that support the Center, and its Governing Board, are truly grateful. Academician Martirosyan was an Honoured Speaker at ISTC's 15 Year Celebration last year in Moscow and it is a great pleasure to meet with him again here in Yerevan.

I believe Academician Martirosyan was also instrumental in obtaining recognition of our partnership from the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, Tigran Sarkisyan, and his words, which we deeply value, appear in our current Annual Report. If I may quote the Prime Minister "ISTC played a positive role for Armenia and we managed to preserve a major part of our scientific potential thanks to it". This recognition is vital to an organization such as my own.

Armenia and ISTC

Since 1995, when the first Armenian project was launched, ISTC has funded 163 science projects to a total value of 38.6 million USD.

This total also includes 22 partner projects funded by international governmental and private entities. And it is through these projects that Armenian scientists and experts have been able to work in full partnership with scientific colleagues from Germany, UK, USA and many other countries.

Armenia has been actively involved in ISTC's Commercialization Program, which aims to take Armenian high-technology to the marketplace to create financial benefits and sustainable jobs in the country. To date, two innovation initiatives have been successfully implemented in Armenia for a total amount of \$840,000 and this will lead to the creation of 84 permanent jobs for scientists and researchers in Armenia.

This is, however, just a start in terms of the commercialization of innovation when we consider the skills, strengths and excellence of Armenian science and scientists, coupled with the country's commitment to becoming an innovation leader.

To give an overview of just a few of the recent Armenian success stories that ISTC is proud to be associated with, I can mention:

- The creation of a natural hazards prevention system for the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia;**
- The use of amino acids in the search for more effective drugs; and**
- The supply of sapphire crystals to meet industrial and international demand.**

And there are many more initiatives that are under development.

It is these projects that show how ISTC, through the creation of genuine partnerships, has supported new opportunities for scientists in Armenia; the Center has assisted with the modernization of the country's research infrastructure and brought Armenian scientists into contact with their peers and colleagues elsewhere in the world, all of whom have been as equally impressed with the quality of science in the country. Moreover, funded research has led to many high-level publications and is the subject of discussion at many international scientific conferences. The business skills of scientists are also being further developed as they attend training courses run by ISTC in a range of practical areas vital in today's international world.

Way forward

I will talk briefly about the future of ISTC.

The work of ISTC has assisted with the creation of a civil orientated research community in the countries of the former Soviet Union. New networks of national and international scientific contacts have been built up. Individual skills of scientists and engineers have been further developed. Researchers have been given new careers and research facilities have been modernized. It is certain that the work of the Center has evolved over recent years to take into account the changing needs of our Governments and of the scientists in the many countries with whom we work. Targeted initiatives have been, and are being, developed, for example, to assist in the discovery of new drugs and to contribute in the fight against bio-threats. It is in these areas particularly that I certainly count on the further contribution from Armenian scientists.

ISTC itself began its activities 15 years ago in Armenia. And it is clear that many of the scientific challenges we now face differ from those of 15 years ago. For example, while health and environmental issues have always been of concern, with the rapidly changing world in which we live today such issues can rapidly assume a global dimension. We have seen this in the spread of global epidemic threat, such as avian and swine flu, or with the international consequences of a single volcano erupting in Iceland.

Today, the world faces more global challenges and threats than ever before. The science that needs to bring the solutions for example to establish low carbon economies is complex, requires substantial funding and pooling of the best expertise worldwide. Nowadays: we need more multilateral scientific cooperation, not less.

Of course we need to respect the sovereign decision taken by a country to withdraw from ISTC but ISTC, with its multilateral approach, exactly serves the purpose of transcending national boundaries, bringing together the best expertise worldwide to contribute to the solution of today's scientific questions and –by the way- this is more cost effective.

But as the demands change so must the solutions and ISTC is no exception to this. Scientific and technological challenges are evolving and are increasingly interlinked. ISTC fully recognizes this and takes responsibility for its future and has, therefore, begun a discussion on a new framework for stronger multilateral cooperation and focus on delivering results to the solution of the global issues, the new challenges from a non-proliferation point of view and to the policies of individual Governments to foster innovation to develop new technologies, products and services. Why was it not possible to wait the outcome of these discussions before taking rather far reaching decisions?

An ISTC working party has recommended a new organization dealing with global challenges and threats with a refined partnership approach in its work. Work will finish by the end of this year. Armenia is part of this process. I assure you that our constructive work and our close dialogue with Armenia will strongly influence the changes we now look to make.

Armenia itself has undergone and is still undergoing rapid changes. Science, Technology and Innovation are vital to further economic and social progress. I consider it our common task to further strengthen the research performance, promoting innovation and knowledge transfer. The task is thereby to attract young people to scientific work. We have organized special competitions for young scientists, and last week - for the first time - a special Summer school exactly to serve this purpose.

Final

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the award to ISTC of the Golden medal. I see it as the clearest sign yet to continue, side by side, our common path to promote international scientific breakthroughs and innovation partnerships. I recognize the great contribution that Armenia is making, and will continue to make, to international scientific progress to the benefit of mankind.

As your President, President Sargsyan, has recently stated: "We believe that Armenia's greatest resource is its intellectual capacity. Not only the intellectual potential of the citizens of Armenia, but of the Armenian people worldwide". I am personally very proud that ISTC is playing its part by working alongside the people of Armenia in the realization of the country's vast potential and its vital contribution to scientific progress.

I thank you for your attention.