

Science and Development :
Prospects for the 21st Century
Royal Academy of Overseas Sciences
United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization
Third World Academy of Sciences
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Closing Speech

by

Paul SIMON *

Mr Minister,
Mr Director-General,
Mr President,
Dear distinguished guests,
Dear participants and colleagues,

First, I would like to excuse Mr Yvan Ylieff, Belgian Minister of Science Policy, who cannot participate in the closing ceremony of the International Symposium on "Science and Development : Prospects for the 21st Century". He is presently on travel on behalf of the Government, to attend another important event.

The Royal Academy of Overseas Sciences agreed on December 15, 1994 on a Memorandum for cooperation with UNESCO. The joint organization of this Symposium, which began yesterday afternoon with opening speeches by the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr Federico Mayor, and Mr José Vargas, President of the Third World Academy of Sciences and Minister of Science and Technology in Brazil, is a very good example of the benefit of such a cooperation.

The Secretary-General of TWAS, prof. Adnan Badran, and the Executive Director, prof. Mohammed Hassan, have also taken part in the Symposium as speakers.

On behalf of Minister Yvan Ylieff, I would like to thank you for being with us for this International Symposium, for your support and your active participation.

* Head of Cabinet of the Federal Minister of Science Policy, rue de la Loi 66, B-1040 Brussels (Belgium).

I am very pleased to remind you that this Symposium is actually a preparatory event to the "World Conference on Science for the 21st Century : a New Commitment" organized by UNESCO and to be held in Budapest next year from 26 June to 1 July.

During these two days, three specific panels have been dedicated to :

- Contemporary Evolution of Science and Prospects for Development ;
- Scientific Institutions and Private Sector Support to Science for Development ;
- Partnerships and Sharing of Knowledge.

The variety of themes addressed during this Symposium demonstrates the need for a worldwide reflection on the scientific challenges for the next century. The role of science and technology for development and the public and private partnership for culture, ethics and sustainable development are of paramount importance. The major findings resulting from research and development and issues raised by the scientific community are badly needed for policy makers and worldwide citizens.

Any Minister of Science Policy should take into account all those elements to define an adequate policy, followed by strategic choices to be supported by programmes and projects at the international level.

This dimension, well-known for many years by scientists, must be more deeply integrated into the variety of international scientific committees and organisations.

The federal Minister of Science Policy is sharing your concern on the strong need for a scientific culture dedicated to peace. Up to now, major breakthroughs in scientific knowledge have been the heritage of war. One of the latest examples is the scientific exploration of space which has been recommended by the IGY since 1953 and endorsed in 1955 and 1956 by the USA and the former Soviet Union. But the first satellite launched in October 1957 was mainly the demonstration of the ability of the Soviet Union to send missiles across the Atlantic. The Nazis during the Second World War also developed the rocket technology. The scientific space programmes are still a fundamental pillar for astrophysics and planetology, but also for geophysics with the Earth observation, very important in the context of sustainable development.

Telecommunication is another new space-based technology which should be used not only to make profit but also to improve the worldwide education and the transfer of information, basis of our democratic values.

It is always difficult to predict the future. Science has deeply evolved from the Newtonian paradigm to the concept of complexity, non-linearity and management of uncertainties. How to combine the scientific and technological development towards a peaceful world with social equity? This is one of the challenges that scientists, policy makers and economists have to cope with, to move forward into the 21st century.

In that context, the Earth and its environment are an important component of the heritage we have to ensure and transfer to the next generations.

This Symposium with its themes reflects also the interest of the Royal Academy of Overseas Sciences. More than 50% of the speakers have come from developing countries. Minister Ylieff is reiterating his thanks to this Academy and UNESCO for their joint collaboration and he is looking forward to a very successful meeting next year in Budapest. He is convinced that Belgium and its Royal Academy of Overseas Sciences will continue to contribute significantly to the improvement of the worldwide access to scientific knowledge, in the prospect of a sustainable development and of a peaceful 21st century.

I thank you for your attention.