**United Nations Secretary-General's**

**Scientific Advisory Board**

**High-Level Open Session**

"Strengthening scientific human capacity in developing countries"

Remarks by

**Romain Murenzi, TWAS executive director**

The World Academy of Sciences

for the advancement of science in developing countries

Wednesday 25 May 2016 | 11.30 - 13.00

Trieste, Italy

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Distinguished members of the Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board,

Honourable Director-General for Cultural and Economic Promotion and Innovation at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Honourable Assistant Director General for the Natural Sciences at UNESCO

Honourable President of the Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia

Esteemed President of the National Research Council of Italy

Distinguished colleagues of the Trieste international scientific centres,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

The World Academy of Sciences grew from the partnership of two physicists: Abdus Salam, a Nobel laureate from Pakistan, and his Italian colleague Paolo Budinich. When TWAS was founded 33 years ago, there were few leaders who understood the importance of science, engineering and technology for the developing world. But Salam and Budinich, with partners from many lands, carried the mission forward, that is, **“Strengthening scientific human capacity in developing countries”**.

Today we see the extraordinary success that TWAS has helped to inspire: Brazil, China, India and South Africa have built human prosperity by investing in research and science education. Other countries, too, are successfully following this course – Malaysia, Mexico, Kuwait and even my own home country, Rwanda.

We also see, however, that the progress has been uneven. Especially among the 48 Least Developed Countries, profound human challenges remain in food production, clean water, health care, energy, climate change and urbanisation.

Science and technology are essential for addressing the challenges detailed in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals approved last year. And yet, the poverty in these nations is reflected in a scientific poverty.

Consider these facts from the 2015 UNESCO Science Report:

\* Africa has 16 percent of the world's population, but only 2.4 percent of its scientists and 2.6 percent of annual scientific publications. These numbers have been improving, but too slowly.

\* Of every 100 Africans, only 21 have access to the Internet.

Consider this conclusion from the 2015 Human Development Report:

If Internet access in developing countries were the same as in developed countries, 2.2 trillion dollars in GDP could be generated, with more than 140 million new jobs – 44 million in Africa and 65 million in India.

[Pause]

Educating and training scientists, building research infrastructure – this is the mission of TWAS. We are also very active in scientific exchange programmes, science policy and science diplomacy.

TWAS has distributed nearly 2,400 research grants to equip laboratories in the developing world.

Every year, we and our partners offer nearly 500 PhD Fellowships. Our Trieste partner – the Organisation for Women in Science for the Developing World – offers 50 PhD fellowships every year to women from sub-Saharan Africa.

Together, by year's end, we will have nearly 1,000 PhD students at top universities in the South.

Distinguished members of the Scientific Advisory Board, ladies and gentlemen,

Such accomplishments would be impossible without our partners. We are deeply grateful to the government of Italy, which has supported us generously across many years. We are grateful to UNESCO, which provides valuable administrative support.

We are grateful, as well, to the Scientific Advisory Board. We are proud to count five of our elected Fellows among your members. I know that we share a common vision, and by working together, we can nurture a new generation of researchers, in every country. In doing that, we will advance science in every field, to the benefit of all people.

Please allow me to end by saying that Professors Salam and Budinich approached science with, what I will call in French, ***“Un autre regard”*** which means “Another Look ”. Not science for science sake but science for all people, and I thank once more the Italian Government and the City of Trieste for making this happen.