

Statement issued by K.R. Sreenivasan, Director of the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), Trieste, Italy

An Italian newspaper has recently published a series of articles on ICTP, juxtaposing facts with vivid imagination, alleging that a small number of its past visitors were involved in nuclear weapons programs in their countries, and that at least some of the necessary knowledge was acquired at ICTP. To preserve the institutional integrity, and considering the difficult times in which we live, a brief response appears worthwhile.

ICTP's mission is to foster the growth of advanced studies and research in physics and mathematics, especially (but not exclusively) among researchers from developing countries. Its focus is *not* technology transfer but the development of human capital. ICTP has hosted some 100,000 scientists from every part of the world for short periods. Its contributions are a tribute to the vision of the scientists who created the Centre and to Italy that has generously supported the institution since inception. All ICTP's activities, which focus on basic sciences, are available for public scrutiny.

ICTP is a United Nations (UN) institution organized under a tripartite agreement among the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the Government of Italy. Its programs are thus open to qualified scientists from all UN countries. The participants in ICTP's programs are chosen on the basis of their scientific merit and suitability, and are evaluated by scientists with experience and excellent track record, drawn from ICTP and elsewhere. The procedures for selection are well publicized and comparable to those in other reputed institutions. ICTP's programs and the names as well as affiliations of its visitors are displayed on its website, most often well in advance of the event. All the work done at ICTP is published in open literature. ICTP is neutral to all shades of politics and religious beliefs and has no special affinity to any government or country.

ICTP does not work, and has never worked, on nuclear technology. ICTP categorically denounces all destructive use of science, nuclear and otherwise, and plays no role in anyone learning anything specific about any weapons programs. All its nuclear-related programs are held in cooperation with IAEA, the world's watchdog agency in charge of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons; without exception, these activities are on peaceful applications in agriculture, climate, energy, medicine and water. The decision on what is an allowable program is made within the guidelines of IAEA, and the selection of participants is done by IAEA subject to its rules. ICTP believes that whatever energy option a country chooses, within international guidelines, to meet its development needs, the scientists of that country must know how to handle the details responsibly.

In short, ICTP seeks to establish better understanding among scientists of all nations. We aim to produce conditions where talented people can pursue their creative interests for the larger benefit of all.