

Dear Fellow Triestini:

When I came to ICTP almost six years ago, I believed that it was important to bring the City of Trieste closer to ICTP. My belief has grown stronger with time. The Open Day is one among the several initiatives in that direction. Our goal for this activity is to invite the citizens of Trieste to ICTP for a day and amuse them with matters of science. I hope that you will enjoy your day here by doing things yourself, watching others do them, walking around ICTP and other Miramare institutions which have joined the Open Day effort, or simply by listening to the interesting presentations that are planned.

I apologize that I cannot be here personally to welcome you, especially the special guests and the authorities who have graciously accepted our invitation and come here. I have requested my colleague Professor Claudio Tuniz to read out my remarks. I truly regret not being here. You will understand this regret better if I say that this Open Day will most likely be the last one to be held under my directorship of ICTP. It is almost certain that there will be a new person at the helm two years from now, and what happens then is not for me to speculate. Because of this special reason, I wish to take a few minutes of your time to share with you my thoughts on why science is a great enterprise of our time, while also making a few personal remarks.

Science and its close relative, Technology, have made today's life very different from that of our forefathers some hundred years ago. We understand many things better now than at any time before; we can do many more things now than before; we don't have to struggle for our daily existence the way as our forefathers used to struggle. More than these, we have become aware of a process by which we can become more aware of our universe and our place in it. This is an extraordinary enterprise of which all of us should be a part. I hope your visit today will bring you, especially the young ones among you, a bit closer to some ideas that have enchanted the best minds among us.

Yet, with all these positive changes have come anxieties of the sort that our forefathers never faced: the possible annihilation of the human race by accidental or intentional misuse of nuclear weapons or by the pace of greedy development that cannot be sustained or by the loss of personal freedom that the information age has been ushering upon us. Science has been a double-edged sword in this respect: marvelous as a fountain of ideas which has taken us ever closer to understanding the deep mystery of our existence, but one, if used with poor judgment or with the conviction of a thoughtless fool, can take us many steps backwards.

The only inoculation against this tragic role that science and technology has often played in our history is an educated citizenry which is knowledgeable; one which is vigilant and ensures openness in the way our political masters conduct our business. Turning our back on science does not bring us the serenity that some think existed centuries ago, because an inquiring mind is naturally driven to Science: just imagine Galileo who persisted with his queries despite tremendous opposition. Nor will peace reign by controlling the pace of science by banning this or that kind of research. The only solution to a better world is to create a large-scale public awareness of all manifestations of Science, so our political

masters dare not abuse the fruits of its toils. In its own small way, our Open Day is an effort at improving this public awareness.

Allow me now to say a few personal words about my five and half years in Trieste. For the most part, I have minded my business and concentrated on ICTP. I have rarely ventured into the City, rarely aspired for publicity, and never meddled in the affairs of other scientific institutions. Yet, I have always been ready and willing to do anything I could do when asked. In part, my code of conduct comes from the personal belief that the head of an international institution should display the discipline to be expected of a good guest. In part, it arises from the circumstances of my life, into which I will not go here. Nevertheless, I have developed an immense love for Trieste: whether I am walking along the Barcola beach enjoying the beautiful sunsets or the beautiful people, whether I meet the citizens and officials of Trieste in my office or elsewhere in the City, I feel that the history of Trieste flows in my breath and my blood. This is a city with enormous potential, still struggling to find its roots and destiny. Whether it will rise in the changing world or remain in the backwaters of new Europe will depend on your spirit of enterprise, but, no matter what, there will always be love in my heart for this city and its people. I feel that I have received a lot from Trieste but have done far less for it.

It remains for me to thank all the ICTP staff who have put in enormous effort to make the event successful. I will find another occasion to show my appreciation for them more concretely and so will not name them here. I must especially acknowledge the support of our sponsors, the help received from the local authorities and other Miramare institutions for this event. Without their support and goodwill, nothing would work. Thank you all.