

**RECOLLECTIONS, WITH GRATITUDE,  
OF THE ASSOCIATE-MEMBER PROGRAM OF THE ABDUS SALAM ICTP.**

(A personal statement on the influence of a significant aspect of the a unique UNESCO/IAEA institution dedicated to research, training and to the advancement of science in the developing world).

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I was born in Caracas at that time the capital of the United States of Venezuela. After completing my primary and part of my secondary education in my home town, I went on to obtain a Ph.D. in the University of London, followed by a post-doctoral position at the same university.

I arrived at the ICTP in March 1971 with what today essentially corresponds to a Junior Associate Membership. (The ICTP was not new to me, as I had had the enormous privilege of being present at the inauguration of the Miramare site as a participant of the memorable “Contemporary Physics Symposium” in June, 1968.)

IAEA had Fellowships to allow at the ICTP for visiting junior scientists. After a short stay of 6 months I took up a position of researcher at the main research institute of Venezuela, the Instituto Venezolano de Investigaciones Cientificas (IVIC) in Caracas. I remained in that position for 7 years reaching tenure in 1978. I was offered the position of Professor at the then new Simon Bolivar University, where I stayed till my retirement in 1990.

During those years, as a researcher and then professor of Venezuelan institutes, I gladly accepted the positions of Regular Associate and Senior Associate Member of the ICTP. I had the privilege of enjoying what had been Professor Abdus Salam’s original objective of being part of an advanced institute, where I was able to

change my permanent environment in a non-industrialized nation in order to refresh and strengthen my research objectives.

Salam's initiatives inspired me with confidence, not only for his outstanding performance as a researcher, but especially since like myself, he had been born in a developing region of the world and understood fully from personal experience what it means to try to help one's native land, in spite of all the underlying difficulties that are not evident without direct contact with that environment.

These visits to Trieste had a profound influence in my academic maturity: The flexible and enjoyable link with the Miramare Campus allowed me to meet other scientists from many countries of Asia, the Middle East and my own Latin America spontaneously in a relaxed atmosphere. I have continued to benefit by the example and experience of some of them right up to the present day. These new contacts in Trieste influenced my own field of expertise – the new science of astrobiology, earlier referred to as bioastronomy or exobiology.

Once I had received my pension status in 1990 from the Higher Education System of the then Republic of Venezuela, I joined the ICTP as a consultant. Professor Salam asked me in the Autumn of 1990, to take over the then 10-year old Program of Physics of the Living State, which included Biophysics and Neurophysics, leaving Medical Physics outside the range of my duties.

This request led to the supervision of many Associate Members, Junior, Regular and Senior, an experience that has greatly enriched my scientific outlook. The organization of multiple courses, colleges, workshops and, especially a 10-year sequence of high-level conferences in my area of research, were initiatives needed earlier on. Today, the continuing changing landscape of science has led other sectors of the ICTP and SISSA to provide these academic activities to our own associates.

Besides, the explosive growth of astrobiology has led to a parallel flourishing of conferences in astrobiology, retaining the need for the ICTP to preserve the Associate Program, rather than to continue organizing specially designed training activities by the Coordinator, since biophysicists, neuroscientists and astrobiologists have already found an extremely wide spectrum of opportunities for participation in high-level meetings in our region of the world.

As a consultant of ICTP, and later as a Staff Member, I have endeavored with all my care, energy, experience and enthusiasm to provide the many Associates coming to the program that I have supervised, Physics of the Living State, with the same opportunities that led to the insertion of this activity in the 1960s and 1970s. I have felt throughout my collaboration with this Centre that the ICTP is essentially the home of all scientists that come from the emerging nations to refresh their own careers and to bear with perseverance the difficulties that we have all experienced during the course of our scientific careers in the non-industrialized world.