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Israel Academy Joins Global Advisors

When a President needs science advice he can turn to his Science Advisor. When a country needs science advice it can turn to its National Academy of Sciences. But where can the world, as a whole, turn for science advice? As our planet becomes increasingly interconnected and science-dependent, and as its problems become increasingly global in scope, this question becomes increasingly urgent. There is a pressing need for a new nongovernmental mechanism for providing objective, timely, multinational scientific advice, upon request to international organizations, such as the United Nations and World Bank, and to consortia of national governments.

In January 2000, the representatives of 14 national academies, plus the World Bank, ICSU and others, met in Davos, Switzerland to lay the groundwork for such an Inter-Academy Council (IAC). Their task: to make the world's best science and scientific advice available to international decisionmakers.

In May 2000, the Inter-Academy Panel Steering Committee met in Tokyo to help set up the IAC and elect its first Board of Directors. Israel Academy President Prof. Jacob Ziv, long an enthusiastic supporter of the IAC concept, was appointed to a five-year term on the IAC's Board of Directors. The other members include the U.S., U.K., France, Germany, Japan, Russia, Sweden, Mexico, China, India, Brazil, South Africa, Malaysia and the Third World Academy of Sciences (TWAS), all represented personally by their presidents. The IAC will be hosted by the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences in Amsterdam, as a legally independent foundation with its own secretariat.



Israel Academy President Prof. Jacob Ziv (behind chair), Executive Director Dr. Meir Zadok and Prof. Shmuel Eisenstadt met with their counterparts at the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing in May 2000 (see article on page 2).

In a public statement, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan has welcomed this “initiative to create an InterAcademy Council for providing advisory studies and reports on issues of concern to the U.N. system.” The IAC will operate on a project-by-project basis, each funded by interested international agencies and foundations. Voluntary panels of world experts will prepare analyses, conclusions and recommendations on issues ranging from climate change to genetically modified organisms to the digital revolution.

The IAC Executive Committee met again in Davos, Switzerland, in January 2001, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF). Suggestions for possible initial IAC projects in 2001 included Human S&T Capacity Building in Less-Developed Countries, Food Security for Africa, and Bridging the Global “Digital Divide.” There were also opportunities to meet with senior attendees at the WEF. Initial IAC funding has been offered by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the United Nations Foundation. Israel is proud to play such a major role in this important new international organization.

International News Briefs

Israel Academy President Prof. Jacob Ziv, accompanied by Executive Director Dr. Meir Zadok and Prof. Shmuel Eisenstadt, met with their counterparts in China and Japan in May 2000. Israel’s high-tech success in Biotechnology and Communications were major topics of discussion. They also met with the President of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences and his colleagues, who requested help in establishing an academic center to encourage contacts between the social scientists of both countries. The Israeli Academy offered its assistance and hopes to initiate a series of joint Chinese-Israeli research workshops, particularly in Jewish studies.

The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities recently became a founding member of the Asian Association of Science Academies. Prof. Ruth Arnon, Chairperson of the Israel Academy’s Science Section, was elected Vice President at the new body’s inaugural meeting in Seoul, Korea.

The Israel Academy also recently signed bilateral Agreements for Scientific Cooperation with the Italian Academia Nazionale dei Lincei and the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences. This should further promote Israeli cooperation with scientists in these countries.



Israel has become a founding member of the prestigious InterAcademy Council (IAC, see cover article), and Prof. Jacob Ziv, President of the Israel Academy, was elected to the IAC Board of Directors at the Council’s first meeting in May 2000 in Tokyo, Japan.

Israel is a member of the Asia-Pacific International Molecular Biology Network (IMBN) Priority Needs Commission. Israel’s national representatives, Prof. Ruth Arnon, Prof. Benjamin Geiger and Prof. Yoram Groner, all from the Weizmann Institute of Science, recently submitted a report outlining Israel’s infrastructure, resources, industry, achievements and future needs in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology.

Despite the current unrest, Bob Lapidot, Head of the Israel Academy’s Division of International Relations, reports that most scheduled visits, meetings and exchanges involving European and Asian scientists have been proceeding normally. “Most individual scientists are interested in participating in their scientific programs as planned, and they recognize that isolated incidents are occurring primarily in specific locales far from the Academy,” he noted.