

Iran, science, and collaboration

More than 35 years since its revolution, Iran is embarking on a new era of international interaction and cooperation. On the road to becoming a nation with scientific clout, Iran takes the role of science for peace, progress, and dialogue very seriously.

Iran is now a nation of 78 million people, with about 4.5 million university students, 2500 higher education institutions, 36

science and technology parks, 400 nongovernmental scientific associations, more than 800 research centers, and 1000 scientific journals. Our scientists publish about 30,000 international scientific papers annually, a growth of at least 20-fold since 1979. These achievements could not have been reached without the intensive participation of individual scientists and scientific societies and government support. This participation sprang from a model of development for postrevolutionary Iran that respects the rights of all Iranians to have access to higher education. It is this philosophy that has helped the country weather internal and external disturbances. Sanctions on Iran, for example, pushed its science, industry, and service sectors to cooperate in new and fruitful ways and also forced scientists to work more creatively and promote a knowledge-based economy for the first time in Iran's history. This environment further spurred science-driven political discourse in the country. A prominent example is the role of the scientific community in the recent negotiations on Iran's nuclear program. This could not have materialized without the participation of scientists to provide technical expertise and to clarify scientific language.

Today, Iran is in a position to fine-tune its development model and move toward qualitative improvement of its science and technology. This includes

growing its international scientific collaborations. Given that cooperation is most effective through direct contacts between scientists rather than through government-driven agreements, the Iranian government will encourage and support collaborations initiated by individual scientists from within the country or in any part of the world. There are already such efforts in place, such as the Gondishapour program, in which

Iran has partnered with France to support the travel of scientists to and from Iran once a mutual project between the scientists of the countries has begun. A similar program has been negotiated between Iran and some other European countries. Iran will continue to encourage its universities to be international in all aspects of science and education.

In looking at Iran's history, it is clear that international scientific institutions such as the Maragheh observatory, which was established in the 13th century by a couple of hundred scientists from all over the world, can be vivid guides for science diplomacy in all areas of science, research, and technology. Iran plans to have big science projects,

such as the Iranian National Observatory, which will bridge Iranian scientists with the international science community.

In addition to the increasing number of scientific personnel and growing the scientific infrastructure, Iran offers a unique environment for certain research areas such as archaeology, desert studies, ecological studies, and study of the fauna and flora of the Irano-Turanian region. Thus, prospects for collaboration in the natural sciences, humanities, engineering, and medical and biosciences are all on the horizon. We invite scientists from all over the world to initiate a collaborative program with our scientists. Iran is ready.

— **Mohammad Farhadi**



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Mohammad Farhadi is Iran's Minister of Science, Research and Technology in Tehran, Iran.