

My personal experience at the IAP Young Scientists Conference held in conjunction with the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting of New Champions, 2008, Tianjin, China, 26-28 September 2008

43 young scientists from all over the globe, nominated by their respective national science academies and chosen by the InterAcademy Panel on International Issues, assembled at Tianjin, China, to participate in the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting of the New Champions 2008. I was nominated by the Indian National Science Academy and participated actively in the meeting. The IAP young scientists' meeting/s began with two interactive sessions on i) managing science and ii) the role of frontier areas of science in shaping society. I also attended other open sessions on the roles of nanotechnology and the life sciences in shaping society. The discussions were wide-ranging and enthusiastic and we all benefited from the wide range of experiences/ challenges that were brought to the fore by scientists/ entrepreneurs from all over the world.

The discussion on science management centered on integrity, compliance and the value of maintaining integrity in scientific research, which, in my opinion, was a very relevant topic considering the recent incidents of plagiarism in scientific research. To restore and ensure integrity in scientific pursuits, we discussed the role of mentoring programs, performance based initiatives, the responsibility of individual researchers and authors of scientific papers, and issues concerning ownership of research data. We discussed the fundamental elements of successful science management, issues concerning profitability, the positive impacts of science on society and in businesses, and their roles in shaping society.

This was followed by an interactive session on the role of frontier science in shaping society. In this session, the importance of collaborative ventures between industry and academia, the role of innovation in frontier research, availability of research funding etc were discussed. The IAP announced five awards with substantial seed money for R&D proposals arising out of interactions between the members of the scientific and business communities present at the meeting.

The roles of our respective governments in encouraging such collaborations between the academia and industry cannot be underestimated. The young scientists pinpointed research areas in their home countries which they felt should be treated by their governments/ science policy makers as frontier research areas. As part of this discussion, I singled out areas such as nano- and biotechnology, new materials, fuel cells, poverty reduction programs, medical care and vaccination programs, renewable and sustainable energy, and telecommunications as areas that are likely to shape and transform Indian society in the coming decade.

A direct consequence of our attendance at the IAP Young Scientists meeting and the subsequent cross-fertilization of ideas was the drafting of a 'Tianjin statement' which has been submitted to the IAP on 19th November 2008. In this statement, we have pledged to use our skills for the betterment of our respective societies and to work towards forming a

global scientific community, irrespective of financial and geographical barriers. 40 young scientists have signed this statement.

The Tianjin meeting was an excellent start in forming such a global scientific community that can work with businesses for the dissemination of science to the masses and for using their complementary skills sets for the betterment of society. We have proposed the formation of an 'Academy of Young Scientists' for cross-disciplinary research, educating the public about science, to facilitate business-science partnerships, and to contribute to the formulation of national science policies.

Another consequence of this meeting has been the creation of an e-mail list of young scientists where we regularly share our ideas and welcome opinions from our fellow young scientists on our goals of spreading the passion for science and of using science to make a better world.

In summary, this was a very successful meeting of scientists and entrepreneurs, all passionate about using their skills to contribute to a better world. This is just the beginning of our journey together and I am very hopeful that we will all be able to keep our passions alive and achieve our vision of being key players in shaping our respective societies and, in turn, the whole world.

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