

## INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

**THIRD WORLD SCIENCE GROUPS FORM NETWORK**

NEW YORK—Spurred in part by the United Nations' mixed record of success in stimulating Third World scientific endeavors—especially R&D and information exchange—concerned scientists have launched their own initiative. Last October, they inaugurated the Third World Network of Scientific Organizations (TWNISO), meeting at the Third World Academy of Sciences' (TWAS) headquarters in Trieste, Italy. Although TWAS has yet to establish a firm program, its main priorities include Third World participation in global scientific efforts (e.g., the human genome project), encouraging biotechnology transfer to facilitate economic and social development of Third World countries, and improving lines of communication with developed countries through bilateral links and exchanges.

TWNISO has grown quickly from concept to reality. In 1986, TWAS invited national science academies and research councils in developing countries to sign an agreement to strengthen their cooperative links with TWAS. Out of 30 groups con-

tacted, 23 responded favorably.

Encouraged by this positive feedback, TWAS president Abdus Salam of Pakistan, the director of Trieste's International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP)—speaking at the opening of the 1987 TWAS Second General Conference in Beijing, China—proposed extending the scope of the TWAS initiative to form a network linking scientific institutions in developing countries. To enhance overall communication and collaboration, he called upon the Ministries of Science and Technology and Higher Education in developing countries to participate.

During the Beijing meeting, representatives of over 40 ministries, research councils, and scientific academies discussed Salam's "network" proposal. An *ad hoc* committee, chaired by Nigeria's Minister of Education Jibril Aminu, was established to further explore the network's formation. Ninety-four scientific organizations from 60 Third World countries have since agreed to become members of TWNISO.

The main business of the October

1988 founding meeting was to elect officers and approve the charter statutes. The members also adopted the "Trieste Declaration on Science and Technology as an Instrument of Development in the South," which resolves that its members will "work toward giving Science and Technology a position of highest priority in their own countries and to strengthen their collaboration with other countries of the South as well as the North."

In addition to its main offices at TWAS, the network established four regional offices to facilitate its operations—in Nigeria, Tunisia, Mexico, and Malaysia, the home countries of the four TWNISO vice presidents. The TWNISO executive board will next meet in Trieste this month. At that time, the shape of TWNISO's programs should crystallize—with biotechnology slated to play a major role.

The second general meeting of TWNISO is scheduled for October 16–20 in Bogota, Colombia, in conjunction with the TWAS Third General Conference. —Mark Ratner



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