



Commissioner Janez Potočnik

***VIDEOMESSAGE***  
***15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Science  
and Technology Centre (ISTC) in Moscow***

*10 December 2009*

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

THE RECENT EVENTS to commemorate the fall of the Berlin Wall remind us of a colder time, not so long ago, and of the new possibilities and new challenges which were suddenly opened. Likewise, after the collapse of the Soviet Union we were unexpectedly faced with a whole new future, with new opportunities and new challenges. At that time there were real concerns about what would happen once all of the knowledge related to cold war weapons was liberated. We were all relieved at the end of the East - West arms race. But we did not want to see its fearsome technologies spread more widely, more illicitly, and more invisibly.

WE HAD TO prevent the illicit sale of this knowledge. And this is how the ISTC was born: as an inter-governmental organisation whose purpose was to re-channel potentially deadly weapons knowledge and skills towards peaceful activities. Since 2002, it has also been instrument of the G8 Global Partnership Initiative, for scientific engagement in non-proliferation.

THAT'S A PRETTY big job, and the ISTC has had a lot to do. In the nineties, it was instrumental in countering the potential brain drain of a large portion of the scientific workforce of the Former Soviet Union.

ITS STRUCTURE, AS a governmental and multilateral organisation, has helped it fulfil that mission. Not only by making sure it attracted enough funding, but also by encouraging coordination between donors; and by building confidence in the Centre's collaborators and partners.

OVER ITS 15 YEARS its credibility and effectiveness have grown. And it has evolved into a proactive and service-oriented organization, which has significantly contributed to national and international research and technological development.

THAT IS WHY the European Commission is particularly proud to have been one of those founders and partners. It is why we have funded ISTC supported research for the sake of non-proliferation. And it is why we remain committed to the ISTC.

SINCE 1994, THE European Union, alongside Canada, Japan, Norway, South Korea and the US have supported the ISTC not only to prevent weapons expertise spreading, but also to help former weapons scientists to find research jobs in civilian and peaceful areas. Over 900 ISTC supported research projects have been funded by the European Commission, and by institutions and companies from EU Member States. Thousands of former weapons scientists have been involved. To my mind, this is a much better use of their time and expertise. I say this for two reasons:

FIRSTLY, BECAUSE WEAPONS proliferation remains potentially the greatest threat to global security.

SECONDLY, BECAUSE IF knowledge belongs to humanity, then its huge powers should be directed towards the increasingly common and global challenges that humanity faces.

BUT DESPITE THE excellent work of ISTC and other programmes, multiple proliferation threats still exist worldwide. Weapons scientists and engineers might still be attracted into covert activity in proliferating states and terrorist or organised-crime groups. The ISTC has the experience and the contacts to prevent this happening. And, on a broader level, it has done

something very significant: it has contributed to the integration of scientists from the Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States into the international scientific community... no small task.

THE ISTC SITS in a unique position and offers substantial value to its members, particularly from the EU. Its activities are of interest to many EU research organizations that alone would find it hard to work with their counterparts from Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

I KNOW that the ISTC is in the process of modernising. And to do this, it must pursue its efforts to make its structure and working practices more efficient and flexible. And it must further develop its relationship with business and industry.

ITS EXPERIENCE MAKES it an ideal partner to support an increasingly global international research ecosystem. This is the role it should look to build on. It has much to contribute to the prevention of weapon expertise proliferation in the future and should rightly be part of the discussions within the international community on the outlook of the G8 Global Partnership Initiative after 2012.

I AM SORRY I cannot be with you today. The ISTC's first 15 years are really a good reason to celebrate.

BECAUSE OF YOUR work, the world is without any doubt a safer place.

THE NEXT 15 YEARS – and beyond – will see you consolidate your position through new research partnerships, and through new innovations. I know, as I'm sure you do, that the ISTC has plenty more to offer.

GOOD LUCK AND thank you!