

Dr. Hans Winkler

Mr. President, Minister, Mr. Under Secretary General, Mr. Director, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. Thirty-five years ago the Austrian government took a very important decision, and it was a decision very much motivated by considerations of foreign policy. The offer to IIASA to take up residence in Austria was a very important one, and I can assure you, since then, we have not regretted this decision one single moment and I hope that IIASA hasn't regretted it either. And let me just add one very personal remark – as a very, very young diplomat 35 years ago, one of the first tasks I was assigned in the legal office in the foreign ministry was to find a legal basis for the presence of IIASA in Austria. Because after all, IIASA was not an international organization—IIASA was an international non-governmental organization so it was a legal challenge at the time. I trust that the solution that we have found is still satisfactory today.

IIASA was one remarkable fruit of an otherwise hardly fruitful Cold War era. The then-president of the United States, Johnson, suggested in 1966 that scientists of the United States of America and the Soviet Union should work together on global issues that all advanced societies were confronted with, irrespective of their social and political system. The fact that Austria won the bid to host the organization against tough competitors had very much to do with the role Austria was able to play because of her international status and the active role she had assumed in the promotion of peace and cooperation between the two blocs.

In 1972, Austria already had a very long tradition of serving as a meeting place for higher-level conferences and as a host to international organizations inside and outside the UN family. And in 1972, UNIDO had already been in Vienna for 6 years and IAEA had already been in Vienna for 16 years. So the decision was taken to invite IIASA to come to Austria and eventually to make Schloss Laxenburg the meeting point of scientists from all over the world working together on common and globally relevant issues. The establishment of IIASA signified a turning point in our thinking about global scientific issues. A process was started which recognized the global character of fundamental changes in our world. The awareness of the interdependence of every aspect of life in modern civilization on man and nature was thus raised in all developed societies. Although there existed already a great number of international organizations and institutions with the common goal of building, in a very general way, a better world, there was no international non-governmental institution with a scientific approach which could establish undisputed facts and provide objective analyses. And this unique function of IIASA in my opinion is unrivaled until today.

Certainly, IIASA has changed during its 35 years, and it has met changes. Because it has always been closely linked to political reality in a changing world, as the host country, we have closely watched all of those developments and its consequences on IIASA. The end of the Cold War did not, as one might have expected, mean the end of the need to have an institution like IIASA, quite to the contrary. New global challenges made it clear that something like IIASA continued to be important and relevant and since it was already there, one did not have to reinvent it. New worldwide political constellations

continue to demand a common scientific platform. We need a substantial revival of multilateralism on all international issues which may strengthen global partnerships, global decision-making processes, and the reaching of global goals. With the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, IIASA has completed the long process of change from the former East–West orientation towards a North–South and global orientation and was able to attract new members such as China, India, Pakistan, and South Africa, and new members, as we have heard from the director of IIASA.

During the last decades, the need for global research has further increased, and new topics, such as global management of energy resources have appeared strongly on the political agenda. All this confirms that the work of IIASA is indispensable. And we have also heard from the Under-Secretary General of the United Nations how important global issues in relation to developing countries have become. And I am sure that IIASA, in an environment here in Austria that is I think conducive to such research will also play in the future a very important role.

Global change is not a new phenomenon. One might be amazed how similar many topics of international mass media, for example, in 2007 are similar to those surrounding the foundation of IIASA in 1972. But it also shows alarmingly enough, to what extent the urgency of problems indicated with the term “global change” has increased. With its findings, conclusions, and suggestions, the Institute provides a sound basis for political decision-making.

Ladies and Gentlemen, at today’s jubilee, the Austrian foreign ministry wishes to reconfirm its commitment to IIASA. We particularly highly esteem the Institute’s valuable contribution to science and polity over the past three and a half decades, reminding us that our planet is nothing but a small spaceship moving through the gigantic universe with Laxenburg as its sort of scientific monitoring center.

Happy Birthday, and congratulations to IIASA, to its director, and to all members of a continued dedicated scientific and administrative staff. May you also thrive the next 35 years. Thank you very much.