Report from Malta

Frontiers of Science: Research and Education in the Middle East

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The sixth biennial "Malta Conference" (Malta-VI) was held November 10-15, 2013, at the Hilton Hotel on the Mediterranean island of Malta. These conferences, which are organized by the Malta Conferences Foundation (MCF), a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, are dedicated to the use of science diplomacy as a bridge toward peace in the Middle East. They feature plenary lectures by Nobel Laureates, workshops on topics of importance to scientists and educators from the region, oral and poster presentations by participants from the Middle East, and ample time for everyone to make personal and professional connections. Previous conferences were held in Malta in 2003 and 2005, in Istanbul in 2007, in Amman, Jordan, in 2009, and in Paris in 2011 at UNESCO headquarters as part of the celebration of the International Year of Chemistry.

Representatives from 15 Middle Eastern countries (Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates) were present at Malta-VI. A total of 80 invited participants, including students and early-career scientists, attended; 15 others were unable to come to Malta, a member of the European Union, because of visa problems.

Plenary lectures were given by Yuan T. Lee (Taiwan), *Return to Nature, Back to Sunshine*; Ada Yonath (Israel), *Mid-East Regional Collaborations for Investigating Cellular Molecular Machines*; Danny Shechtman (Israel), *Quasi-Periodic Materials – A Paradigm Shift in Crystallography*; Claude Cohen-Tannoudji (France), *Atoms and Light*; and Roald Hoffmann (U.S.), *Protochemistries Are the Bridge*. Plenary presentations were also made by Yvonne Pope (Chemical Abstracts Services, U.K.), *SciFinder – The Choice for Chemistry Research*; Monique Beaudoin (U.S. Office of Naval Research Global, London), *ONRG's International Research Grants and Research Support Grants*; and Mustafa Al-Ammar (Earth Ambassador for the Protection of the Planet and Preservation of Peace), *Sustainable Peace and Youth Leadership*, who also performed a number of Iraqi songs and ballads.

Greetings were offered at the opening ceremony by Zafra Lerman (President, MCF), George Abela (President, The Republic of Malta), Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley (U.S. Ambassador to Malta), Rob Luke (British High Commissioner to Malta), Henry Frendo (President, Malta National Commission for UNESCO), who read a message from Irina Bokova, the Director General of UNESCO, and Marinda Wu (ACS President). The opening address on "Science for Peace" by HRH Princess Sumaya Bint El Hassan (President, Royal Scientific Society of Jordan), who was unable to attend because of illness, was read by a member of the Jordanian delegation. Evening receptions were held during the week at the residences of Ambassador Abercrombie-Winstanley and High Commissioner Luke.

The following workshops, which were chaired by their organizers, were held:

- *Chemistry and Bio-Medicinal Chemistry*: Cathy Costello (U.S.), Masoud Mehrgardi (Iran), Mohammed El-Khateeb (Jordan)
- *Analytical, Nanotechnology, and Material Science*: Khalid Al-Saad (Qatar), Essam Al-Jumaily (Iraq), Ossama Assad (Israel)
- *Energy, Environment, Air and Water Quality*: Chuck Kolb (U.S.), Yehuda Shevah (Israel), Tareq Abu Hamed (Israel), Alfred Abed Rabbo (Palestinian Authority)
- *Chemistry Safety and Security*: Leiv Sydnes (Norway), Nadia Kandile (Egypt), Saeed Al-Alawi (Bahrain)
- *Science Education at All Levels*: Howard Alper (Canada), Rachel Mamlok-Naaman (Israel), Boshra Mossaad Awad (Egypt)

Forty-four oral presentations were made in the workshop sessions; 25 posters were on view throughout the entire meeting. At the end of the conference, the workshop organizers provided summaries of the talks in their sessions, many of which were quite provocative and stimulating, and the vigorous discussions that ensued. Proposals were presented for future actions, including the continuation of existing collaborations and the development of new ones, the dissemination of the information from the workshop, and the search for funding to provide research and international exchange opportunities for students and faculty. In the closing session, the participants, many of whom had attended previous Malta Conferences, enthusiastically endorsed the motion that Malta-VII be held in 2015.

In addition to its President and Treasurer, the other members of the MCF Board of Directors who attended were Iona Black (Secretary, U.S.), Cathy Costello, Chuck Kolb, Howard Alper, Leiv Sydnes, and Stanley Langer (U.K.). More information about the MCF and the Malta Conferences can be found at <http://maltaconferencesfoundation.org/>.

An article about Malta-VI by Sarah Everts appeared in *C&EN*, Vol. 91, Issue 46, Nov. 18, 2013, p. 7.