

INTERNATIONAL INTERIM COUNCIL OF SESAME

**Extracts Address by
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International Interim Council
Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science
and Applications in the Middle East (SESAME)**

**on the occasion of the ground-breaking ceremony
for the SESAME Centre
Allan, Jordan, 6 January 2003**

We are here to participate in the groundbreaking for the building of SESAME, an indication that the project is entering its definite phase of realisation thanks to the generous support by Jordan.

The word SESAME may be interpreted with different meanings but the best known is that of a 'door opener'. Indeed it is hoped that the new centre will open many doors.

The main facility will be a powerful light source using the so-called synchrotron radiation and providing light beams from the visible spectrum to X-rays, many orders of magnitude stronger than what can be obtained by ordinary sources. Such synchrotron radiation sources are used world wide as instruments for research and technological development in domains from basic research in physics, investigations of materials, biology, archaeology, environment even to medicine - to mention just a few applications. During the past years the parameters of the SESAME facility have been constantly optimised within the given practical and financial boundaries. Very recently a version has been proposed which will make SESAME fully competitive with other facilities presently under construction or recently put into operation. Thus an instrument will be provided which will be essential if the region wants to benefit from progress in science and technology.

Sometimes, I have the impression that many of the persons dealing with SESAME in governments or administrations have not yet realised what a jewel is being created, a situation which I regret. In contrast to other bilateral or even international projects which last at most for a few years, SESAME will be a centre giving an extremely beneficial long-term impetus to the region. By fostering competitive scientific development and promoting modern technologies it will have an important impact on economies. SESAME will contribute to guarantee a basis for an enduring social welfare, including the creation of jobs and human health.

Another main objective of SESAME is to train and form scientists, engineers and even administrators, in scientific and technical issues but also to teach them the many different aspects and practices of international co-operation. In this respect SESAME has already provided positive results. Thanks to the support of various sponsors, in particular the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), the USA and most recently Japan, a number of workshops and seminars could be organised and fellowships

granted to people from the region. Training will remain a task with high priority during the whole existence of SESAME.

Last not least, I confidently hope that SESAME will have a similar success in providing a better understanding between people from different traditions, political systems and religions. Following its two predecessors, CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) in Geneva and JINR (Joint Institute for Nuclear Research) at Dubna, SESAME will become the third international scientific organisation that is given by its founding fathers the genuine task of contributing to peace building. For many of us working for SESAME, the main incentive is the satisfaction we experience by seeing sitting together around the same table representatives from countries exposed to more or less strong political tensions. Ignoring these political problems they discuss peacefully concrete issues of co-operation - a marvellous way of creating confidence and mutual understanding.

The first concrete steps for SESAME were initiated in the summer of 1999. In the years following this, the project advanced at a surprisingly fast rate. In general even a national project, much simpler to organise, needs more time to get to such a stage. Quite a number of hurdles SESAME could pass only with the help, the dedication and enthusiasm of many people. I shall have another opportunity to thank them explicitly and here I can only join the Director-General in the thanks he expressed.

But allow me to mention the crucial role that His Majesty King Abdullah II Ben Al-Hussein played. When we were received by him in the fall of 1999 and explained to him the opportunity that SESAME would offer, he took, without having been warned, maybe after some briefing by His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad and Minister Toukan, the immediate decision to offer a site, and when we left the palace we had it even in writing. During the following years His Majesty constantly followed the project with interest. So far Jordan has turned out to be an ideal place for such an international project. It is a country which accepts scientists from all over the world without discrimination, one of the major conditions for the selection of the site, and Jordan has committed itself to provide the ground and the hall for the facility. During the past two years this building has been planned and prepared in many ways and today we have the great pleasure to assist its groundbreaking. Allow me, Your Majesty, to express to you on behalf of SESAME our warmest thanks for your generous and efficient support.

I cannot close my remarks without thanking Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura.

The only possibility to establish SESAME as an international organisation was under the umbrella of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) following the example of CERN. This, however, implies quite a complicated process - getting the agreement of the internal UNESCO management, then that of the Executive Board and finally the General Conference. This procedure would normally take two to three years. Thanks to your engagement, the help of your staff and the strong support we obtained in these two UNESCO bodies we could rush through this procedure with superluminal velocity and get SESAME approved by UNESCO this spring within less than a year - I believe this must be a record in UNESCO affairs. But even more important, outside this formal procedure you supported the progress of SESAME in various important ways, taking sometimes at crucial moments courageous decisions without which the project would have failed. You got so much interested in the project

that you almost became an expert - to such an extent that when we had the opportunity to inform His Majesty on SESAME's progress you were able to give all the explanations, including on technical issues. SESAME and all its future users owe you great thanks.

Many were sceptical about the vision to realise such a project in a region and at a time when incredible tension dominates. However, I hope and am convinced that SESAME in the safe cradle of Jordan will grow and bloom to outlive the present difficult times, being a light of human hopes in a dark time.