

## YOUNG SCIENTISTS MERIT A GREATER DEGREE OF INFLUENCE WORLDWIDE

The creation of the Global Young Academy (GYA), reported in the *Science* editorial entitled “Empowering Young Scientists” (April 2, 2010), is a masterful device for promoting the participation of young scientists in world affairs. This new academy will face complex challenges, and facilitating the establishment of national young academies needs to be carefully planned.

Traditional academies, often considered ineffective by young scientists, may, in turn, perceive the young academies as unnecessary, rather than as worthy partners. To bridge the generation gap, traditional academies might want to amend their by-laws to incorporate outstanding younger scientists and open the door for collaborations across generations. However, the significance and chroma of “young academies” is their focus on issues with direct relevance to young scientists.

Worldwide, young scientists are increasingly aware of their obligation to engage in a dialogue with the public. The GYA could play a major role in bridging communication between scientists and government to benefit socioeconomic development. In some troubled Latin American countries, such as Nicaragua and Venezuela, the independent voice of science has a difficult time being heard. The GYA could organize forums to discuss the role of science in policy making and to ensure that the views of young scientists are made available to the government sector. It could promote open access to scientific information and visiting scientists programs for science education.

Efforts and scarce resources should by no means be duplicated and the rationale and responsibilities for each young academy should be clearly defined. For this to be a successful enterprise, it is crucial that it be done from a bottom-up perspective, identifying the key areas of inter-

est of each country, in consultation with local experts. In addition to nurturing young scientists worldwide, attention should also be directed to fostering scientific efforts in the developing world.

There is worldwide consensus regarding the important role played by the Academies of Sciences in promoting scientific activity within developing countries. The Third World Academy of Sciences, TWAS, and the Interamerican Network of Academies of Science, IANAS, try to structure capacity building programs to prepare young scientists from developing nations, using the Academies of Sciences as intermediaries.

We recognize the importance of these efforts, however, capacity building should not be understood as simply communicating a message on the usefulness of research as a tool for furthering development, prosperity and equality within societies, and to indicate how the developed nations have achieved these goals. It should also consist of a collection of coordinated actions to strengthen the development of scientific capacities of a given country, according to the country’s needs and, above all, according to its own particular set of circumstances. In the document entitled “Building Scientific Capacities: A TWAS Perspective”, this organization recognizes that “...we have known for some time what needs to be done but we have been less sure on how to successfully do it”.

The Global Young Academy, working together effectively with local Academies, will be a powerful tool for young scientists on their journey toward successful careers. Science academies around the world should applaud the efforts of the GYA and welcome them into the established scientific community.

JORGE A. HUETE-PÉREZ  
Nicaraguan Academy of Sciences  
CLAUDIO BIFANO  
Venezuelan Academy of Physical,  
Mathematical and Natural Sciences