

The 150th anniversary of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Sofia, 12 October

2019

Address by Professor Daya Reddy, President, International Science Council

Professor Julian Revalski, President of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Academicians, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure that I convey, on behalf of the ISC, warmest congratulations to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences on the occasion of the 150th year of its existence.

The Bulgarian Academy has a long and inspiring history, and continues to uphold the universal values of science as the premier intellectual centre in Bulgaria, engaging in high-quality research, education, and as a partner in developments at the regional and global levels.

The International Science Council comprises scientific organizations from over 140 countries and more than 40 international scientific unions and networks across the natural, social, and behavioural sciences. The vision of the Council is of science as a global public good, and the ISC works on behalf of the global scientific community to convene scientific expertise, and to provide advice and influence on major issues of concern to science and society.

The ISC is the result of a merger between ICSU, the International Council for Science, and the International Social Science Council, in July 2018. It is important to note that the Bulgarian Academy was a founder member of ICSU in 1931, and we are proud to count the Academy among the founding members of the ISC.

The world of today presents major challenges: in climate change, which represents an existential challenge; and more broadly the set of challenges set out in the Sustainable Development Goals. We are also witness to dramatic developments such as the digital revolution, which has brought with it unprecedented opportunities for development. Some of these developments, such as gene editing, will allow us to address goals in health, food security and other areas in a highly effective way. But they are accompanied by major ethical issues, which we as a scientific community must engage with, and also provide the scientific input and perspectives to allow policymakers to shape policies that have a coherent scientific basis, and which also are ethically sound.

We live in a world in which science has to contend with many threats, whether the promotion of views that are sceptical of science, or even anti-scientific in nature. It is essential that we, as a community of scientists, and working closely through our academies and other scientific bodies, address these challenges vigorously, emphasise the value of science, and uphold the values of science.

The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, with its considerable strengths and breadth of expertise, is well placed to play a major role in addressing these issues, on its own and in partnership with the International Science Council and its members. I have every confidence that it will rise to this challenge, and extend its illustrious history of outstanding science and committed service. Once again, my warmest congratulations on this significant anniversary.

Thank you.