

Her Highness Sheikha Moza opens Annual Research Conference 2013

Doha, 24 November 2013 –Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, inaugurated the Annual Research Conference at Qatar National Convention Centre today, stressing the nation’s long-standing support to develop scientific research in Qatar, and the country’s commitment to the universality of knowledge.

The two-day conference, which was held at Qatar National Convention Centre under the theme ‘*Qatar’s Cross-cutting Research Grand Challenges*,’ follows on from a series of high-level engagements with academia, government, industry, and research institutes, in order to identify the major issues that are fundamental to implementing Qatar National Research Strategy.

Her Highness Sheikha Moza welcomed renowned intellectuals and scientists to Doha and announced the decision to address three priority challenges – cybersecurity, water and energy security. She called upon participants to harness their creative energies by applying intelligent solutions to these critical challenges that could have a positive impact on the nation’s growth and advancement. Local and international delegates were urged to work alongside their peers, and encouraged to focus their attention on pivotal R&D areas.

“This conference is an opportunity to announce our decision to address three priority challenges in our country: energy security, through raising the production of solar energy to one gigawatt by 2020; water security, through promoting the scientific research in the area of water desalination; and cybersecurity, through strengthening information security management in an electronically open and overlapped space,” said Her Highness. “In addition, we continue to pursue our research in health, particularly in priority sectors for our country, namely diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and neurological disorders.”

In driving forward the commitment to innovation, Qatar Foundation Research and Development launched the Qatar National Research Strategy last year to enhance the role of scientific research for the welfare of the community, environment, economy, and with the aim of contributing actively to scientific efforts across the world. This strategy is in keeping with the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030.

Her Highness Sheikha Moza reaffirmed Qatar’s pledge to support Arab expatriate scientists and to provide the necessary resources to reputable centres across the world so as to advance research expertise locally, regionally, and internationally.

Her Highness said, “We believe in the globalisation of science, and in sharing, cooperating, and supporting the establishment of scientific research, given that this world is a nation for us all; a world in which science should be devoted to the service of humanity. Given that challenges are global by nature, they require global research solutions through working with international partners who share our beliefs.”

She added, “We recognise, as you do, that the tools, capabilities and outputs of scientific research are an intellectual capital. We produce this research together for our mutual benefit, in a way that no one can be entitled to monopolise the means of progress. Here again we reaffirm, as we have done on previous occasions, that there is no other choice other than inculcating solutions together and reaping the fruits, since we are together confronted with different challenges. We will leave no one lagging behind.”

Faisal Alsuwaidi, President of Qatar Foundation Research and Development, also underscored the phenomenal value of having such a unique platform for keen scientific minds to explore new technologies and innovative approaches.

“We are building and promoting a research culture that values partnerships across research institutions. We know that our investment in R&D will take time to reduce the broad social and economic impacts articulated in Qatar National Vision 2030. Therefore, our R&D agenda is a long marathon and not a short sprint,” said Mr Alsuwaidi. “The country’s investment in R&D is significant. We must be good stewards of this investment. We must ensure clear focus, accountability, and efficiency, and we must continue to work with all of you, this country’s R&D stakeholders and our partners in academia, government and industry. We must support the highest quality of research addressing our greatest national challenges and make sure that results can help improve people’s lives, environment, and economy.”

Mr Alsuwaidi urged delegates to begin working on the identified R&D grand challenges, and explained that the challenges not highlighted this year will remain important and will be addressed through ongoing initiatives such as Qatar National Research Fund grants and in the work of research institutions.

He added, “We must move research along the innovation value chain towards commercialisation, application, and results. We have already started but results will take some time. The Qatar National Research Strategy 2013 Grand Challenges help us to focus on a few critical areas as we continue to implement the broader plan. To summarise, we have an overarching strategy with QNRS and we are making progress in addressing the wide range of priorities within it.”

During the first panel discussion, leading experts gathered to discuss the challenges and opportunities that Qatar faces, in light of international experience. The insightful session was moderated by Dona Crawford of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in the USA, and saw the participation of Dr Thomas Zacharia, the Executive Vice President of Qatar Foundation Research and Development.

Dr Zacharia said, “This is an extraordinary opportunity to discuss the challenges, and indeed the opportunities, that face Qatar in research and development. Clearly science is a global enterprise – we are indeed building a world-leading research and innovation ecosystem. The three challenges identified give Qatar the opportunity to not only create solutions but to leapfrog technologically and in so doing, create new opportunities for new businesses here in Qatar in our drive towards a knowledge-based and diversified economy.”

Among the esteemed group of panelists was Nobel Laureate Professor Shinya Yamanaka, Director of the Centre for iPS Cell Research and Application (CiRA) at Kyoto University. In 2012, Professor Yamanaka received the Nobel Prize in Medicine for his breakthrough research into stem cells.

Other distinguished panel members included one of the world's leading authorities on water and environmental management, Professor Asit Biswas from the Lee Kuan Yew School for Public Policy in Singapore and founder of the Third World Centre for Water Management in Mexico, alongside Professor Anthony K. Cheetham from the University of Cambridge in the UK, Treasurer and Vice President of the prestigious Royal Society, who has received numerous awards for his work in the field of inorganic and materials chemistry.

An engaging line-up of discussions and interactive debates is scheduled to take place tomorrow (November 25). The conference will kick off with keynote speeches from several prominent researchers. Dr Farnam Jahanian, who leads the United States National Science Foundation Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE), will address the importance of a cyber secure society; Dr Ramesh Ramamoorthy, the Science and Technology Director at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in the USA, will discuss breakthroughs in solar energy; and Dr Adel Sharif, Research Director from the Qatar Energy & Environment Research Institute (QEERI), will talk about the role of science and innovation in achieving water security.

An award ceremony will be held tomorrow evening (November 25) to honour outstanding researchers and students who submitted exceptional oral and poster presentations. The winners will be recognised for their hard work and for helping advance Qatar National Research Strategy by aligning their innovative presentations with its key pillars: energy and environment, computer science and ICT, health, social sciences, arts and humanities.

For more information about ARC'13 please visit: www.qf-arc.org.

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About Qatar Foundation Research and Development

Leading Qatar's vision to become an international centre for research and development excellence and innovation, QF R&D is home to Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP), a world-class hub for technology innovation and commercialisation, as well as the Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF), a globally renowned scientific research funding organization, and prominent research institutes operating

at the frontiers of science, including Qatar Biomedical Research Institute (QBRI), Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI) and Qatar Energy and Environment Research Institute (QEERI).

For more information about this press release please contact:

Rania El Hussein, BLJ Worldwide

Mobile: [00974-70218286](tel:00974-70218286)

Email: rania@bljworldwide.com

For more information on Qatar Foundation Research and Development please contact:

Mr. Khaled AL Muraikhi

Communications & PR Manager

Mobile: +97455888615

Email: kalmuraikhi@qf.org.qa