

News Release | Friday 18 June 2010

Kofi Annan to deliver the annual Richard R. Ernst Lecture

Zurich – Delivering the second Richard R. Ernst Lecture today, former UN Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan will call on scientists at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology to harness the “spirit of discovery, creativity and optimism beyond their laboratories and lecture theatres” and focus their efforts on the public good.

During his address, Mr. Annan will reflect on the rapid pace of change driven by scientific advances, but say this alone is not a guarantee of social benefit. In an era of increasing interdependence, he will urge the academic communities to examine wider collective global challenges, not least by ensuring that scientific research seeks to address the concerns and priorities of the poorest on the planet.

Mr. Annan will focus his address on how scientists can respond to two major challenges in particular – food and nutrition security, and tackling the threat of climate change. He will say:

- ***The scientific community has a major role to play in working with the policy community, and organisations such as the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, to ensure that we feed our world in a way which is environmentally sustainable:*** This could be by developing new fertilizer types and new water management techniques, as well as ensuring that scientific discoveries be translated into accessible and affordable technologies for farmers within the least developed nations.
- ***Tackling the threat of climate change and the search for the development of a viable clean source of energy is the scientific race of this century:*** The scientific challenge is to make the transition towards clean energy alternatives that are cost-efficient, viable and potentially available to all.
- ***For science to be truly global, we must foster international co-operation:*** This requires scientists in the developing world to be fully involved not just in fieldwork or low-level research but also in establishing the

research agenda. It also requires a fair intellectual property rights regime to ensure that the benefits of research are shared across the globe.

Mr. Annan will note that the generation of students at the Swiss Institute today will produce more dramatic technological, social, economic and political advances than any before it. He will call on his audience to direct these advances to ensure they create a fairer and more sustainable world for all.

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Contact

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Notes to Editors

- Mr. Annan will deliver the Richard R. Ernst Lecture 2010 at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich on 18 June 2010.
- The Laboratory of Physical Chemistry of ETH Zurich annually organises the Richard R. Ernst Lecture to honour Professor Richard R. Ernst, Laureate of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1991. The aim of the lecture is to strengthen the connection between science and society, and to raise awareness for the problems that society faces in the future.
- Kofi Annan served two terms, from 1997 to 2006, as UN Secretary-General. In 2001, Annan and the United Nations were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. Since leaving the United Nations, Kofi Annan has established a Foundation through which he continues to provide leadership on critical global issues, particularly preserving and building peace and facilitating more equitable sharing of the benefits of globalization, by promoting poverty alleviation, good governance, human rights and the rule of law. Please visit: www.kofiannanfoundation.org