

SPEECH OF PROF.
ANDRE CAPRON
at the ceremony of awarding him the Prize
9.8.1410 H - March 6, 1990

Your Royal Highness, Prince Abd Allah Ibn Abd Al-Aziz,
The Crown Prince,
Your Highnesses, the Princes,
Your Eminencies and Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

One of the privileged moments in the life of a scientist comes when he is awarded international recognition, which has been bestowed on me by the award of the prestigious King Faisal International Prize of Medicine. May I also allowed be to say that beyond the personal recognition, this prize rewards the research efforts of an entire group of researchers and also the success of a remarkable international collaboration. It is of particular significance for me to share this high distinction with Dr. Anthony Butterworth with whom so my personal and professional links have been forged during our very active collaboration during the last ten years. This prize also honors all my coworkers, who for many years have so effectively accompanied my long journey towards the development of a vaccine against schistosomiasis. A special word of gratitude has to be addressed in this respect to my wife, Dr. Monique Capron who as a spouse and as a close coworker, has participated in all the important events of my scientific life.

My interest for shistosomiasis was born 32 years ago when, in Madagascar, I first discovered the terrible weight on public health of this major parasitic disease. Since then, I can say that my whole life has been devoted to the ambitious dream of one day achieving the development of a vaccine against this redoubtable disease. I have had

the particular privilege during all these years of benefiting from the spectacular progress of modern biological tools and also from the constant support of several institutions which have played a determinant role in our research, the Pasteur Institute, the University of Lille, INSERM - CNRS in France and the Clark Foundation, the TDR program of the WHO and the E.E.C. at an international level. Only the combination of these favourable circumstances has permitted the fulfillment of our fundamental objectives.

These were to establish our vaccine strategy on the foundations of basic knowledge of cellular and molecular mechanisms of the host parasite relationship. In this particular emphasis was given to effector and regulatory mechanisms of the immune response against schistosomes.

From all these studies, which are now pursued more actively than ever, I think I have learnt two important lessons. One is that beyond the specific goal of immunization, the immunology and the molecular biology of schistosomes have provided us with a fascinating amount of novel information of broad biological interest: molecular mimicry, escape mechanisms of cell activation, isotype selection, novel **IgE** dependent effector mechanisms are a few examples of such contributions.

The other is that although there is no doubt in my mind that a vaccine is now attainable in the foreseeable future, the availability of this essential preventive tool for human populations will remain extremely uncertain if any immense effort of solidarity is not consented by the more advanced countries in favour of the most deprived.

Beyond the scientific achievement which has been recognized by the King Faisal Prize, there is also the clear recognition of the important role played by the control of schistosomiasis in the social and economic development of many countries. Let me express the wish that the immense prestige of this international distinction will focus interest on one of the most debilitating diseases of developing countries.

I have special thoughts today for the respected memory of his Majesty King Faisal; I had the immense privilege some twenty years ago to be personally invited by his Majesty to Riyadh. I know the deep interest he had for public health problems and especially schistosomiasis and I will always remember the words of support he expressed concerning my research. The award of this prize bearing his name has therefore a particular significance for me.