

Speech of  
**DR. FRANCOISE BARRE-SINOUSI**  
Co-Winner of the 1993 King Faisal International Prize for  
**MEDICINE**  
(Acquired Immunodeficiency Diseases)

Your Royal Highnesses  
Distinguished Guests

It is ten years of research in the field of AIDS that the Committee of the King Faisal International Prize for Medicine has decided to acknowledge today.

I am more than honoured to have been jointly selected with Jean-Claude Chermann and Luc Montagnier as major contributors to scientific progress in this area of Medicine.

Ten years ago, in May 1983, we described, in *Science*, the first identification of the causative agent for AIDS, later on designated as HIV-1. In about a year, we accumulated data that were proving the role of HIV-1 from numerous patients with AIDS or with AIDS related symptoms, including blood donors and their recipients. We showed that only patients with AIDS, with AIDS-related symptoms or patients considered at risk for AIDS at that time were presenting antibodies against HIV-1.

We first demonstrated that one major target of HIV-1 was the population of blood cells disappearing in AIDS patients, namely the CD4+ lymphocytes. We showed that HIV-1 was killing such cells, essential for the immune defense of the organism against microbial infections. In parallel, we participated in the development of the diagnostic tests that are still

commonly used today for detecting an infection with the AIDS virus in human beings.

We also participated in the first step of the molecular characterization of HIV-1 that led to the discovery of its peculiar genetic organization with regulatory genes and of its high genetic variability.

On this basis, a tremendous amount of work has been developed by the scientific and medical communities worldwide. Today, HIV is probably the best characterized viral agent! However, even if our knowledge of AIDS disease has enormously increased during those ten years, there is still a long way to cover, in particular to arrive at effective vaccine and therapies.

We, thus, should still be modest! The recent scientific progress also demonstrated that we have to face a very complex infectious disease. Multiple immunological and virological mechanisms appear to be involved in AIDS pathogenesis and we are still far from knowing all of them. Today, my laboratory at Pasteur Institute, as well as many others in the world, is trying to penetrate some of those mechanisms. We all are aware that we have to get over difficulties to win the fight against the AIDS virus. We should not lose any time facing a very urgent and dramatic situation, in particular in developing countries.

All the scientific and medical communities need to be encouraged worldwide. As a representative of the scientific community, I consider the award that I have the honour to receive today not only as a recognition of our work but mainly as an encouragement for all the scientists involved in the field of AIDS. On behalf of all of them, I would like to express our sincere thanks to the King Faisal Foundation for awarding the Prize this year for research on AIDS.

I would like also to express my personal thanks to all my collaborators inside and outside the Pasteur Institute. This award is also dedicated to them. Without them, I will not be in Riyadh today.

I cannot finish without thoughts for my family, friends and close relatives who all during those years helped me so much by their patience and understanding. Many thanks to all of them.

My last words will be for the members of the King Faisal Foundation. The emotion that I feel at this moment is so high that I really do not know how to express all my gratitude to them.

I will simply say many, many, many thanks.