

Acceptance Speech of Professor
Terence Chi-Shen Tao

Co-Winner of the 2010 King Faisal International Prize
For Science (Mathematics)
32nd Awards Presentation Ceremony

Tuesday 9 March 2010 (23.3.1431H)

Your Majesty, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques,
King Abd Allah Ibn Abd Al-Aziz
HRH Prince Sultan Ibn Abd Al-Aziz
Crown Prince, Deputy Premier
Minister of Defense and Aviation and Inspector General
Your Highnesses
Your Excellencies
Distinguished Guests

I am deeply honoured and humbled to be a co-winner of this year's King Faisal International Prize in science, together with Enrico Bombieri, whose work I have admired ever since I was a student. I am also very grateful for the opportunity to visit Saudi Arabia for the first time.

Mathematics is a truly international activity, and also one of our oldest. From the ancient Babylonians and Egyptians came the foundations of arithmetic; the ancient Greeks gave us geometry, number theory, and logic. In the centuries that followed; Europe fell into a dark age, but the Arab world preserved these classical works, while making further major contributions to mathematics, such as algebra, algorithms, and the Arabic numerals that are now used worldwide.

Modern mathematics rests on these foundations, and on the further contributions of countless mathematicians from all the countries of the world. I myself am an Australian of Chinese descent, working in the United

States, but my colleagues come from all over the world, from Europe to Russia to the Middle East, all working towards the same common goal, to increase our understanding the patterns and phenomena that arise from the laws of both the natural world and the man-made one.

Because of all this, I am very pleased to see that this prize recognizes achievement on its own merits, regardless of national origin; in mathematics, at least, I feel that this is how it should be. I also feel that such recognition of the value of the sciences is an important one in any part of the world, but perhaps especially here in the Arab world, given its crucial historical role in the development of science and mathematics. Saudi Arabia is of course world-famous for its natural resources and as the center of the Islamic faith, but it is of course far more than just these two things. In particular, science and learning are important for any country; I am encouraged that these activities are supported and promoted here, and I hope to see many contributions to mathematics and science from the bright young people in this country in the future.