



30 November 2021

**To the Chairperson
Award Committee
Zayed Foundation for Human Fraternity**

Dear Chairman,

Ismail Serageldin has been considered a true “renaissance man” for his encyclopedic knowledge and the enormous number of fields to which he has very significantly contributed.

He was the first Vice President to take on the task of Environmentally Sustainable Development at the World Bank when he was VP of that august institution (1993-2000). He established the methodologies for environmental impact assessment, and promoted a new conception of growth where four kinds of wealth (capital) would be measured and counted: Man-made, natural capital, human capital and social capital. With Sir Partha Dasgupta he edited an important book on Social Capital (published by the World Bank). He was the first international voice raised on the issue of water, warning of “water wars” in the 21st century. He led the global effort to save the seeds for the 22 key crops humanity needs to feed the poor and avoid hunger and famines. He co-organized with Muhammad Yunus of Grameen the system of international donors to support micro-lending for the poorest of the poor. He supported gender issues both within the World Bank’s own management culture and in the projects financed by the World Bank. He worked on the economic recognition of the intangible value of cultural heritage.

In 2000 he then returned to Egypt to launch the Library of Alexandria, which was inaugurated in 2002, and rapidly became a beacon for science, rationality, dialogue and understanding. He was so successful in recreating that beacon of enlightened values that the US National Academy of Science hailed him as a pioneer in the movement to re-establish the importance of science in the Arab and Muslim world, and awarded him the “Public Welfare Medal”, the National Academy of Sciences’ most prestigious award. Established in 1914, the medal is presented annually to honor extraordinary use of science for the public good. In giving him that Award which had been received by Bill Gates and Carl Sagan, the Academy recognized its first non-north American laureate in “Serageldin, an Egyptian national, [who] has advocated for greater equality in science and society at large, a mission shared by the National Academy of Sciences”... “We honor Dr. Serageldin for his leadership in a number of venues, most recently as the founding director of the New Library of Alexandria,” said John Brauman, home secretary of the National Academy of Sciences and chair of the selection committee for the award. “He has been a champion for the use of science in sustainable development and for liberating minds from the tyranny of intolerance, bigotry, and fear.”



Serageldin is a knight of France's Legion of Honor, a former member of the Egyptian Senate, chairman of the Executive Council of the World Digital Library (WDL), professor of the International Chair Savoirs contre pauvreté (Knowledge Against Poverty) at Collège de France, Paris, and the recipient of 40 honorary doctorates from universities around the world. He received a Ph.D. from Harvard University and began a career in academia. In 1972 he joined the World Bank as an economist; quickly rising through the ranks he worked there in a number of capacities, including vice president for environmentally and socially sustainable development from 1992 to 1998, and for Special Programs from 1998 to 2000.

Throughout his illustrious career, Serageldin has earned a reputation for applying science to nearly every type of global problem. He is perhaps most highly regarded for his attempts to combat hunger in developing countries through the promotion of sustainable agriculture. As chairman of the World Bank's Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research from 1994 to 2000, Serageldin worked to protect the food supply of a global population that is poised to expand by an estimated 2.5 billion people during the next four decades.

Serageldin has blamed "an increasingly intolerant social milieu" where the scientific enterprise is continually challenged by growing contingents against science, notably creationist proponents in the United States and religious extremist groups in the Middle East.

In a 2008 editorial in science, Serageldin wrote, "Science requires much more than money and projects. Science requires freedom: freedom to enquire, to challenge, to think, and to envision the unimagined. We must be able to question convention and arbitrate our disputes by the rules of evidence. It is the content of scientific work that matters, not the persons who produced it, regardless of the color of their skin, the god they choose to worship, the ethnic group they were born into, or their gender. These are the values of science, but even more, they are societal values worth defending, not just to promote the pursuit of science but to have a better and more humane society."

In Serageldin's work to ignite interest in science and apply technological advances to global problems, his colleagues have said that Serageldin's greatest talent is his ability to build consensus among those with conflicting viewpoints.

"Ismail Serageldin is a visionary driving force against narrow-mindedness in politics, science, and society," said Ralph Cicerone, president of the National Academy of Sciences at the time of the Award. "He fights ignorance with scientific reason and his knowledge of culture and the lessons of history."

"Serageldin is also a very public figure," said Cicerone. "He shares the National Academy of Sciences' commitment to educating the public about science and culture." His hour-long television show, "The Cairo Salon," was broadcast weekly on Egyptian television for 137 episodes. It discusses a wide range of issues and explores challenging frontiers in the hope of fostering a commitment to cultural and religious tolerance. Another television program, "Muslim Scientists," which aired daily during the month of Ramadan, educates Arab viewers with short (5 minute) snippets about the historical accomplishments of the Muslim world. Also part of his relentless mission to inspire interest in science was his Arabic and English TV science series where he presented topics ranging from physics and biology, to climate change and food security, to energy and water.



Serageldin's "encyclopedic mind" is well-known, one supporter wrote, and his "incomparable mastery of world public welfare affairs" makes him a well-deserved recipient of the award. "He renders his public service with unparalleled intellectual courage and incalculable personal sacrifice."

He has recently been active on the international stage as a Patron of the International Science Council (which had brought together the Social and the natural sciences) and serves as the co-chair if the Nizami Ganjavi International Center based in Azerbaijan.

Sincerely,

Vaira Vike-Freiberga
President of Latvia 1999-2007;
Co-Chair, NGIC

Rosen Plevneliev
President of Bulgaria 2012-2017

Ivo Josipovic
President of Croatia 2010-2015

Valdis Zatlers
President of Latvia 2007-2011

Emil Constantinescu
President of Romania 1996-2000

Zlatko Lagumdžija
Prime Minister of Bosnia and
Herzegovina 2001-2002

Viktor Yushchenko
President of Ukraine 2005-2010

Mladen Ivanic
Chairman of Presidency of Bosnia
and Herzegovina 2016-2017;
2014-2015

Katheryna Yushchenko
First Lady of Ukraine 2005-2010

Jadranka Kosor
Prime Minister of Croatia
2009-2011

Amre Moussa
Secretary-General of the Arab
League 2001-2011

Petar Stoyanov
President of Bulgaria 1997-2002



Boris Tadic
President of Serbia 2004-2012

Rexhep Meidani
President of Albania
1997-2002

Laimdota Straujuma
Prime Minister of Latvia
2014-2016

Djomart Otorbayev
Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan
2014-2015

Shaukat Aziz
Prime Minister of Pakistan
2004-2007

Bujar Nishani
President of Albania 2012-2017

Jan Fischer
Prime Minister of Czech Republic
2009-2010

Eka Tkeshelashvili
Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia
2010-2012

Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic
President of Croatia 2015-2020

Rosalia Arteaga
President of Ecuador 1997

Noeleen Heyzer
Former Under Secretary General
on UN

Rovshan Muradov
Founding Secretary-General of
Nizami Ganjavi International Center