

**MEETING OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE
CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF
THE DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION AND
STOCKPILING OF BACTERIOLOGICAL
(BIOLOGICAL) AND TOXIN WEAPONS AND
ON THEIR DESTRUCTION**

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ENGLISH ONLY

**Meeting of Experts
Geneva, 13-24 June 2005**

THE AVICENNA PRIZE FOR ETHICS IN SCIENCE¹

Prepared by the Islamic Republic of Iran

At the initiative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Avicenna Prize for Ethics in Science was established by the Executive Board of UNESCO at its 166th session in 2002 to reward the research and services of individuals and groups in the field of ethics in science.

By thus promoting ethical reflection on issues raised by advances in science and technology, the Avicenna Prize for Ethics in Science is expected to help significantly to increase international awareness and highlight the importance of ethics in science.

Ibn Sina, known by his Latin name Avicenna (980-1037 AD), born near Bukhara in 370 in the year of the Hegira of Persian origin, was one of the most eminent scientists and philosophers of the 10th and 11th centuries. He was the most renowned philosopher of medieval Islam and the most influential name in medicine from 1100 to 1500. Extraordinarily creative throughout his life, he played a crucial role in inspiring humanity to build a better future. His whole scientific life was devoted to promoting ethics, elevating human characteristics and enhancing the welfare of future generations. He wrote approximately 450 works, of which about 240 still exist. Of those that survived, 150 are on philosophy and 40 are devoted to medicine, the two fields to which he contributed most. His famous work on philosophy, *Kitab al-Shifa* (The Book of Healing), includes many relevant disciplines such as natural sciences,

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metaphysics, logic, mathematics, astronomy and music. His medical masterpiece is *Al-Qanun fi l-tibb* (The Canon of Medicine). Avicenna established the classification of sciences used in the medieval schools of Europe. UNESCO commemorated his life and achievements in 1980, the thousandth anniversary of his birth, by striking a medal in his honor and granting him the recognition due to one who contributed outstandingly to scientific development.

The purpose of the Prize is to reward the activities of individuals and groups in the field of ethics in science. Such activities shall be in conformity with UNESCO's policies and be related to the Program of the Organization in the field of ethics of science and technology.

The Prize shall be funded by the Islamic Republic of Iran and shall consist of:

- a gold medal of Avicenna along with a certificate and a sum of US \$10,000 and;
- a one-week academic visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran, which would include the delivery of speeches in the relevant academic gatherings, organized for this purpose by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran;
- The Prize shall be awarded on an initial basis in the 2002-2003 biennium;
- The operating costs of the Prize shall be shared equally by the Islamic Republic of Iran and UNESCO with effect from the 2004-2005 bienniums, provided that provision has been made for UNESCO's share of these costs in the program and budget approved by the General Conference.

The candidates (individuals and groups) should have contributed to high quality research in the field of ethics of science and technology.

The prizewinner shall be designated by the Director-General of UNESCO, on the recommendation of an international jury. The jury shall consist of three members, of different nationalities, appointed by the Director-General from among the members of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST), taking into account the renewal of COMEST members. The jury shall adopt its own working procedures and shall be assisted by a member of the Secretariat designated by the Director-General.

When the Secretariat has received the items to be awarded and the funds for the operating costs, the Director-General of UNESCO shall invite the submission of nominations from the governments of Member States, in consultation with their National Commissions, and from international non-governmental organizations maintaining official relations with the Organization. Each Member

State and NGO may designate one candidate. The governments and NGOs shall provide in support of each candidate recommendation including:

- a description of the candidate's academic background and achievements;
 - a summary of the work submitted for consideration;
 - A review of the way in which the work submitted has contributed to the development of research in the field of ethics of science and technology.
- The nominations should be submitted in English or French and be accompanied by a biographical note.

The Director-General of UNESCO shall announce the name of the winner. The Director-General (or his representative) shall award the Prize at an official ceremony held for that purpose.

The first Avicenna Prize for Ethics in Science was awarded on 26 April 2004 to Professor Margaret Somerville, an Australian-Canadian national and Director of the Centre for Medicine, Ethics and Law at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. She was also founding Chairperson of the Ethics Committee of the National Research Council of Canada. Through her books, conferences and other work, Professor Somerville has made an important contribution to the global development of bioethics, and to the ethical and legal aspects of medicine and science.

Dr. Abdallah Daar from Oman was chosen as the laureate of the Avicenna Prize for Ethics in Science in 2005, upon the recommendation of a jury which met on 22 March 2005 in Bangkok, Thailand.

His significant contribution to research in the ethics of science and technology does not only cover a wide range of topics, but engages in depth with issues at the crossing point of science and ethics, technology and society. The impressive breadth of his numerous publications in the area of biomedical ethics is evident from the scope of themes that he covers, ranging from more traditional issues such as living donor transplantation to newer concerns such as the use of stem cells, genomics and xenotransplantation.
