Astronomical and Astrophysical Transactions (*AApTr*), 2022, Vol. 33, Issue 3, pp. 183–184,
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Message of Professor Remo Ruffini, Director of ICRANet, for the Opening Session of the ICRANet–Isfahan Astronomy Meeting

I always remember with great pleasure my first journey to the Islamic Republic of Iran, when I visited the Biruni Observatory, created by Prof. Yousef Sobouti under the supervision of the late Prof. Bob Koch and Ed Guinan from the University of Pennsylvania, at the University of Shiraz. The Observatory is located on the mountains, overlooking the beautiful town of Shiraz. Since then, I had the great pleasure to continue my many interactions with Prof. Yousef Sobouti, repetitively in Rome, at ICRANet center in Pescara as well as at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Basic Sciences (IASBS) in Zanjan. I admired the structure of that Institute: it has the serenity, like the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton used to have, offering the possibility to access the library day and night and open to everyone: this is becoming a rare and beautiful example on planet Earth. In the meantime, ICRANet has signed collaboration agreements with many Universities and research Institutes in the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- Alzahra University
- Damghan University
- Institute for Advanced Studies in Basic Sciences (IASBS)
- Institute for Research in Fundamental Sciences (IPM)
- Isfahan University of Technology (IUT)
- Sharif University of Technology (SUT)
- Shiraz University
- University of Mazandaran.

The ICRANet–IUT collaboration has been started since 2010, with more than eight PhD students who came to ICRANet for short and long visit periods, jointly supported by ICRANet and by the Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In addition, we have in ICRANet as Adjunct Professor, Soroush Shakeri and, as a full Professor, Rahim Moradi. We promoted an intense visiting program for short periods from many of the Universities with which we have signed collaboration agreements. The novelty is that we have enrolled two new graduate students from the Islamic Republic of Iran (one from the University of Mazandaran and one from Alzahra University). Both are registered at the International joint PhD in relativistic astrophysics (JIRA PhD), recently established between the University of Ferrara (UNIFE) and the University of Sciences and Technology of China (USTC), with the collaboration both of ICRANet and ICRA.

Following this experience, it has been particularly significant to hold this meeting under the aegis of H.E. Mohammad Ali Zolfigol, Minister of Science, Research and

Technology of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I was particularly honored to transmit to him the message sent to his predecessor, with the unanimous approval by the ICRANet Steering Committee, of the possibility for the Islamic Republic of Iran to join ICRANet as a Member State. We look forward to seeing progresses between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Italy, depositary of the ICRANet agreement. Since its establishment, I have always encouraged the collaboration between ICRANet and all countries. We assume that fundamental scientific knowledge has a universal value: it is politically neutral and it is a driving force for the development of mankind through international cooperation.

I'm extremely happy to thank everybody, especially Prof. Soroush Shakeri from Isfahan University of Technology, its President, Professor S.M. Abtahi, as well as Prof. Yousef Sobouti to have prepared such a remarkable program, which occurs on the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the introduction of the Black Hole. The key message is that, after 50 years, we finally observed the Black Holes and we can really assert what my dream was 50 years ago: Black Holes are alive and we see their actions, their emissions all over the spectrum, from the radio to the optical in X-ray, in gamma rays and in TeV radiation. We are learning by the observations all over the Universe to the depth of 15 billion light years of distance, the fundamental science which we were unable to learn before on Planet Earth. Some of these results will be presented in this outstanding meeting.

Professor Remo Ruffini,
Director, ICRANet