



## **Speech by Professor Gruss**

**on the occasion of the opening of the Indo-German Max Planck Center  
for Research on Lipids**

**“The Max Planck Society. Basic Research for all - Safeguarding the  
Future”**

**NCBS, Bangalore  
September 22, 2011**

Prof Raghavan,  
Dr Mayor  
Mr Consul General, Dr Karsten  
Prof Zerial,  
Dr Kurzchalia,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Bengali author and Nobel laureate in literature Rabindranath Tagore once said: *“If I can't make it through one door, I'll go through another door - or I'll make a door. Something terrific will come...”* Over the years, the scientists of the Max Planck Society and their Indian colleagues have opened a lot of doors. In some cases they also made doors, when there were none - in order to jointly push forward their research.

This partnership is now beginning to bear fruit. I am therefore delighted that we are here today in Bangalore to open the *Max Planck Center for Research on Lipids* together with the *National Centre for Biological Sciences*. My warmest thanks go to Dr. Vijay Raghavan and Dr. Satajit Mayor from the NCBS, as well as Dr. Marino Zerial and Dr. Temo Kurzchalia from the *Max Planck Institute of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics*, who have made this happen.

I strongly feel that we are establishing something truly terrific with the *Indo-German Max Planck Center for Research on Lipids*. This venture opens up new possibilities for the cooperation with our Indian partners, not only with regard to the science and technology of lipids, but also for the Indo-German research collaboration on the whole.

Science is a central element in the Indo-German partnership, with both sides mutually benefiting from each other's strengths. It gives me great pleasure to say that the *Max Planck Institute of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics* in Dresden has found a truly excellent partner in the *National Center for Biological Sciences* in Bangalore: With state of the art and complementary research at the highest level on both sides, this partnership will certainly boost the research in the field. The Center offers optimum conditions for advancing lipidomics from its present early stage to the level needed to play a major role in biomedical research. Thus, lipidomics will not only become an essential toolkit in cell and developmental biology, but will also be used as a powerful technology in diagnostics, molecular medicine and nutrition. We envisage creating new opportunities in medicine and drug development, enabling novel approaches for combating human diseases.

The Max Planck Society is led by the conviction that "*knowledge must precede application*", as stated by Max Planck himself. The *Indo-German Max Planck Center for Research on Lipids* is also a good example of the relevance that basic research has in this process: The research of this Max Planck Center may lead to opportunities and solutions that may one day help thousands of people in India, Germany, and all over the world.

Science is international – not only in its impact and its benefits, but also in its work. The scientific community consists of researchers of the most various nations. Together, they are advancing the knowledge of mankind. This process can be envisioned like a huge puzzle on which all researchers are working together. And this is why science cannot be restricted to the national level. The scientists of the Max Planck Society alone are involved in more than 2,300 international projects in 123 countries. In turn, about 7,000 young researchers and visiting scientists from abroad were carrying out research at a Max Planck Institute last year. Incidentally, approximately one third of our scientists have no German passport. Our goal is to bring together the best minds of the world, so that they can advance their research ideas autonomously at institutes with outstanding equipment. This way they can open up new scientific fields for the greater good of mankind.

And we won't and can't limit this goal to Germany. It is of great importance to us to strengthen the international scientific cooperation of Max Planck Institutes with international partners, since this means enhancing the scientific performance of all institutions involved. At the same time it leads to mutual access to leading research

infrastructures and opens up new career options for young researchers. And last but not least, internationalization helps the Max Planck Society to increase its visibility worldwide.

This is one of the reasons why we are supporting excellent scientists outside of Germany who are engaged in particularly promising ventures – as here Bangalore. With our Max Planck Centers, we can enhance the visibility of international collaborations on site, thus making them even more attractive - both for German scientists and their Indian colleagues. From the many young talents in India, we want to foster the very best here and help to integrate them in the international scientific community.

Through such activities the Max Planck Society is attempting to make a contribution to the development of India as a knowledge society. There are many signs that India's population shares this ambition. Science enjoys a high status in Indian society. This made a deep impression on us when the "Science Express" toured India, a scientific multi-media exhibition by the Max Planck Society on board of a train. Five million visitors have seen the exhibition since it was launched in 2007, often forming long queues just to get in. The train was an excellent opportunity to raise awareness in India both of Germany's research profile and of the Max Planck Society itself. Simultaneously, the interest of Indian students and graduates in Max Planck Institute has risen steadily over the past few years. India now accounts for the second highest proportion of foreign Ph.D. students at the Max Planck Society. At our International *Max Planck Research Schools* Indian students represent the largest group.

And it is to support these students after their return to India that we have initiated such programs as the *Max Planck Partner Groups* and *Max Planck India Fellowships*, which have proven to be very successful: 24 Partner Groups have been set up since 2005. Presently, there are more active Partner Groups in India than in any other country. And more than 30 Indian junior scientists use a Max Planck India Fellowship to establish collaboration with Max Planck Institutes. On the long run this "brain circulation" is going to benefit both sides tremendously. One and a half years ago, we inaugurated the first Center of this kind with the *Indo-German Max Planck Center for Computer Science* in Delhi. It has already successfully taken up its research activities. It is wonderful that we can now round off all these activities with the new *Indo-German Max Planck Center for Research in Lipids*.

We are thus creating a stable basis for German-Indian collaboration in the coming years and decades. The author Rabindranath Tagore used to say: "*Inspiration follows aspiration.*" I would like to add another aspect: "*Transpiration follows aspiration!*" Please allow me to once again extend my warmest thanks to all of those who have made the foundation of this Center possible through their work and their commitment! I wish all those scientists involved in the research activities the best of luck, and the necessary inspiration: And I am sure that "*Inspiration will follow transpiration!*"