



## **Stronger Cooperation with Partners in Latin America**

Speech of the President of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft

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– Check against delivery –

How wonderful to see you all here today. It fills me with great joy and some pride. Many of you have traveled a long way, but I hope you can say: It feels like coming home – so many Max Planck colleagues in one room! We came here with a whole delegation, which includes also our General Secretary Simone Schwanitz. And I am grateful that the German Consul is with us. A warm welcome, Martina Hackelberg!

Dear group leaders,

Each of you is doing research at a very high level. I am looking forward to your presentations and to discuss your work. But I am also looking forward to hearing your ideas for deepening our cooperation. But before we begin, let me tell you a little about our past few days. We had several packed days in Buenos Aires and here in São Paulo. I am full of impressions. Our goal for this trip is to explore opportunities for stronger cooperation with partners in Latin America. This continent has a nearly infinite geological, ecological, and social diversity and also excellent research institutions that offer science a gateway to the past, present and future of nature and humankind. Chile is home to the large telescopes of the European Southern Observatory. And the Amazon region, in turn, is of great significance to the global climate. I will talk about that next week in Brasilia where we prepare for the United Nations COP event.

However, our visit to Latin America also has a political dimension. Our colleagues in Argentina are suffering from an anti-science climate. According to estimates, the budget of the science sector has been cut by about one third, several thousand jobs were lost. In such a situation we have to speak up. In Buenos Aires, I spoke up for academic freedom and expressed solidarity with our Argentinian colleagues. And I must say that I was impressed to see the remarkable resilience of Argentine scientists, which deserves our utmost respect.

Here in Brazil, there is optimism and relief after the hard years of cutbacks under the last government. Science has not yet fully recovered; that takes time. But the country has the potential to become a “laboratory for the future” and a



pioneer in sustainability and environmental protection. Brazil is home to a dynamic start-up scene and it can choose partners around the world, in Asia and in Europe.

Dear all,

The most important aspect of our cooperation however is something else. Of course, it is the people – the leaders, but also the young talent. Did you know that by the end of last year, 248 PhD students from Latin America were working at our Max Planck Institutes, as well as 188 postdocs and 287 visiting scientists? And it is likely that these numbers will increase because the United States may lose its role as the prime destination for young researchers from Latin America due to the current politics. Certainly, at Max Planck we will welcome talent from Latin America, and we will provide help to those who return home as PIs later on. Indeed, a total of 80 partner and tandem groups have been established in Latin America. Over 3/4 of these are in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Columbia, but there are also groups in Uruguay, Mexico, Peru and Bolivia. For sure, it is a wonderful network of colleagues.

And when the best scientists see opportunities for collaboration, synergies may be created that enable us to do things no-one could do alone. To foster this, we have recently established eight new Max Planck Centers in Asia, the most dynamic region in the world. And now we hope to also establish new centers in Latin America, likely first here in Brazil.

Let me point out that such international cooperation can not only lead to more innovative science. No, these networks also establish a global research community that is more resilient. In times of geopolitical shifts, it is important that we protect and enhance this resilience. Why? Because science is more than research. Science serves society by fostering critical engagement with the world. It empowers individuals to think and act independently, and to overcome dogma and external control. Thus, scientific freedom, just like freedom of the media or independent courts, is a pillar of open societies and democracy.

And this is why I am so concerned about the recent developments in the United States. What can we do in this situation? At Max Planck we started our Transatlantic Program. It has two goals. First, we want to strengthen our partnership and establish new Max Planck Centers with top U.S. institutions. Second, for excellent researchers who have to leave the U.S. we offer positions at all career levels.

Dear colleagues and friends,

Life as we know it would not be possible without science. Science is one of the most successful human endeavors. We all have the responsibility to keep it that way. By upholding the values of science and ensuring that it can flourish and that everyone has the chance to participate in it - across all borders. This afternoon is dedicated to exactly this idea. Let me end by expressing my sincere thanks to Caro Abadie, who has supported the MPG from her Buenos Aires office for many years and who organized this meeting! Now you can relax because everyone is here and all worked out well. So now: Please enjoy the science, enjoy the company and have a successful day! Thank you.