Together in Science. Connected for Life.

Welcome Address of the President of the Max Planck Society

Professor Dr. Patrick Cramer

At the Max Planck Alumni Kick-off Event

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− Check against delivery −

Do you know how film director James Cameron pitched the movie “Titanic” to Hollywood? Well, he simply said: “Romeo and Juliet on a sinking ship.”

Dear alumni, dear colleagues and friends,

To get a big idea across, it takes a good pitch. A pitch can make all the difference in science, too – and in how we bring people together around science. So what is the pitch for Max Planck Alumni – our new network we are launching today? What defines us? And where are we going?

Maybe we can start with a few pitches for the Max Planck Society:

“Science at the frontiers of knowledge.”
Or: “Insight must precede application.”
Or: “High trust, high risk, high gain.”
Hmm. It is not so easy, really.

What we know is that today, the Max Planck Society is larger, more diverse and more international than ever before. Of our 50 recently recruited directors, 60% are female and 2/3 do not have a German passport. Our scientists come from over 130 countries. And almost 80 per cent of our postdocs join us from abroad.

This diversity is one of our greatest strengths. And it is reflected in our alumni. Alumni have not only shaped who we are. They carry their Max Planck experience with them. And they have so much to contribute to science and society.

Just imagine this: If you are completing your PhD at a Max Planck Institute today, wouldn’t it be great to know an alumnus or an alumna who is already working in your future field of interest – may it be in academia, industry or elsewhere?

Or if you are taking up a position on the other side of the world, wouldn't it be wonderful to know someone there who could provide some advice and help you get started?

And if you have already left the Max Planck Society, wouldn't it be good to stay connected with the next generation?

These questions depict just some of the opportunities that we want to create with Max Planck Alumni – and I am sure there are many more.

With Max Planck Alumni we will connect people across generations, countries and disciplines, to keep knowledge, experience and ideas flowing. Today, we are launching an online platform to do just that.

With Max Planck Alumni we are creating a single, central activity that connects and supports the local alumni activities at our institutes. My heartfelt thanks go to all the colleagues at our institutes who have been supporting their alumni for years with dedication.

But today, I would like in particular thank our Department IV, especially Sabine Ziegler and Kerstin Dübner-Gee, for developing Max Planck Alumni and for organizing this event.

Dear alumni, colleagues and friends,

Please take the idea of Max Planck Alumni out into the world. Tell your colleagues about it. Make them register. And please contribute your ideas. Help us to build the community we want it to be.

Let me leave you with a final thought: I really think that science is a peace project. It brings people together across borders. It thrives on openness, exchange and trust.

Max Planck Alumni can build bridges. And this matters more than ever now when the world of science risks fragmenting into geopolitical spheres with different values and standards.

Dear friends,

What is now a possible pitch for Max Planck Alumni? Our suggestion is: "Together in Science. Connected for Life."
Let's see what you think. But after all, we do not need a pitch, really. Because we already have something special in common: a shared spirit. Thank you and all the best!