Welcome and Introduction of the President of the Max Planck Society

Professor Dr. Patrick Cramer

At the Opening Event of the Advanced Research Consortium

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Harnack House, Berlin

– Check against delivery –

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues and friends,

Welcome to Harnack House! A hundred years ago, Adolf von Harnack declared that science is international. Today, this is more than a fine principle. It is an urgent necessity. The great questions of our time – from climate change and artificial intelligence to health, migration, or the future of democratic societies – they do not fit neatly into academic departments. And just when we need more collaboration, we face rising geopolitical tensions, shrinking resources, and growing barriers to international academic exchange. Now, more than ever, we need to open doors, not close them.

A warm welcome to our friends from the Institute for Advanced Study and the Weizmann Institute of Science, and to their presidents, Alon Chen and David Nirenberg! Today, our three institutions are together launching the Advanced Research Consortium, let's call it ARC. Today marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter in international, cross-disciplinary research.

Our idea is simple, but ambitious: to bring brilliant minds together across disciplines, institutions, and continents, and give them the time, freedom, and intellectual company to pursue questions too big for any one field or institution. Most importantly, we want to turn the usual logic around. Instead of asking researchers to fit their questions into existing structures, we want to build a structure around their questions. No permanent faculty. No predefined research agenda. No pressure to produce predictable results. Just the freedom to explore, challenge one another, and follow an idea wherever it leads.

And we have found a home for this adventure: the Otto Warburg House, just five minutes from here. Warburg built it for his research and cared deeply about its architecture. He once asked: "Why should a scientific institute look like a factory?" Quite right. Science should take place somewhere inspiring! But we plan to change more than the building's use. What was once a home for one research unit will become a meeting place for intellectual teams from around the world.

ARC will develop three complementary programs. The Core Program will support collaborations of up to a year. The Exploratory Program will bring small groups of researchers together for intensive encounters to test emerging ideas. And our Postdoctoral Program will give early-career researchers the opportunity to work across disciplines and institutions. Together, these programs will create space for ideas to grow – from initial conversations to ambitious, sustained collaborations.

Not very long ago, ARC was just an idea – and now we will soon welcome the first researchers. This is because some people have shown great commitment to bringing the Consortium to life. I want to thank the members of the ARC directorate: Irit Dinur, Nicole Dubilier and Ziv Reich! And I want to thank the administrative director, Alexandra Rosenbach.

With ARC, we cannot promise breakthroughs. We cannot even predict what will emerge. But that is precisely the point. Our task is to create the conditions in which the unexpected can happen. There is something especially meaningful about bringing this initiative to life at a time of geopolitical tension. International scientific collaboration can keep channels of exchange open. It can build trust across borders, and remind us that the pursuit of knowledge is a shared human endeavor.

Dear friends,

This truly is a historic moment. When the IAS, the Weizmann and Max Planck join hands together, great things are bound to happen. So let us do like they did decades ago and celebrate open minds, bold questions, revolutionary ideas to come, and the courage to venture into the unknown. Thank you all and all the best to the Advanced Research Consortium!