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Our Academy is a unique assemblage of scientists of all disciplines with a rare expertise, a unique knowledge of global past and present realities (memories of the vanished past with at the same time a very good knowledge of present problems).

I would like to stress the fact that the Academy is very autonomous, very independent and that it has no vested interests, which is becoming less and less usual in this world. We, as rectors of universities, all know for example that the University has more and more vested interests. We are not any more in an ivory tower because we are devoted to research and to teaching but also to delivering service to society. Throughout the world, universities have to become more entrepreneurial. In doing so they lose credibility.

In my opinion, the Academies, in general, are the epitome of the place where we are free from the struggle for life and the struggle for funding. And this gives us a unique credibility in the long term.

Speaking on behalf of the Section of Moral and Political Sciences, I would like to respond to some of the most interesting presentations of yesterday. There is a growing concern for the social and cultural factors. There is also more and more interaction between people but unfortunately, probably less and less understanding between them. The so-called communication age is one of the greatest paradoxes of our time: we have a lot of interaction, a lot of information and a lot of misunderstandings. The various identity crises around the world, are also a major challenge for our disciplines.

Belgium in many ways has a very specific and special responsibility for a huge part of the world, which is of course Central Africa. This Academy was founded in this perspective. Over the years, the geogra-

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phical scope of our Academy has become wider. But we still have, as Belgians, a very specific responsibility to this part of the world. May I remind you that there have probably been in Central Africa several million deaths during the last five years.

Actually, the Academy is a wonderful meeting-ground for different generations, and I am glad to see that there are more and more senior and junior scientists side by side in some of our meetings. This is an extremely interesting evolution.

The Academy is also an attractive meeting-ground, sort of a hub between the North and the South : between Africa, Asia, South America and Europe. This has already been elaborated by several speakers during this symposium.

Another important aspect is the fact that there is also, inside Belgium, the North and the South, with its different meanings. The scientific landscape in this country is extraordinarily fragmented as this country itself. For all together a mere ten million citizens, one of the key issues has become the level of fragmentation of this country in many aspects : philosophical, institutional, linguistic, regional, etc. In this context, our Academy has become one of the few places left where everybody meets without any major problems. This is also extremely useful in many ways. In this respect, the Academy plays an important liaison role between the universities (including university cooperation, which is a very specific field and a key issue), the federal institutions and the Administration.

Another significant aspect is the transdisciplinarity of the Academy, not only because of its three Sections, but because these Sections are more and more diversified.

Inside each Section, and probably in the Section of Moral and Political Sciences more than any other, there is a wide scope of disciplines. One of the major challenges of Science today, all over the world, is the need for a good interdisciplinary approach. When dealing with major challenges, like terrorism, AIDS, or sustainable development, we need multi-disciplinarity.

Therefore, we have a challenge to take up since the major questions that society and decision-makers alike are asking to scientists cannot be solved with a mono-disciplinary approach. We have to pool various resources, to collect a wide range of expertise. This is one of the pressing issues of the world today that makes an Academy so important.

Another clear aspect is that, through Science in general, the distinction between fundamental and applied research is vanishing, and this is true

for the Academy as well. We all start from a very fundamentalistic approach in general and we all end up, owing to the challenges of most of the South, with a very much applied research.

A further point to mention is the connection of pools of disciplines, pools of scientists around the world to create a wider network of Academies, which is also very relevant. If we consider our Academy as a meeting-ground, as a hub or as a team, of course there are plenty of opportunities for our society.

A big challenge also, from the Moral and Political Sciences' point of view, is, of course, the cultural, social and identity issue. There is a new wide scope of inequalities inside society and between the North and the South. Around the world there is a strong commitment to significantly increase the percentage of the GNP dedicated to alleviate the poverty issue in the coming years. In this matter the Academy could play a major role in monitoring and advising the decision-makers at different levels.

Finally, we have been dealing with one form of cooperation or another for almost a century if we take the colonial time into account. If we try to assess what we have achieved over that long period, as an anthropologist, I am quite critical : what is still operating on its own ? The result is very meagre, with, of course some significant exceptions. In general, it is due to a lack of consideration for the sociocultural issue. The approach is very often scientific, very technical but not addressing the priorities of the people. The social issue will become a support to some of the ideas of the members of the Academy and I think there are many opportunities today.

To conclude, after 75 years of existence, the Academy, even if its role is evolving, still remains an institution which has a major contribution to make to the sustainable development of the South.