

SHARING A VISION OF PROGRESS

FU SHUQIN AND IMMACOLATA PANNONE RECEIVED
TWAS-UNESCO LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT HONOURS IN BUENOS AIRES

They seem to have little in common, at first sight. Immacolata Pannone, a veteran in the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Fu Shuqin, past director of the TWAS Regional Office for East & Southeast Asia within the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), do not share language, culture, hobbies or lifestyle. But they possess something vitally important: a vision of how science and engineering can drive economic growth and build human prosperity in the nations of the developing world, and the energy to bring that vision to life.

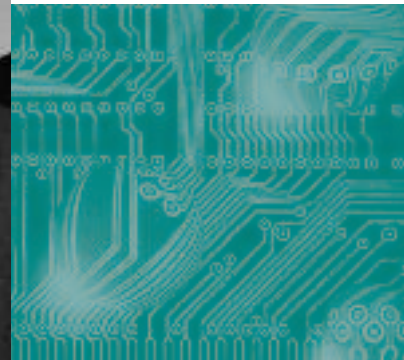
Working with unceasing enthusiasm for almost 30 years, Fu and Pannone have been indispensable allies to TWAS, devoting significant parts of their careers to the promotion of development, progress and justice through the power of research. For their role in the Academy's success, the women received TWAS-UNESCO Special Lifetime Achievement Awards during



a ceremony held during the 24th TWAS General Meeting, on 1 October in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

“Immacolata Pannone and Fu Shuqin have played, sometimes behind the scenes, an essential role in shaping the collaboration between

TWAS and CAS and, as a consequence, between Italy and China”, commented Mohamed H.A. Hassan, the former executive director of TWAS and co-chair of IAP the global network of science academies. “Their keen understanding of the importance of science for developing countries has been a driving force, a stimulus to work hard to improve the quality of research and education in developing countries. By strengthening the TWAS-CAS partnership from the early years of the Academy's work to the present days of uncertainties, Fu and Pannone have certainly written some important paragraphs of TWAS's history. This is why they have been honoured in the 30th anniversary of our Academy.”



Above: From left, Immacolata Pannone, Mohamed H.A. Hassan, Alessandra Di Pippo, C.N.R. Rao. Right: Pannone receives her award. (Photos: Cristina Serra)



Pannone has a cheerful spirit and the sharp focus of a scholar, and these have served her well as she has worked to build a constructive relationship between TWAS and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE), where she has served since 1991.

“One of the very first assignments I successfully carried out during my career at MAE”, she points out, “was the agreement between Italy and UNESCO, which ratified that TWAS and IAP, the global network of science academies, should be headquartered in Trieste. The agreement also stated that the Italian government should provide, on an annual basis, a mandatory financial contribution to cover the operational costs and the costs for the promotion of their activity worldwide. I immediately realized TWAS’s potential and the importance of its focus, at a time when the Academy was still in its infancy. Now TWAS is always on my agenda, and the successful achievements of this organization tell me I was right in my judgement.”

Pannone, who holds a *Laurea* in philosophy and a master’s degree in epistemology from Sapienza University in Rome, is a scientific expert in MAE’s Bilateral

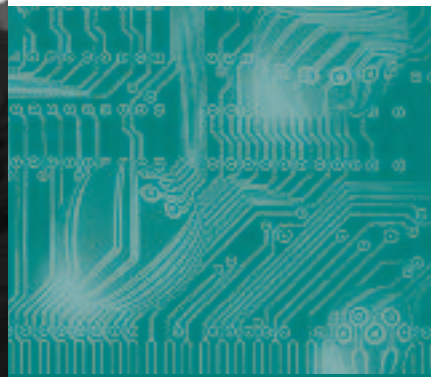
and Multilateral Scientific and Technological Unit. Her institutional role has brought her into close contact with many diplomatic headquarters in Europe, in the Mediterranean region and Middle East, where she scouts for scientific excellence and then promotes it.

“Promoting science and research worldwide, but especially in developing countries, is an investment”, she explains. “We fuel the deployment of international networks, and through multidisciplinary approaches we enrich each country with skills and competences. TWAS is the voice of the South for the South, and its activity must be seen as a precious tool that helps to create

win-win situations where all the actors have access to international research and receive benefits. In addition, science is a peace-keeping tool.”

Pannone was cited for “her continuous commitment in enhancing the special relationship between Italy and TWAS in support of science in the developing world.”

Their keen understanding has been a driving force to improve the quality of research.



Above: Fu Shuqin accepts her award. Right: Fu receives her award. (Photos: Cristina Serra)

Fu Shuqin was honoured for her “continued commitment in enhancing scientific collaboration between developing countries, and especially between the Chinese Academy of Sciences and TWAS”.

Fu joined the Chinese Academy of Sciences as a programme officer in 1983, and she has helped to forge a close and constructive bond between TWAS and China’s powerhouse academic institution and R&D centre. She was among the leaders in the 2003 establishment and later operations of the TWAS Regional Office for East & Southeast Asia.

She set up the office in a way that has guaranteed a smooth workflow. Among her duties were the coordination of international workshops and the implementation of the CAS-TWAS fellowship programme; the promotion of the associateship scheme at centres of excellence in the South; and, in general, building and maintaining positive relationships between China and TWAS.

And it is no coincidence that two TWAS General Meetings have been successfully organized in China, in 2003 and in 2012, at a time when Fu Shuqin was heading the general organization of what is certainly the most important event in the Academy’s year.

Promoting science worldwide is an investment in people – and peace.

“One rewarding aspect of my collaboration with TWAS”, recalls Fu, “was working in close contact with TWAS scientists from different countries. I broadened my personal perspectives.” Her kind manners and professional approach have been praised by TWAS fellows and others in the Academy’s extended global family, and by colleagues at TWAS’s headquarters in Trieste, Italy, who value her reliable assistance and cooperative spirit.

In view of her excellent management and contributions, Fu is now working as consultant to the TWAS regional office in China. “I have good memories from the times spent working with TWAS colleagues”, she said. “And I am glad I could serve the CAS-TWAS mission for so many years, giving my personal contribution to the promotion of science as a tool for development and peace.” ■

◆◆◆ Cristina Serra