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8 April 2008
058/2008

Opening of the German-Israeli Year of Science and Technology New Young Scientists' Award worth €400,000 per year / Priority areas of the Year: medical, environmental and civil security research

Federal Minister of Research Annette Schavan and Israeli Minister of Science Galeb Majadle officially opened the German-Israeli Year of Science and Technology 2008 on Tuesday, under the motto "Science as the Diplomacy of Trust". Speaking at the opening event in Berlin, Minister Schavan stated: "Almost 50 years ago, the first scientific contacts between our two countries paved the way for our diplomatic relations. Today, science and research remain one of the main pillars of our partnership. With the Year of Science, we want to encourage the intensification of our existing cooperation and lay the foundation for further trusting collaborations." Her Israeli counterpart Minister Majadle said: "The Year of Science is an expression of the decade-long tradition of German-Israeli cooperation in numerous different fields. This partnership has brought forth research results of outstanding scientific importance. It also serves to deepen and broaden the scientific relations between our two countries, which is something that benefits both sides."

During the German-Israeli Year of Science, it is intended that new developments will be triggered with the help of application-oriented research collaborations, whereas in the past, the focus has been on cooperation between scientific institutions in Germany and Israel. The priority areas will be medical sciences, civil security research and environmental research. "We have incorporated the field of civil security research into our partnership on the occasion of the Year of Science", Schavan said. "We are working on

joint measures within the framework of the German security research programme and are planning to carry out the first pilot projects before the end of the year". The envisaged projects include the monitoring of drinking water, the detection of chemical, biological and explosive hazardous materials, and the development of protection systems for emergency rescue services.

The Year of Science will put special emphasis on cooperation between young scientists in both countries. This will ensure that the outstanding research relations between Germany and Israel continue to flourish in future generations. In November, the BMBF will present an award to two outstanding German-Israeli teams of young scientists in the field of the humanities and social sciences. Starting in 2008, it will be conferred annually, alternating between the humanities/social sciences and the natural sciences/life sciences. The award is worth €400,000 per year.

A further milestone of the Year of Science will be the establishment of a new Minerva Centre for the Humanities and Social Sciences with endowment funds amounting to €2 million. The centre is being set up in Israel on the occasion of the Year of Science and Technology. The Minerva Centres are affiliated to individual Israeli research institutions and specialize in specific fields of science. They promote cooperation between German and Israeli scientists by organizing joint projects, exchange programmes, symposia and workshops. The Max Planck Society's Minerva Foundation is the donor institution responsible for the Minerva Centres.

Further information about the German-Israeli Year of Science and Technology is available online at www.gist2008.com.