

Inauguration Ceremony of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN Geneva, 21 October 2008

Address by Professor José Mariano Gago,
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Director General
Director General designate
Heads of Government, Ministers, Colleagues
Fellow scientists and engineers
Ladies and gentlemen

CERN is the most advanced collective achievement of science in Europe, a unique and extraordinary venture, the best among its peers at world level, a miraculous scientific laboratory in Europe that is a decisive attractor of talent from all over the world.

CERN has succeeded where others has failed and where urgent progress is needed in Europe: in combining international networking and critical mass, in stimulating reform of national laboratories, in putting together science and research, advanced academic and technical training, engineering and industry, in joining successfully the efforts and investments of national research agencies, laboratories and universities, in closing the gap between students and professionals at the most demanding international level.

Europeans must be proud of CERN as the most advanced model ever archived of a world laboratory.

CERN, its scientists, engineers and administrators, as well governments and officials from member states, have succeeded because at all time they have strived to give priority to science over bureaucracy or conservative hierarchies. This is one of the few large scientific organizations in the world where new projects are publicity presented and discussed in advance and where a student may challenge a Nobel Prize winner at the auditorium.

We are here to celebrate success, the completion of the LHC, as well as your courage to dare to acknowledge technical problems, circumstantial failure and how you are solving them. Those are the values of science!

LHC is the combined result of theory and previous experiment, of technical ingenuity pushed beyond its limits and sound engineering organization focused to achieve well defined goals. It will remain for a long period one of the wonders of the modern world, an immense active observatory of the substance of all things, a monument to human civilization and to the power of human knowledge.

CERN is also an incubator for invention and for the development of new products, services, ideas and organizations: ESO, WWW, GRID, medical imaging.

The future can only be built upon experience and success.

As governments, it is our duty to invite you to face new challenges, and to firmly support you in those future endeavours.

The development and the choice of the site for future world accelerators will probably dictate the role of Europe at world level in many technical and scientific domains. Maintaining and reaffirming experimental particle physics as a flagship of European science and technology and as a major asset of Europe in attracting high level human resources and investment from the world at large will require, in my view, that future machine to be located in Europe.

Astroparticle physics is a new fast growing field of science and development ground for new instrumentation. In my view CERN should be asked to play the role of a European world umbrella organization for all astroparticle physics large projects.

Intergovernmental European research laboratories, like CERN, EMBL, ESO, ESRF or ESA have jointly created a platform for communication. Cross-disciplinary new frontier research should be the result of ambitious initiatives yet to be developed or stimulated from the huge potential of these organizations as well by many others national and European initiatives. CERN could play a major role in that respect.

I was myself a student, and for many years a physicist at CERN and I wish to acknowledge my immense debt to CERN, both as a scientist as a citizen of the world. As a fellow scientist I must tell you, scientist and engineers from so many countries, how unique and how critical for the future of science are your generosity and dedication. You, scientists and engineers, are the real soul of Science and the life and blood of CERN. Thank you!

José Mariano Gago
CERN
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