

Dear Delegates from Africa, Observers from synchrotron sources worldwide - in particular our friends from the US - many of you who have come a long way. Observers from the European Commission and from other organisations and important research institutes,

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the ESRF, welcome to Grenoble - in this exciting and historical gathering which witnesses the first official step in setting the basis for the first synchrotron facility in Africa.

Research infrastructures today have become an unescapable requirement to carry out research programmes at the forefront. This is the case not only for the most advanced, speculative and fundamental research, such as the understanding, existence and origin of “Dark Matter” and “Dark Energy” and deep space exploration. In fact, today, most advanced research infrastructures are essential to explore problems of the highest technological relevance, the solutions of which are the key to face the big challenges of our society:

- new pharmaceutical products and new treatments for Malaria, Ebola, HIV, etc.;
- responsible production and management of natural energy sources;
- advanced materials to face the challenges of the IT revolution;
- sustainable management of our planet’s resources, starting from water and atmosphere management and preservation.

Synchrotron sources provide today, and for many years to come, fantastic tools to explore the living matter we are made of and the materials that we need for tools for everyday life; these tools allow us to unveil the mysteries of the nature that surrounds us.

Synchrotron sources are, however, much more than this:

- They represent places where different cultures – scientific, human and historical – join together.
- They represent unique places to train the next generation of scientists, engineers and skilled people.
- They represent a cross-roads where scientific culture meets the needs of industrial innovation and nano-technological developments.
- They create attractiveness, visibility and cultural and economic growth of the participating countries, and they create employment.

It is imperative that scientists collaborate and share technological resources and know-how to advance in public knowledge.

It is imperative that each continent, group of nations get together to share knowledge, grow together, construct together state-of-the-art Research Infrastructures.

It is imperative that African countries join forces to construct, operate and maintain a state-of-the-art synchrotron facility in Africa.

It is for this reason that the ESRF is proud to host this first meeting welcoming the African scientific community using synchrotron radiation, reviewing the state of synchrotron-based science worldwide, and setting the founding stone of the future African Light Source.

We are all shocked by the events in Paris of last 13 November! This tragic crime against culture and fundamental human principles calls for immediate action:

For us, the scientific community, it is to demonstrate that scientists know how to work together and create added value from working together:

Science is knowledge

Science is the future

Science is working together

Science is peace