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Thank you for that introduction, Dame Sackler. And thank you for your service to this important organization, to the Smithsonian and for all you do.

Thanks to Noel Lateef for the invitation to speak today and to the Foreign Policy Association for honoring me with this prestigious medal.

I wish to congratulate the Aga Khan for this extraordinarily well-deserved honor and Ambassador McNee for accepting the award and for his career-long accomplishments.

You may be asking, why is the head of the Smithsonian receiving this enormous recognition related to international affairs and, further, what is the role and history of the Smithsonian vis-à-vis international affairs?

It’s true that I don’t expressly work in foreign policy, nor does the Smithsonian make policy recommendations. But throughout my career—in medicine, higher education, research, and capacity building—I have had the great privilege of learning from and working with international partners, governments, and NGOs toward mutually held goals. In all of my roles it has been clear to me that we have to be global in our thoughts and actions.

I would argue that now, more than ever, we need each other, and we gain greatly from each other’s perspectives across national boundaries and around the globe.

So let me give you a little of my personal background and share some insight about why I’m convinced that the path to solving the world’s most challenging problems will come not in isolation, but from international collaboration.

At both the University of Iowa and Cornell University, I advocated strongly for and was personally involved in a variety of international collaborations and engagements.

The faculty, staff and students of Iowa and Cornell embarked on many international collaborations during my time there.  A few examples: agricultural research and development at the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics in Hyderabad, India; anthropological research and education in Bandung, Indonesia; the effective and influential International Writing Program at The University of Iowa; a medical school in Doha, Qatar; great and growing international cooperation in the two fields of research in which I engaged, medical imaging and image processing and the care of adults with congenital heart disease; and an initiative aimed at higher education faculty development in sub-Saharan Africa. I learned so much from all of the international partners and colleagues with whom I worked on these and other projects.

Perhaps most important of the many lessons I learned was to follow the lead of international partners in prioritizing and implementing work in-country. One of most common mistakes Western organizations make in development and education overseas is assuming that we know better than local professionals what is needed in their countries. It couldn’t be further from the truth, and by trusting the judgment and experience of local experts we not only educate ourselves about their country, we build lasting partnerships and friendships.

Education is a common thread in most of my international activities.  The need for international collaboration in education is vitally important for innovation and economic growth.

Take the groundbreaking project, Cornell Tech. This experimental model for graduate education is currently open in Chelsea, and its main campus being built on New York City’s Roosevelt Island will open this summer. It has the chance to accelerate the transformation of the region into a hub of innovation. By combining forces with the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, Cornell was able to bring this promising development to life. Without collaboration, it wouldn’t have been possible.

Talented, creative people from around the world are drivers of the U.S. economy.

According to a 2016 report by the Institute of International Education, International students contributed more than $35 billion to the U.S. economy in 2015.

International students not only bring their expertise and research capabilities to the U.S., they help provide American students with a broader perspective and better preparation for the world of work in a global economy.

And yet, according to a recent survey of higher education, approximately 40 percent of U.S. colleges are experiencing declines in international applications. This is troubling—and exactly the opposite of what we need to do.

As a physician and researcher, I can attest to the importance of international collaboration in the medical field as well. The global outlook is mutually beneficial to the U.S. and to the rest of the world.

For instance, the GHESKIO clinic in Haiti, formed in partnership with the Weill Cornell Medical College, was the first institution in the world dedicated to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

And the Weill Cornell Medical College is the first medical college in the U.S. to offer its M.D. degree overseas with its Qatar division.

So those are a few thoughts about my own international experience and the influence these experiences had on me. But what about the Smithsonian? You may think of the Smithsonian as primarily an American institution, with our nineteen museums, research centers, education initiatives, and a collection of more than 154 million specimens, artworks, and cultural objects.

That is true, but it has also been at heart an international institution since its inception more than 170 years ago.

As Joseph Henry, our first Secretary, famously said, **“**the worth and importance of the Institution is not to be estimated by what it accumulates within the walls of its building, but by what it sends forth to the world.”

Tonight we are joined by the Director of the Smithsonian Office of International Relations, Molly Fannon.  Thank you, Molly, for your very good work.

Earlier this year I had a chance to visit the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama.

This is perhaps the perfect example of international Smithsonian scientific collaboration. We have not only had a tremendous working relationship with the Panamanian government for more than 100 years, but scientists and fellows come from around the globe to work in one of the world’s most biodiverse regions.

Today our curators, educators, researchers, scientists, and specialists share our expertise with peer institutions around the world – engaging in cultural diplomacy through programs, research, and outreach in more than 140 countries. That can take the form of building and strengthening relationships between the U.S. and other nations, supporting peace and reconciliation efforts, strengthening economies bolstered by the global cultural sector, and maintaining U.S. leadership in international bodies.

It also means creating museum exhibitions and programs that demonstrate the complexities and benefits of a pluralistic society to international audiences.

One area that has been at the top of our list of activities in recent years is cultural rescue: the protection of heritage at risk from war, from environmental degradation, or from natural disaster.

A nation’s objects, artistic output, customs, and practices comprise its cultural heritage. Learning through this cultural heritage can foster empathy for others, build respect for difference, and bring people together.

Recently, the Smithsonian joined the State Department to represent the U.S. government at the G7 Cultural Ministerial meetings in Florence—the first such meetings convened as part of a G7 summit. The focus of these meetings was the dire need to protect artistic and cultural heritage in crisis areas, and the power of culture to spur dialogue among peoples.

We have an ongoing partnership with the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage in Erbil. There, we work with local Iraqis to recover and protect priceless heritage imperiled by conflict and terrorism. In March, the Smithsonian and the State Department signed a new agreement to support our efforts to stabilize the ancient city of Nimrud and build local capacity in cultural heritage recovery. It will serve as a pilot program for other cities recently liberated from ISIS control.

And before the recent military campaign to take back Mosul, the Smithsonian worked with a coalition of U.S. and Iraqi partners to create the *Guide to Mosul Heritage*. It outlines important heritage sites in and around Mosul for all military groups involved with liberating the city.

The Smithsonian has also recently worked to preserve heritage and tell stories of conflict, loss, and hope after war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Colombia.

The cultural sector is a powerful force for economic growth. Museums in the United States are a billion-dollar industry, and tourism is one of the largest employers in the world. By strengthening the global cultural sector, we support communities’ abilities to provide for their families and preserve their heritage.

We have recently worked with local colleagues, governments, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations to strengthen the cultural sector in Armenia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Cuba, and more.

But culture means more than economic prosperity. Through cultural sites, knowledge, and practices, societies preserve their collective memory, identity, and history.

Through professional training, support for new and existing museums, and educational programs online and on site, we bring the Smithsonian to the world.

Examples include our Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra which plays in countries across the globe.

We also partner with the U.S. State Department abroad to foster dialogue, teach young people job skills, and shed light on American culture.

We engage in “panda diplomacy” through our partnership with Chinese colleagues to better understand giant pandas and their habitats—not to mention allowing them to mug for the Panda Cam. Those pandas are such attention-getters!

We do all of this because our mission is the increase and diffusion of knowledge in the world. But we are also compelled by the knowledge that a strong cultural sector supports strong communities, peace, and stability.

In addition to sending the Smithsonian to other countries, we also bring the world to the Smithsonian. In the D.C. area and New York, our museums inspire and educate Americans about cultures they often can’t access.

For instance, we facilitate person-to-person diplomacy through the annual Folklife Festival. Hundreds of thousands experience other cultures through this festival every summer on the National Mall.

And each year, hundreds of pre-doctoral and post-doctoral fellows travel to the Smithsonian to expand their research and share their own expertise with us, exchanging scholarly and cultural knowledge at our museums and research centers.

Exhibitions are the beneficiaries of our international dialogue, such as the recent Qu’ran exhibit at our Freer|Sackler Museums of Asian Art, or the 2015 contemporary art show featuring Iranian artist Shirin Neshat at the Hirshhorn Museum.

Our connections to the world span not just miles, but centuries, as we bring history to life. A particularly poignant example is the ballast recovered from a sunken slave ship off the coast of South Africa and displayed in our new National Museum of African American History and Culture.

This powerful museum is furthering a national conversation about how to more effectively face our divisions and move forward together. But it is also an important symbol to other nations that we can recognize and learn from our own tragic history.

Whether looking to the past or to the future, engagement with the international community will continue to be a large part of what we do.

We recently developed a new Strategic Plan for the Institution to take us into the next five years and beyond. A significant thrust of that plan entails increasing international engagement and using our role as a convener to more strategically shine a light on issues that affect the world.

An exciting opportunity on the horizon embodies the Smithsonian’s international aspirations. In 2017, we aim to finalize an agreement with the Victoria & Albert Museum to create our first international museum exhibition presence in London.

Whether preserving cultural heritage, engaging in cultural diplomacy, collaborating on scientific exploration, or convening international thought leaders, researchers, and other experts, the Smithsonian shares your commitment to bringing the world together.

I am proud to represent my Smithsonian colleagues, and I humbly thank you for this award.

I applaud the work of the Association and wish you well in your critically important endeavors.