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### **Creating an enduring framework for scientific cooperation in the Middle East**

MICHAEL GREENE, The National Academies

There are few channels for Israelis and Arabs to communicate directly when tensions are high. Scientists, who always have channels open for scientific communication, have a special responsibility to remain in contact with their counterparts on the other side to provide an avenue for reasoned discourse. Jordanian engineer Dr. Hani Mulki, former foreign minister and now science advisor to the King of Jordan, once said that scientific cooperation should not be a byproduct of peace, but a driving force. Many of the senior Israeli, Palestinian, and Jordanian scientists know each other and know how to work together, but it can be difficult for them to meet or even to speak without the cover of an invitation from a foreign organization; younger scientists unknown to the foreign organizations have fewer opportunities. The activities sponsored by APS, NAS, AAAS, and others are playing an important role, but what also is required are national and regional scientific organizations that can independently convene meetings and provide an umbrella for collaborative research. The academies of sciences of Israel and Palestine and the Higher Council for Science and Technology of Jordan have been working together for nearly two decades on joint research, studies and conferences, but always under the sponsorship of the U.S. National Academies or other international organizations. They should be able to convene regional meetings and provide an umbrella for cooperative research that can be sustainable without a foreign presence. Since they are only a driving distance apart, there is much they can do together for little money. Strengthening these academies, especially the relatively new Palestine Academy for Science and Technology, should be a high priority. Foreign scientific organizations should include the academies of the region in their activities, as co-sponsors if possible, to enhance their stature and encourage a role as independent conveners and sponsors of cooperative research.