CLAF-CNRS Latin-American Network (27/01/2026)

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Esteemed Márcio,
Esteemed Professor Antoine Petit,
Thank you for your introductory words.

It is a reason of great joy and a true honor to be here today with all the colleagues from CBPF and from the CNRS delegation visiting Rio.

I would like to start by thanking Dr. Liviu Nicu, from the CNRS Office in South America, who was instrumental in the initial discussions about this network and for encouraging and guiding me in shaping its initial idea into a solid proposal.

And of course, Dr. Christelle Roy, Director of IN2P3, Dr. Nicolas Leroy, Scientific Director for Astro-particles and Cosmology at IN2P3, as well as Dr. Marianne Lemoine-Goumard, the CNRS scientist in the guidance of this network proposal — who is following us remotely — for their enthusiasm and partnership.

I would like to say just a few words from the side of CLAF to introduce this ceremony marking the first steps towards the creation of the CLAF-CNRS Latin-American Astro-particle Physics Research Network.

Astro-particle Physics is one of the most dynamic fields at the frontier of physics worldwide. In Latin-America it enjoys perhaps an unparalleled historical

importance as it is at the origins of physics research in this continent, particularly experimental physics.

This is certainly true in the case of CBPF — the first institution fully dedicated to scientific research in the region — whose first director was Cesar Lattes, who co-discovered the pion in the observation of cosmic-ray induced air showers. But it is true also for the department of Physics of the University of São Paulo, whose beginnings revolved around cosmic-ray physics, as well as for traditional institutions in Argentina and Mexico.

Astro-particle physics is, and has always been, one of the most international fields of physics, defined by the work of global scientific collaborations. The Chacaltaya Cosmic-Ray Laboratory near La Paz, in Bolivia — very likely the first international research laboratory in the continent — is a historical testimony of that. Chacaltaya not only played a central part in the discovery of the pion by Lattes, but was also home to a collaboration between Bolivia, Brazil, and Japan that started only a few years after World War II, showing that science has always been a language common to societies all over the world, which has the power to serve as a bridge of friendship amongst peoples and nations. And this is a value that continues to be of extreme relevance today.

Beyond the great science we are all convinced that will result from this initiative, I have no doubt that this continental network will leave a significant impact in the formation of students and young researchers for the continent, and in the scientific and cultural exchanges between Latin America and France. And not less important, I hope it will be the context for many continental and transatlantic friendships, that form the tapestry of human life and society.

Starting almost 30 years ago, Latin America is home today to a number of world-leading astro-particle physics and cosmology experiments, many of which have the direct involvement and leadership of CNRS. It is nevertheless true as well that, from a Latin-American perspective, the involvement of Latin American groups in these international collaborations is limited, and oftentimes confined by national borders, meaning that usually the scientific partnerships are defined by the hosting agreements around which such experiments are established — with perhaps only two exceptions, namely Brazil and Mexico.

When I was chosen as one of the Spokespersons of SWGO in 2021, it readily became clear to me that this was a problem because, despite all the geographical and human potential of the region, this situation meant that in the end what we have is a collection of international experiments in Latin America, but no true Latin American science in this field. Of course, the local impact these experiments have, even despite such limitations, is enormous — take for example the hugely successful case of the Pierre Auger Observatory in Argentina. But the right question to be asked is how much more potential there is to be unlocked from all the infrastructure that is already in place?

This is precisely the motivation at the root of this network. And I think that the multiple scientific ties between France and Latin-America, the CNRS leadership in all of the experiments in question, and the framework provided by the IRN, all constitute in ideal elements to help us succeed in transforming research in astro-particle physics in the continent, by helping to bridge these islands of research and create a true network of cooperation and scientific collaboration in the region. In an era of growing division, Europe stands as a model of the power of integration, and I have no doubt that this is also the right model for us here today.
Thank you.