

Recipe for a Competitive Economy in the Developing World

New members of the Global Science & Innovation Advisory Council help Malaysia progress towards developed country status in unique "kitchen cabinet."

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, June 3, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A competitive economy fuelled by innovation is the ambition of many nations today -- developed and developing alike.



Science was born to solve problems. And, with talent and vision, we can solve any problem that faces us

Dr. Hayat Sindi

But is there a formula for creating an environment in which innovation and entrepreneurialism is fostered and rewarded, generating sustainable jobs and propelling national prosperity?

Looking to demonstrate the answer is Dr. Hayat Sindi, a medical scientist of growing global renown who founded and leads the [Institute for Imagination and Ingenuity](http://i2institute.org) (i2institute.org) in her homeland, Saudi Arabia.

She is also one of 26 members of the UN Secretary-General's Scientific Advisory Board and was appointed this year by the SG to a 10-member group supporting technological facilitation of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Her insights and advice now contribute also to Malaysia's unique "kitchen cabinet" of 51 national and international sustainable development advisers, the [Global Science and Innovation Advisory Council](#).

According to Dr. Sindi, shortages of entrepreneurialism in the developing world generally comes down to a handful of reasons:

- * A lack of formal business skills among scientists and engineers
- * Culturally intrinsic fear of failure
- * Too few potential investors to provide the necessary capital and fewer still willing to finance science-based ventures.

Through fellowships, trainings and mentorships, her i2 Institute seeks to empower and inspire the next generation of innovators and support innovative ideas in four critical areas -- energy, water, health, and the environment -- and cites five factors for success:

- * The quality of the business idea
- * Unique approaches tailored to regional needs
- * Role models and mentorship to build business skills and confidence, and to form bridges to investors
- * A strong support network
- * Excellence in delivery

Another essential ingredient for entrepreneurial success, says Dr. Sindi: A passion to improve people's lives. While financial rewards often result, personal gain cannot be the driver behind innovation. Needed are agents social change in both the science and business realms.

"That is what drives me to conduct science: Seeing the needs of people and wanting to make life better for them," Dr. Sindi says. "Science was born to solve problems and with talent and vision we can solve any problem that faces us."

"Every innovation started with a need," she says. "Listen to the voices of the developing world. Give people the tools and confidence to meet their own needs. Poor doesn't mean stupid."

Practicality and simplicity are essential, she adds. Though she was personally inspired by Marie Curie, Ibn Al-Haitham and other great scientists who changed the world, "the i2 Institute is not looking to create another Einstein."

"Children in the developing world need clean water, for example. People need electricity in order to work and study. How can we provide these where they are needed in more creative, adaptive and affordable ways?"

Of critical importance, says Dr. Sindi: Impressing on children an understanding and appreciation of how science and technology can improve lives, and to impress on national leaders the imperative to invest in S&T at appropriate levels.

Educated at King's College London, Cambridge, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Harvard Business School, Dr. Sindi overcame long odds to become the first female from the Gulf to earn a PhD in biotechnology. In addition to her institute, she is co-founder of Diagnostics For All, creating novel, affordable point-of-care diagnostic tools for impoverished people.

Dr. Sindi notes that after her scientific training, "the experience that changed my life forever" came in business school, learning "how to talk to investors, how to tell my story, how to assess how many people and which collaborators I need to succeed, and who my competitors will be."

"My dream is that i2 will make stories like mine less exceptional and more possible for every young innovator."

Among those joining Dr. Sindi as a new international member of Malaysia's Global Science and Innovation Advisory Council: The Honourable Deborah L. Wince-Smith, an expert on economic, science and technology policy and President of the Washington DC-based Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils (GFCC).

Chaired by Prime Minister Najib Razak, GSIAC's mandate is to help Malaysia identify and pursue sustainable means for achieving high income status by 2020.

Secretary of the Council is Prof. Zakri Abdul Hamid, the PM's Science Advisor and, like Dr. Sindi, one of 26 members of the UN Secretary-General's Science Advisory Board.

The converging revolutions expected to drive future productivity and prosperity

According to Ms. Wince-Smith: "The fields of digital technology, precision agriculture, genetics and new materials are all experiencing revolutions, and their convergence is going to create new services and industries we can't yet imagine. These extremely disruptive new industries will impact national wealth, jobs and global security on a massive scale."

Her organization, the Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils, is a global network of leaders from competitiveness councils around the world. The GFCC shares best practices among councils and creates a network of global leaders committed to their national prosperity and the prosperity of the world.

She says the physical and digital worlds are merging as evidence by, for example, ubiquitous sensors, self-driving vehicles, and futuristic robots, such as the machine teaching itself to be a firefighter on US navy ships.

In agriculture, a smarter approach to management of the entire supply chain will help eliminate waste "from farm to fork," offering the opportunity for many to transition from food scarcity to food abundance and high nutrition, she says.

Nanotechnology and synthetic biology -- already a \$1 trillion global industry -- is producing materials and products with profoundly important new characteristics.

Ms. Wince-Smith urges nations to direct their innovation capacity to next generation manufacturing, saying that the USA learned a hard lesson when it failed to invest sufficiently to compete successfully in flat panel display manufacturing.

"The old view of manufacturing was based on the four "Ds": dirty, dumb, dangerous and disappearing," she says. "But technology advances are replacing that view with four "Ss": smart, safe, sustainable and surging."

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The GSIAC Secretariat is hosted by the [Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology \(www.might.org.my\)](http://www.might.org.my)

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