

## ΓΕΝΙΚΟ ΣΕΜΙΝΑΡΙΟ ΤΜΗΜΑΤΟΣ ΦΥΣΙΚΗΣ

# PHYSICS COLLOQUIUM

**Thursday, 07 April 2016**

**17:00 -18:00**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Seminar Room**

**"Knowledge: from telescopes to government"**

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President of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences

President of the Swiss Academy of Sciences (SCNAT)

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### **Abstract**

The progress of astrophysics in the last half century or so changed fundamentally our view of the Universe. Contrary to the stable, "eternal", "perfect" Cosmos suggested by the contemplation of the night sky and by observations in the visible domain, we discovered a Universe in which violent phenomena on timescales down to milliseconds shape the cosmic environment. This change of perspective is largely due to observations at high energies performed from space. Space science was at the origin of many space technologies and therefore, indirectly of a large spectrum of facilities that shape our societies. This close link between fundamental science and society, visible also in the public interest for astronomy and space related findings, makes it natural for some of us to invest time and effort to bring science in general closer to society and decision making processes. Knowledge is nowadays central to steer our civilizations towards a harmonious development on the planet. Climate evolution, public health, energy policies, nutrition resources are some of the many domains which require action on our side; action that must be informed by a considerable body of science. Contributing to this process is our responsibility. It is a difficult task. Lawmakers are most often far from science, scientists are closer to doubts than certitudes, measurements and extrapolations come with uncertainties, vested interests must be avoided, etc. The Earth is a spacecraft, a large one seen from the point of view of each of us, but a finite one within which we are condemned to live. Scientists can and must contribute to its general well being.