

Your Excellency, Presidents, promotores, honorary doctors, jubilee doctors and new doctors, professors, medallists and award winners, students, honourable guests!

A warm welcome to Stockholm University's Inauguration of New Professors and Conferment of Doctoral Degrees 2019! A warm welcome to our international honorary doctors!

This is a historic year for Stockholm University. On 14 October 1869, 150 years ago, 76 individuals from various walks of life submitted an "Invitation to contribute to the establishment of a higher education institution in Stockholm". A few days later, the Stockholm University College Association was formally constituted, tasked with founding a university in the capital and "not to be dissolved until the university was established and its future could be considered secure." The association is still alive and active, so one might ask if the university's future is still not secure. Those of you who are new professors and doctors here at Stockholm University have chosen a relatively young academic institution, established in the spirit of the Enlightenment. Today, it is 110 years since the first conferment of doctoral degrees; a total of three doctoral degrees were awarded: Adolf Pira in zoology, Erik Stridsberg and Axel Johannes Malmquist in mathematics. The university's first full professors had been appointed in 1881: Gösta Mittag-Leffler in pure mathematics and Waldemar Christopher Brøgger in geology and mineralogy.

One objective of the University College Association concerned the "nation's political and social life" and the changes "in our society, calling on citizens of all classes to participate in public affairs". Another objective was the fact that competition from "the big nations" called for improvement in the field of education; the importance of international cooperation and exchanges was emphasized in the invitation. A third objective was to promote cooperation between the various academic institutions that were already in operation in Stockholm, including Carolinska Institutet and Teknologiska institutet, predecessor of the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH); the idea being that a new university could "create a connection between them and join forces".

Now, 150 years later, Stockholm Trio, an alliance between Karolinska institutet, the Royal Institute of Technology, and Stockholm University, has formalised an already well-

established cooperation with our closest university neighbours, together with whom we form a complete academic environment. The formalisation of the cooperation by an agreement provides a clear framework for the development of cooperation in education, research and as operational support. We have everything to gain from a closer cooperation. It is frequently suggested that we need to attract one of the world's top universities to raise the academic level in Sweden. However, the three of us together would, overall, rank tenth in the world according to the Shanghai Academic Ranking, making us one of Europe's strongest scientific environments. Jointly, we represent nearly 30 percent of research in Sweden and just over 15 percent of higher education. Our alliance is therefore significant locally as well as regionally, nationally and internationally.

On an international level, Stockholm University has been granted funding by the EU Commission to join CIVIS, a pilot project linking eight European universities, in the framework of the European Universities initiative. Universities have been of central importance for the emergence of modern Europe. Today, European university cooperation and student mobility has a particularly important role to play as European cooperation is undergoing a crisis on several levels, and as the autonomy of universities and academic freedom is threatened in a number of countries, including within Europe.

We live in a turbulent age, where populism is gaining new terrain, where research results are called into question, where rationality is often ignored in the social debate and where democracy itself is ultimately threatened. Knowledge, enlightenment and the pursuit of truth are core values at Stockholm University. In a social climate where poorly substantiated opinions are often voiced and quick answers and simple solutions are sought, it is the university's primary task to stand for a long-term approach, to promote critical thinking, and to advance science-based knowledge with all its complexity and nuances. Research takes time, as those of you who have completed your dissertations or been appointed professors are aware.

The open science movement, in which Stockholm University is at the forefront both nationally and internationally, and to which I am strongly committed, is a way of contributing to this development. The result of research and associated data must become

freely and openly accessible to secure transparency and reproducibility, and to make it possible for more people to access cutting edge research – ultimately a democratic right.

In the spring, the Government called for input to next year's research policy bill, which was announced by the Prime Minister in the Government policy statement. The academic institutions in Sweden must show that we are ready to shoulder the challenge of standing for freedom and long-term vision in basic research, but also to directly address major social challenges, especially the UN's global sustainability goals in Agenda 2030. In this context, we are part of a knowledge ecosystem with other actors in business and civil society, and also in an international context, which requires broad-based cooperation. Stockholm university celebrates the importance of this work through its yearly Sustainability Forum, which this Fall is devoted to democracy, populism, and sustainable development. The university art space Accelerator, which was inaugurated in September, also opened with an exhibition by Tino Sehgal, whose art focuses on sustainability.

However, the most important issue by far and the absolute greatest challenge for Swedish research policy at this time is to secure the future of the research infrastructure, an important part of which is e-infrastructure for open research data. AI is the new watchword – and to a large extent it concerns the large amount of new research data that is available today and needs to be used in a constructive way. Meanwhile, there are increasing infrastructure requirements in all disciplines, and underfunding is urgent – in 2021, according to its forecast, the Swedish Research Council will have SEK 0 left to finance new national initiatives, while about 50% of national funding will have been transferred to the higher education institutions, which must also finance local and regional needs. At the same time, important investments have been made in large infrastructure projects in Sweden, unique opportunities that need to be harnessed. At Stockholm University we have also made large investments, especially in humanities. Today, research infrastructure is something that unites the entire university - and the educational institutions throughout the country.

The government emphasizes in its research policy lifelong learning and competence provision. These issues concern higher education, but are closely tied to research. As the largest university in Sweden when it comes to the number of students, research based

education is of utmost importance for Stockholm university. The most important task of universities, and our most important contribution to society, is to offer higher education for future generations.

These are extremely important issues, but research policy is not everything. The foundation of policies are the core activities, the research and education we conduct at our universities. The former University President Carl-Gustaf Andrén concluded in his *Visions, choices and realities, Swedish universities in development after 1940*, that “An individual- and idea-oriented way of working is the only thing that can, in the long term, guarantee that visions lead to forward-looking choices and turn them into a lasting reality.” I would like to add that such a way of working must be entrenched in the researcher’s and the teacher’s everyday reality at the university, a reality which you, as researchers, are well familiar with.

All of you who are the object of today’s celebration have contributed in many ways, as individuals and through your ideas, to Stockholm University – new doctors, jubilee doctors and new professors with research, honorary doctors with research and collaboration, teaching award winners with dissemination of research, and medallists by developing, in various ways, research and education at Stockholm University. We pay tribute to all of this tonight, to thank you all and to celebrate your important efforts. The university’s strategies emphasize the importance of excellence in research and education, and your contributions to this goal are crucial. My warmest congratulations and best wishes to you all for the future!

Dixi.