



Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to convey my very best wishes and sincere thanks to all of you as we wrap up an eventful 2016 and shift our momentum into the next calendar year. The past 12 months have been marked by noteworthy achievements and change. As we reflect on the past year, I believe that we have many reasons to have enormous pride in our accomplishments at NAMES and look forward with enthusiasm to next year.

Just a few outstanding examples: [NAMES](#) celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2016; while we took pride in reaching this milestone, we must take a moment to reflect on the hard work and efforts of a handful of people who believed in the Network and made it happen. A brain child of Ms. Hoda Elmikaty, who was then heading the Planetarium Science Center at the Library of Alexandria, the Network remains an outcome of her vision and determination to make the impossible possible. Hoda was joined by the late Mijbil Al Mutawa whom we sadly lost in 2016, but not without leaving his amazing mark, not only on the field of science centers in his country and our region, but as we have witnessed, upon so many people all over the world; may his soul rest in peace.

These two beacons had a soldier doing the hard work in helping elevating the Network; Ms. Maissa Azab whose perfectionism never ceases. She was later joined by Ms. Rehab Elawamry as a full-time NAMES officer and our link with all our members and friends. Both Captain and Officer are still working tirelessly to help do more and make more of an impact as the [NAMES Secretariat Office](#).

Though held in late 2015, I must mention the [EMME Summer School](#) organized and hosted by the Planetarium Science Center in Alexandria. EMME is a wonderful example of a great partnership between two networks, NAMES and Ecsite, and the dedication of its Active Partners who gain no financial or commercial benefits through their participation, yet continue to do so for the greater good—thank you! In 2016, we also signed among all the partners the new Partnership Agreement at the Ecsite Conference held in Graz, Austria, in June. The 3rd EMME edition is scheduled to be hosted by Città della Scienza, Naples, Italy, 10–15 September 2017, so stay tuned and do join us then.

We recently held our [Biennial NAMES 2016 Conference](#) under the theme REACH and reach we did. We were very proud to meet new centers in the region at the conference and many old ones. Relationships were established, ideas and experiences were exchanged, and a lot of memories were created in my small country, Jordan. I thank each and every person who took time to join our conference.

In 2016, we also launched this e-newsletter, [Al Manara](#), and though it is still a working progress, it remains the platform that we communicate with all of you and inform you of what to expect from us. Our strategic plan is still being implemented; a new NAMES brand and website were launched this year, welcoming a new phase of the Network and its services. I thank NAMES Secretariat Office for their hard work and dedication, as well as the rest of the team at the Library of Alexandria for making this happen.

In 2016, NAMES members also joined colleagues from all over the world in celebrating the [International Science Center and Science Museum Day](#) held on 10 November. Under UNESCO's theme of "Science for Peace and Development", science centers and museums around the world celebrated the first such day and our region was quite active on the international map of participating centers.

We also welcomed several new [Full and Sustaining Members](#) in 2016; a critical factor to the growth and sustainability of the Network. Thank you for joining NAMES and please help us grow with your ideas, support, and enthusiasm.

Indeed, we have so many points of pride that there are too many to do them all justice in an end-of-the-year letter; there are more than enough to justify great optimism as we move forward. NAMES, and all of you who are part of it, will continue to make us proud in 2017; we will maintain our momentum and actively work to shape our own future as the Network that strengthens science communication in North Africa and the Middle East.

Thank you all for being part of our story and thanks so much for helping make the past year so memorable. I invite you to join me in anticipating what we will accomplish together in the year to come.

With very best wishes,
Sawsan Dalaq