Press Release

**Investing in Research Universities Only Way to Strengthen Innovation, Says MIT President**

*Dr. Rafael Reif Commends Progress of Masdar Institute at Lecture in Abu Dhabi*

**Abu Dhabi-UAE:** 16 **April, 2014 –** The most fundamental way for a nation to build its strength in innovation is to invest in its research universities because this investment brings forth new knowledge and human capital – two key aspects that help accelerate innovation, according to Dr. L Rafael Reif, President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

“New knowledge is the foundation of all truly important innovation while human capital helps in transforming knowledge into new technologies, solutions, companies and jobs,” explained Dr. Reif, who was delivering a talk titled, ‘Science, Technology and Education: Research Universities as Engines of a Modern Economy’ at Masdar Institute in Abu Dhabi. A large number of staff and faculty members with students and other stakeholders attended the event that was organized as part of the Masdar Institute of Science and Technology’s Distinguished Lecture Series program.

The MIT President was received by Dr. Fred Moavenzadeh, President, Masdar Institute, senior management from Masdar, as well as staff, faculty and students from Masdar Institute. Dr. Reif was later presented with a Masdar Institute memento by Dr. Moavenzadeh.

Commending the UAE leadership for implementing the vision of the Founding Father of the UAE Late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, who encouraged education and research in the country, Dr. Reif said Masdar Institute can take pride in its progress. He added: “From a hopeful start-up and a bold experiment, Masdar Institute has transformed itself into a thriving academic community that is leading the way on new solutions to the urgent challenges of energy and environment.”

Emphasizing that MIT takes pride in being a partner to Masdar Institute’s progress, Dr. Reif said that a research-based university is more fundamental to fueling innovation than factors such as a modern infrastructure, clear and dependable intellectual property and trade laws or access to financial capital.

Citing the example of the visionary government investment in an institution such as MIT, Dr. Reif reiterated that the structure and culture of the prestigious institution explain why MIT remains a force for innovation. It is the combination of ‘research and education’ that is most responsible for MIT’s capacity to drive innovation, he added.

Dr. Reif said: “During World War II, the US government made investments in science and engineering research on a scale never seen before. But investments continued in scientific and technical research after the war ended, and even now MIT receives about 70% of its research funding through a competitive process of government grants.

“MIT became an engine of the innovation economy only through linking research and education, placing basic and applied research on equal footing, working with industry to encourage entrepreneurship, focusing on inter-disciplinary problem-solving and fostering a community united by a distinctive set of values.”

Listing achievements in innovation, Dr. Reif pointed out that in the last 69 years, 13% of the most important advances in scientific knowledge – as measured by Nobel Prizes awarded -- came from MIT. He added that from 2008 to 2012, MIT produced 859 US patents and 117 start-ups, more than any other single university, providing clear evidence of the value of the government investment in a research-based university. MIT is also the only institution to rank among the top six universities in both patent creation and Nobel Prize production since 1944, he remarked.

Pointing out that about 15% of MIT’s research funding comes from the industry, Dr. Reif said staying close to industry exposes universities to real-world problems and inspires them to focus on practical, long-term challenges. He added that by 2001, MIT’s 125,000 living alumni had started 26,000 active companies across the world – one for every five living graduates – employing 3.3 million people.

Currently, about 60% of the MIT faculty members are associated with one or more of the 50 labs, centers and institutes at MIT that focus on inter-disciplinary problem-solving, a style of thinking very familiar to people at Masdar Institute, Dr. Reif said, adding that openly exchanging ideas and information while working closely with others offer the quickest route to innovation and economic progress.

ENDS

**About Masdar Institute**

Masdar Institute of Science and Technology (Masdar Institute) was established by the government of Abu Dhabi as a not-for-profit, private graduate university to develop indigenous R&D capacity in Abu Dhabi addressing issues of importance to the region.

In collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Masdar Institute has developed an academic and research platform that articulates its mission and vision according to critical energy and sustainability challenges.

An important characteristic of Masdar Institute is its focus on complex real-world problems that require a multidisciplinary approach for the development of solutions from an integrated technology, systems and policy perspective. This multi-interdisciplinary and integrated approach is supported by the structure of its academic programs and by the emphasis placed on engaging external partners from industry, government, and other academic institutions in collaborative activities.

Serving as a key pillar of innovation and human capital, Masdar Institute remains fundamental to Masdar’s core objectives of developing Abu Dhabi’s knowledge economy and finding solutions to humanity’s toughest challenges such as climate change.

Masdar Institute integrates theory and practice to incubate a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, working to develop the critical thinkers and leaders of tomorrow. With its world-class faculty and top-tier students, the Institute is committed to finding solutions to the challenges of clean energy and climate change through education and research.

Masdar Institute offers degrees in:

* MSc Engineering Systems and Management
* MSc Computing and Information Science
* MSc Materials Science and Engineering
* MSc Mechanical Engineering
* MSc Water and Environmental Engineering
* MSc Microsystems Engineering
* MSc Electrical Power Engineering
* MSc Chemical Engineering
* MSc Sustainable Critical Infrastructure
* PhD in Interdisciplinary Engineering

Please visit our website <http://www.masdar.ac.ae/>

**For more information contact:**

**Name**: Bader Al Zarei

Director - Communications

Public Affairs Department

**Email**: [balzarei@masdar.ac.ae](mailto:balzarei@masdar.ac.ae)

**Phone**: +971 02 8109372