

To the Minister of Education, Culture and Science,
Dr R.H.A. Plasterk

Amsterdam, 12 January 2009

Dear Mr Plasterk,

With reference to the regulation of 23 June 2008, amending the 2007 Iran Sanction Regulation concerning the admission of Iranian students to proliferation-sensitive programmes¹, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences objects to the Dutch Government's narrow interpretation of the term 'vigilance' as used in UN Resolution 1737 and regards the far-reaching implications of the Sanction Regulation as contrary to the free and international conduct of science. It considers it indefensible that students from Iran or students who have Iranian citizenship should be categorically excluded from certain fields of research and education. Moreover, implementation of this regulation should not be the responsibility of universities; they are neither equipped to carry out such a task nor designed for that purpose.

The Academy is also of the opinion that the agreements it has signed concerning freedom in the conduct of science and international scientific cooperation² do not permit the admission or exclusion of researchers and students on any basis other than personal merit or competence or individual risk to national security.

Finally, the Academy is concerned that this measure will damage the reputation of Dutch scientific research and, in turn, of the Netherlands. The Netherlands must remain a country that welcomes science and scientific researchers.

The Academy would therefore ask the Dutch Government to withdraw the Sanction Regulation or to amend it in such a way that it does not entail the categorical exclusion of persons who hold Iranian or dual Iranian/Dutch citizenship.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Robbert H. Dijkgraaf
President

¹ no. DJZ/BR/0588-08

² Statute 5 of the ICSU; the basic principles of the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies, in accordance with Articles 2 and 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); and Article 1 of UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education (CADE)

