



Media release

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The Ambassador of Switzerland in Jordan inaugurates the Swiss Lounge at SESAME

On 14 December 2020, the Ambassador of Switzerland in Jordan H.E. Mr. Lukas Gasser and Prof. Dr. Khalid Toukan, Director of SESAME, officially inaugurated the Swiss Lounge at the research institution's guesthouse. The ceremony which

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was held in a hybrid format was attended by various partners of SESAME in Switzerland, in particular the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation and the Paul Scherrer Institute.

SESAME (Synchrotron-Light for Experimental Science and Application in the Middle East) is the first synchrotron light source in the Middle East and neighbouring countries, and the region's first major international centre of excellence. Besides Jordan, the autonomous intergovernmental organization counts the following Member States: Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, Palestine and Turkey. Switzerland, represented by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation, is an observer to SESAME, along with a series of other countries and organisations.

Close ties unite Switzerland and SESAME since the latter's inception. The Paul Scherrer Institute based in Villigen, Switzerland, regularly supports SESAME with in-kind contributions and through its expertise. Another main partner of SESAME is the Geneva-based European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN). Finally, the private company Dectris, a spin-off of the Paul Scherrer Institute, donated a detector to SESAME, further strengthening bilateral ties between the Switzerland and the Kingdom at all levels.

Convinced of SESAME's importance and potential for research and scientific development in the Middle East, the Swiss Government through its Embassy in Jordan decided to finance the establishment of a so-called Swiss Lounge. Located within the new Guesthouse next to the main site, it offers visiting scientists, including university students and researchers, from all over the world an enabling environment for informal exchange and collaboration. The venue will also allow SESAME to host seminars and international conferences for experts and officials on site. Following the idea of "science for diplomacy", Switzerland is persuaded that the professional and personal ties created at SESAME among researchers from different countries in the region will not only strengthen the scientific development and network in the Middle East, but also foster mutual understanding and collaboration. Transversal themes such as the interaction of trans-border science and diplomacy are an integral part of Switzerland's first [Strategy for the Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\)](#) which was adopted by the Swiss Federal Council (Government) in October 2020.

The opening ceremony was held in a hybrid format in order to abide by the current rules and regulations in place to curb the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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