

**Remarks delivered by
Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak, ISIS Past President
At the Opening session of
The Sixth Biennial Conference on Iranian Studies
School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
London, England
August 3, 2006**

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am honored to be standing in front of you, not just as a proud ISIS member and your Past President, but as the representative of the Persian Cultural Foundation (PCF) and a member of its Board of Advisors as well, a perfect example of the revolving door – except that, in this case, there is no conflict of interest; the interests here are entirely complementary. As you know, this is the second time that, as the principal institutional supporter of our biennial conferences, the PCF, along with the other institutions listed in the Program, is making these conferences possible and viable; I am delighted to have had a part in making sure that that support continues and I hope it will continue well into the foreseeable future.

So, if I focus on the support provided by the PCF, I do not mean in any way to detract from the important part that other grant-giving community organizations or charitable individuals and institutions have played in sustaining ISIS's biennial Conferences over the years. In 1998, when I agreed to Chair the first of these Conferences, we laid the foundation of our work through partnerships with various academic and community organizations and we relied on the benevolence of a few very important charitable individuals and institutions. The American Association of Iranian Studies, (AAIRs), the Association for the Study of Persian-Speaking Societies and (ASAP), were among the most prominent. For our conference in 2000, Chaired by myself

again, and 2002, Chaired by Professor Ghanoonparvar, Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute (RCHI) was added to that list.

In 2004, when I had the privilege of serving you as ISIS President and my good colleague Dr. Nasrin Rahimieh Chaired our Conference, we all worked so very hard to make it possible for our Nobel Laureate Shirin Ebadi to take part in our Conference. Through that process, we came into contact with the PCF, a newly established community organization that was just beginning to support various intellectual, scholarly, artistic and literary endeavors in the US. In that same year, as you recall, we were shocked when over thirty participants in our Conference were denied entry in to the United States in the climate established after the events of September 11, 2001. We all worked together and cooperated with other like-minded academic organizations to make sure that no political climate can interfere with our academic endeavors. Those deliberations led to the decision to hold this Conference here in London. Once again, we have been lucky to be able to garner support from Iran Heritage Foundation (IHF) under the leadership of the dynamic, the indefatigable Farhad Hakimzadeh. IHF had always been a supporter, but has now emerged as our host as well.

In the meantime, the Persian Cultural Foundation has grown into an exemplary community organization and is fast emerging as a model for such organizations in general and, more specifically, for partnerships with academic units, programs and organizations such as the ISIS. Its many projects aim at turning the Iranian Diaspora into a global community and it seems it is in a hurry to accomplish that goal ASAP. Through the reference book *Who's Who in the Iranian-American Community*, it is ensuring that prominent individuals in our community are known to each other, to our host society at

large, and ultimately to future generations of Iranian-Americans; through its production of the musical DVD titled *Persian Gulf, A Tribute*, and perhaps most importantly through its sponsorship and support of several scholarly conferences,) it has made an incredible array of research activities possible in a very brief time span of less than three years. A select list of these conferences will have to do as it is impossible to list all of them here: **Iran Facing the New Century** (University of Oxford, April 2004), **Private Lives, Public Spaces** (University of Oxford, July 2005), **The World of Achamaenid Persia** (London, September 2005), and finally the incredibly popular lecture series and poetry readings tour titled **Simin Behbahani Celebration of her Life and Poetry** (US and Canada, May-June 2006). And this is just a select and partial list; for a more comprehensive list, I urge you to visit the PCF website at [www.persiancultural.org].

And now we are here, thanks to tireless efforts by so many ISIS members, chief among them ISIS President Professor Janet Afary and Conference Chair Professor Houchang Chehabi. And today, we have the honor of having in our midst the PCF President, a world-class entrepreneur and a visionary philanthropist Dr. Akbar Ghahary. With the help of a small staff and a Board of Advisors, of which I have the honor of being one, that man has pushed through all these projects even as he is advancing his various business ventures. Anything we do to recognize and encourage efforts such as he exemplifies will doubtless benefit us and the larger ethnic groups and professional organizations, and of the close colleagues and friends we have become over the years. For my part, I would like to thank Dr. Ghahary for his continued support and express the hope that, with help such as we have had from the PCF and the IHF and other similar organizations, our biennial Conferences and the other facets of our activities not only

continue for many many years to come but be enhanced with each passing season. Thank
you.