

UNESCO honours five exceptional women scientists



15 October 2009 – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (**UNESCO**) and cosmetics giant L'Oréal today announced the names of five exceptional women scientists, selected by a panel headed by a Nobel Prize-winning scientist, who will receive major awards.

The five women were chosen to receive the 2010 L'Oréal-UNESCO Awards in the Life Sciences out of nearly 1,000 nominated scientists by a jury – headed by the 1999 recipient of the Nobel Prize in medicine, Günter Blobel – of 18 eminent members of the scientific community.

The awards ceremony will take place next March at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, with each of the five laureates receiving a \$100,000 prize for their contributions to advancing science.

Rashika El Ridi of Cairo University in Egypt was selected for her work towards developing a vaccine against the tropical disease schistosomiasis/bilharzia, while Lourdes J. Cruz of the Marine Science Institute at the University of the Philippines Diliman is being honoured for the discovery of marine snail toxins that can assist in the study of brain function.

For her part, Elaine Fuchs of the Rockefeller University in the United States was recognized for her contributions to knowledge of skin biology and skin stem cells. Anne Dejean-Assémat of the Pasteur Institute in France was chosen for her contributions to understanding of leukaemia and liver cancers and Alejandra Bravo of the Institute of Molecular Microbiology of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma in Mexico was honoured for her work on a bacterial toxin which acts as a power insecticide.

L'Oréal and UNESCO, who joined forces 12 years ago to support the cause of women in science, stressed the world's need for science more than ever in the face of the current economic crisis.

The winners of the L'Oréal-UNESCO awards “are among the world's best scientific talents and well serve as role models for the future of science,” **said** Professor Blobel, adding that two 2008 laureates were awarded Nobel Prizes this year.

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