



## **17th edition of the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Awards**

### **AN EVENING TO CELEBRATE WOMEN AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF SCIENCE**

**PARIS, MARCH 18th 2015.** Five leading women scientists and 15 promising young researchers were honored tonight by the 17th L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Ceremony in the historic Grand Amphitheatre of the Sorbonne University in Paris, before an audience of 700 experts and opinion leaders (scientists, institutional representatives, media...). The event was opened by Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO and Jean-Paul Agon, Chairman and CEO of L'Oréal and Chairman of the L'Oréal Foundation.

Irina Bokova quickly set the tone of event: *« We don't celebrate « women scientists », we celebrate exceptional scientists who happen to be women. »*

#### **A long-term commitment to empower women in science**

In 1998, the L'Oréal Foundation and UNESCO joined forces to fight for a better representation of women in science, a field still largely dominated by men. "Today still, only 30% of the world's researchers are women. Prejudice and misconceptions still exist and overshadow women in science" explained Jean-Paul Agon in his opening speech.

For 17 years, the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science program has encouraged, promoted and honored women scientists all over the world. Each year, the program recognizes 5 leading women scientists, from each world region, who have made extraordinary discoveries in their fields, and grants fellowships to 236 researchers. Since the creation of the program, over 2,250 greatly talented women have been distinguished in over 110 countries.

*"With our L'Oréal-UNESCO partnership we constantly pursue the same dream: freeing the creative force of half of humanity,"* said Jean-Paul Agon.

#### **Five laureates awarded for their ground-breaking discoveries in the physical sciences**

*"This evening, we celebrate five exceptional scientists, who are rewriting the story of science, who are inspiring other women to follow their path, to shape how history is made,"* said Irina Bokova.

True role models for the next generations of scientists, the Laureates of the 2015 For Women in Science Awards impressed the jury and the public by their passion, determination and creativity. Their work has not only broken new ground in the physical sciences, it could also have great impact on our lives.

- Laureate for Africa and the Arab States, **Prof. Rajaâ Cherkaoui El Moursli. High Energy Physics and Nuclear Physics. Professor, Mohammed V- Agdal University, Rabat, MOROCCO.**  
She is honored for her key contribution to the international effort that led to the detection of the Higgs Boson, the particle responsible for the creation of mass in the universe.
- Laureate for Asia-Pacific, **Prof. Yi Xie. Inorganic Chemistry. Professor, University of Science & Technology of China, Hefei, CHINA**  
She is honored for her significant contributions to creating new materials a few atoms thick with promising applications in conversion of heat or sunlight into electricity.
- Laureate for Europe, **Prof. Dame Carol Robinson. Physical Chemistry, Mass Spectrometry. Professor, University of Oxford, UNITED KINGDOM**  
She is honored for creating a revolutionary method for studying how proteins function, particularly membrane proteins, which play a vital role in many life processes.
- Laureate for Latin America, **Prof. Thaisa Storchi Bergmann. Physics and Astronomy. Professor, Federal University of Rio Grande Do Sul, Porto Alegre, BRAZIL**  
She is honored for her outstanding work leading to the understanding of how massive black holes form in the centers of galaxies, evolve and shape them.
- Laureate for North America, **Prof. Molly S. Shoichet. Polymer Chemistry. Professor of Chemical Engineering and Applied Chemistry, Chemistry and Biomaterials & Biomedical Engineering, University of Toronto, CANADA**  
She is honored for her pioneering approach to biomaterial development to regenerate damaged nerve tissue and for her development of a new method to deliver drugs to the spinal cord and brain.



*Prof. Dame Carol Robinson / Prof. Thaisa Storchi Bergmann / Irina Bokova / Jean-Paul Agon / Prof. Molly Shoichet / Prof. Cherkoui El Moursli / Prof. Yi Xie  
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## 15 promising young scientists whose work could change the world are encouraged in their research

Starting this year, the L'Oréal Foundation and UNESCO take their commitment one step further, by also rewarding 15 "International Rising Talents" chosen from among the 236 fellows recognized by the program in 2014.

During the ceremony, Sara Ravella, CEO of the L'Oréal Foundation and Flavia Schlegel, Assistant Director-General for the Natural Sciences, personally awarded the Fellows their International Rising Talent Grants that will help them advance their careers and offer them international visibility. These 15 high-potential scientists represent the most talented young women researchers in the world.

### Africa and the Arab States:

- **Dr. Nourtan Abdeltawab, EGYPT.** She is being honored for her studies on the effects of host genetics on the outcomes of a new triple therapy for Hepatitis C in the Egyptian population.
- **Dr. Sanaa Sharafeddine, LEBANON.** She is being honored for her project towards optimizing smart grid network design and operation in developing countries.
- **Adriana Marais, SOUTH AFRICA.** She is being honored for her project on the quantum origins of life: a description of the emergence of life from inanimate matter.

### Asia-Pacific:

- **Dr. Kathryn Holt, AUSTRALIA.** She is being honored for her project on tackling an emerging drug-resistant superbug.
- **Dr. Chan Yoke-Fun, MALAYSIA.** She is being honored for her project on the development of novel therapeutic peptides targeting host autophagy machinery against enterovirus A71 infection.
- **Dr. Phuong Ha-Lien Tran, VIETNAM.** She is being honored for her project on the development of fucoidan-based polymeric micelles for cancer treatment and diagnostic.

### Europe:

- **Dr. Signe Normand, DENMARK.** She is being honored for her project on tundra change at the dawn of drone ecology.
- **Dr. Aurore Avarguès Weber, FRANCE.** She is being honored for her project on cracking the neurobiological mechanisms of visual cognition in a miniature brain.
- **Dr. Eva Pellicer, SPAIN.** She is being honored for her project on advanced nanoporous materials for highly efficient hydrogen production.

### Latin America

- **Dr. Ariela Vergara, CHILE.** She is being honored for her project on the exploration of the structural basis of membrane transporter mechanisms through computational methods: one step closer to understanding neuropathological conditions.
- **Dr. Matilde Jimenez Coello, MEXICO.** She is being honored for her project on the expression and validation of potential cardiac biomarkers in an animal model infected with *Trypanosoma cruzi* (DTU I and VI) during acute and chronic phases of Chagas disease.
- **Dr. Carolina Horta Andrade, BRAZIL.** She is being honored for her project on multi-target drug discovery for leishmaniasis using integrated strategies in medicinal chemistry

## North America

- **Dr. Mary Caswell Stoddard, USA.** She is being honored for her project on avian eggshell engineering: evolutionary innovations in color and structure.
- **Dr. Vanessa D'Costa, CANADA.** She is being honored for her project on the mechanisms that allow Salmonella to escape the immune system.
- **Dr. Bham Ramkhelawon, USA.** She is being honored for her project on how Hypoxia sustains low-grade inflammation by inducing Netrin-1 expression in adipose tissue resident macrophages in obesity.



### ***International Rising Talents (from left to right) :***

*Dr Bham Ramkhelawon / Dr Nourtan Abdeltawab / Dr Carolina Horta Andrade /  
Dr Vanessa D'Costa / Dr Ariela Vergara-Jaque / Dr Aurore Averguès-Weber /  
Dr Phuong Ha-Lien Tran / Dr Kathryn Holt / Dr Matilde Jimenez Coello /  
Dr Mary Caswell Stoddard / Dr Adriana Marais / Dr Saana Sharafeddine / Dr Eva Pellicer /  
Dr Signe Normand / Dr Yoke-Fun Chan  
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**Additional information and visuals are available on:**

- [www.loreal.com/medias/press-releases.aspx](http://www.loreal.com/medias/press-releases.aspx)
- [www.discov-her.com/mediacenter](http://www.discov-her.com/mediacenter)

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**#womeninscience**

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**ABOUT THE L'ORÉAL FOUNDATION**

The L'Oréal Foundation is committed to two main causes, that of Women in Science and Beauty for a Better Life. Based on values of excellence, generosity and creativity, science is at the core of the Foundation's commitments, most particularly its commitment to supporting women researchers through its For Women in Science program, a worldwide initiative in partnership with UNESCO. As well, rooted in the belief that beauty care is an essential need met by passionate professionals skilled in creating human relationships, the Foundation has launched several programs anchored by a vision of beauty as a path toward a fairer and more generous society. The Foundation is committed to assisting the economically disadvantaged and those suffering from physical and mental ailments in regaining their sense of self-esteem through beauty care and training in beauty care professions. [www.fondationloreal.com](http://www.fondationloreal.com)

**ABOUT UNESCO**

Since its creation in 1945, UNESCO has pursued its mission of promoting science at the service of sustainable development and peace. It stresses policies and the reinforcement of capacities in science, technology and innovation, science education, sustainable management of freshwater, ocean and terrestrial resources, the protection of biodiversity and addressing the issue of climate change. The Organization also has an overarching objective to eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote equality between men and women, especially in scientific research.