

Merck Foundation Conducts 3rd UNESCO-Merck Africa Research Summit in partnership with the Office of President, Mauritius

Third edition UNESCO-MARS 2017 continues to build Research Capacity in Africa with special focus on Cancer and Vaccines Development

PORT LOUIS, MAURITIUS, December 1, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- •[Merck Foundation](#) partners with the Government of Mauritius, UNESCO, African Union and African Governments for their annual UNESCO-MARS to contribute to empowering Women and Youth in STEM.

- Third edition UNESCO-MARS 2017 continues to build Research Capacity in Africa with a special focus on Cancer and Vaccines Development.
- Winners of the 2017 MARS “Best Young African Researchers Award” and “Best African Women Researchers Award” to be announced.

As part of Merck STEM program For Women and Youth, Merck Foundation, a non-profit organization and a subsidiary of Merck KGaA Germany conducts the 3rd edition of their annual “UNESCO-Merck Africa Research Summit” on the 28th and 29th of November 2017 under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Mauritius, Her Excellency Mrs. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim and in partnership with Government of Mauritius, UNESCO, African Union and African Governments.

The President of the Republic of Mauritius, Her Excellency Mrs. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim emphasized during the inauguration; “We are very happy to partner with the Merck Foundation and UNESCO to empower women and youth in STEM. The UNESCO – Merck Africa Research Summit is a valuable opportunity for all those engaged and interested in health research in Africa to learn about the full spectrum of ground-breaking scientific research currently underway, and prepare the road ahead in Africa’s development as an international hub for research and scientific innovation.”

Speaking on Merck Foundation’s support for Research Capacity building in Africa, “We are keen to support young gifted researchers by passing on the knowledge and experience we have gathered over the 350 years of Merck history. Through our ‘Merck STEM Program’ we aim to promote women and youth in scientific research through providing them with training opportunities to advance their capacity with a special focus on Cancer care,” Prof. Frank Stangenberg-Haverkamp, Chairman of



Mr. Getachew Engida, Deputy DG of UNESCO; Prof. Frank Stangenberg-Haverkamp, Chairman of the Executive Board of E. Merck KG; President of the Republic of Mauritius, Her Excellency Mrs Ameenah Gurib-Fakim (centre) and Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation

Executive Board and Family Board of E. Merck KG & Chairman of Board of Trustees of Merck Foundation emphasized.

“For the third year, Merck Foundation continues their long-term commitment towards building Research Capacity in Africa. Supporting the African research community, with special focus on Women and Youth is one of our most important objectives, this year in partnership with The Head of State of Mauritius together with African Governments, we focus on The Role of Scientific Research in responding to Cancer and Vaccines Development – two critical challenges in Africa”, said Dr. Rasha Kelej, Merck Foundation’s Chief Executive Officer.

UNESCO-MARS 2017 was officially inaugurated by; Her Excellency Mrs. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of the Republic of Mauritius and Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo, Mauritius’ Minister of Health and Quality of Life.

Merck Africa Research Summit – MARS Awards 2017

During the Summit Award ceremony, five winners from Cameroon, Nigeria, Rwanda and Mauritius were recognized and awarded respectively for their excellence in research under the category of ‘Best African Women Researchers Award’. Furthermore, three winners from South Africa, Senegal, and Botswana were presented with the ‘Best Young African Researchers Award’ during the 3rd UNESCO-Merck Africa Research Summit held in Mauritius.

For the first time, an additional three female researchers from Mauritius, were presented with special “MARS Best Mauritian Women Researchers Award”. “This is to contribute to the Mauritian government’s efforts to promote women in STEM with a special focus on scientific research in cancer,” Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation added.

After previous successful editions of the Summit, UNESCO and Merck Foundation join hands for the third time to respond to Africa’s STISA (Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa) 2024, reinforcing the axiom that only through building local capacities can Africa rise again to becoming an



Prof. Frank Stangenberg-Haverkamp, Chairman of the Executive Board of E. Merck KG, President of the Republic of Mauritius, Her Excellency Mrs. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim (centre) and Dr. Rasha Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation follow proceedings at the inauguration



H.E. President Ameenah Gurib-Fakim with Prof. Stangenberg-Haverkamp, Chairman of the Executive Board of E. Merck KG, Dr. Kelej, CEO of Merck Foundation & Mr. Engida, Deputy DG of UNESCO present the MARS Best Mauritian researcher award to Nilufer Jasmine Selima Fauzee

equal partner in advancing STEM research and education.

To this, UNESCO–MARS 2017 brings together African researchers to discuss the generation, sharing and dissemination of research data and to prepare for the road ahead in developing Africa as an international hub for research excellence and scientific innovation. These include researchers from Francophone countries such as Benin, Senegal, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Congo, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burkina Faso, and Anglophone countries such as Kenya, Mauritius, South Africa, Ghana, Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Zambia, Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Egypt, South Sudan and Ethiopia.

More than 60% of young African Researchers attending this year, are women, emphasizing Merck Foundation's long-term commitment towards empowering women in STEM with special focus on Scientific Research in Cancer and Vaccines Development.

Key African ministers attending the Summit to participate in the Ministerial Panels

This year's Summit attracted many African ministers of Health; Education; Science and Technology; Gender and Social Development to participate in the ministerial high-level panels which will focus on 'Empowering Women & Youth in STEM - with special focus on Scientific Research - Challenges & Solutions to be considered in the national strategy in developing countries.'

The ministers participating in the panel included: Hon. Sarah Opendi Minister of State of Health, Uganda; Hon. Leela Devi Dookun- Luchoomun Minister of Education and Scientific Research, Mauritius; Hon. Dr. George Kronnisanyon Werner Minister of Science and Higher Education, Liberia; Hon. Dr. Anwar Husnoo Minister of Health, Mauritius; Hon. Susan Shabangu Minister in the Presidency Responsible for Women, South Africa; Hon. Julia Duncan Cassell, Minister of Gender and Social Development, Liberia; Hon. Chitalu Chilufya, Minister of Health, Zambia; Hon. Malam Adamu Adamu, Minister of Science and Higher Education, Nigeria; Hon. Awut Deng Acuil, Minister of Gender Child and Social Welfare, South Sudan; Hon. Fidelis Macdonald Molao and Deputy Minister of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology, Botswana. The panel also included, Hon. Samuel Mvondo Ayolo, Ambassador of Cameroon to France, and Hon. Christine Nina NIYONSAVYE and Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Burundi to UNESCO.

About Last year MARS Awards Winners:

In 2016, five winners from Kenya, Burkina Faso, Gabon, Uganda and Ethiopia were recognized and awarded for their excellence in research under the category of 'Best African Women Researchers Award' and four winners from Botswana, Cameroon, Gambia and Zimbabwe for 'Best Young African Researchers Award' during the 2nd UNESCO-Merck Africa Research Summit held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

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