NEWS RELEASE

SPANISH-AMERICAN BIOLOGIST RECEIVES WORLD'S LARGEST PRIZE

LONDON, MAY 5 2010 – Francisco J. Ayala, an evolutionary geneticist and molecular biologist, received the £1,000,000 Templeton prize today from HRH the Duke of Edinburgh in a private ceremony at Buckingham Palace.

Ayala, Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of California, Irvine, is an international authority on molecular evolution and genetics. Alongside his scientific work, he has been awarded the prize in recognition of his work to vigorously defend scientific theory from the influence of religious belief while also calling for mutual respect between the two.

The Templeton Prize honours a living person who has made an exceptional contribution to affirming life's spiritual dimension whether through insight, discovery, or practical works and is in its 38th year.

Professor Ayala has announced that he will be donating the Prize money to support graduate education in biological sciences at the University of California, Irvine. The University will be receiving the money at the Templeton Prize reception at London's prestigious Royal Society on Thursday 6th May.

Ayala, who will also be giving a lecture at the Royal Society on Thursday, said in reference to the award: "This is a remarkable prize. I hope the recognition it bestows will help propagate the notion that science and religion are not in opposition and that, in fact, they may often be complementary.

"I have been arguing for years and I continue to argue in all possible ways that are accessible to me that there need not be contradiction between science and religion. Properly they cannot be in contradiction because they deal in different subjects. They are like two windows through which we look at the world; the world is one and the same, but what we see is different. "

Professor John Barrow, a cosmologist, former Templeton Laureate and Fellow of the Royal Society said: "'It is good to see such a distinguished biological scientist, with a background in

philosophy and theology, and a thoughtful view on the interaction of all three complementary forms of knowledge, receive this prize."

John M. Templeton, Jr., M.D., president and chairman of the John Templeton Foundation said: "Professor Ayala has vigorously opposed the entanglement of science and religion, but he has also called for mutual respect between the two, including the open-minded inquiry into big questions, questions that at least partially may be relevant to each domain of knowing.

"Ayala's clear voice in matters of science and faith echoes the Foundation's belief that evolution of the mind and truly open-minded inquiry can lead to real spiritual progress in the world."

Professor Ayala, whose groundbreaking research into single-celled disease-causing organisms may lead to cures for malaria and other serious illnesses, has equated efforts to block religious intrusions into science with "the survival of rationality." A former Dominican priest, he served as an expert witness in a pivotal U.S. federal court challenge in 1981 that led to the overturning of an Arkansas law mandating the teaching of creationism alongside evolution. In 2001, George W. Bush awarded him the National Medal of Science.

Even as he has warned against religion's intrusion into science, Ayala, a former Dominican priest, has also championed faith as a unique and important means to understanding matters of purpose, values and the meaning of life.

Professor Ayala, also a former scientific advisor to President Clinton, is the first Templeton Prize winner from Spain.

He is a member of the US National Academy of Sciences and a foreign member of the scientific academies of, among others, Spain, Russia, Italy, Mexico and Serbia.

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Pictures, including images of previous prize winners, can be found at:
www.flickr.com/photos/templetonprize
Videos of the laureate can be found at: www.youtube.com/templetonprize

Background on the laureate:

1. Born in Madrid in 1934, shortly before the Spanish Civil War started, Ayala grew up within the restrictions of the Franco era. Though his family was largely involved with business and finance, Ayala showed an early interest in science that was cultivated by the priests who taught him
2. In 1960 he, too, became a priest, but soon decided to leave the priesthood – and the intellectual repression of Franco's Spain – to attend Columbia University in New York in 1961
3. At Columbia, he studied under Theodosius Dobzhansky, considered among the 20th century's most distinguished geneticists and evolutionary biologists, who saw Ayala as a student with potential to lead the field's next generation.
4. Under Dobzhansky's tutelage, he received his Ph.D. from Columbia in 1964 with a thesis that established that rates of evolution depend on the genetic variation of a species.
5. It was the first of many discoveries that placed Ayala among the pioneers of genetic research in the second half of the 20th century, including his proof that the parasites responsible for Chagas, an often fatal disease afflicting millions of people living in the tropics, reproduced not sexually but by cloning.
6. This led to similar discoveries about the parasites that cause malaria and other tropical diseases, opening up new approaches to potential vaccines.
7. Ayala also developed highly-accurate ways to read genetic clocks to determine the timing of precise steps in the evolution of a species over millions or even billions of years.
8. Recently, he and colleagues determined that malaria was likely first transmitted from chimpanzees to humans a mere five or six thousand years ago, possibly through a single mosquito.
9. He was President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) between 1993 and 1996 where he developed the Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion.
10. In January 2010 he co-authored a paper establishing that gorillas and chimps may now serve as reservoirs for the parasites that cause human malaria, so that even if a vaccine is developed, humans will always be vulnerable to re-infection.
11. Ayala holds professorships in biology, philosophy, logic, and philosophy of biology (a field he helped establish), at the University of California, Irvine. In addition, he is also University Professor, the highest rank within the California university system and the only person with that title at Irvine.

12. Ayala has two children, Francisco José and Carlos Alberto, from his first marriage. He married his second wife, Dr. Hana Lostakova, an ecologist, in 1985.
13. After moving to California in the 1970s, Ayala purchased a weekend property with a vineyard. Following several expansions, he now supplies major wineries with grapes from more than 2,400 acres of fields in San Joaquin and Sacramento counties.

Background on the Prize

1. The Templeton Prize was created by global investor and philanthropist Sir John Templeton and was established in 1972
2. The Templeton Prize is a cornerstone of the John Templeton Foundation's international efforts to serve as a philanthropic catalyst for discovery in areas engaging life's biggest questions, ranging from explorations into the laws of nature and the universe to questions on the nature of love, gratitude, forgiveness, and creativity
3. The Templeton Prize aims to identify "entrepreneurs of the spirit", outstanding individuals who have devoted their talents to expanding notions or understanding about ultimate purpose and reality
4. The Templeton Prize is awarded annually on the decision of a panel of independent judges. Past judges have included the Dalai Lama, Professor Sir Brian Heap and Professor Paul Davies
5. For more information on the John Templeton Foundation and the Templeton Prize, visit www.templeton.org and www.templetonprize.org.