



Press release

June 9, 2008 09:00 EEST

MILLENNIUM TECHNOLOGY PRIZE LAUREATES MEET IN HELSINKI

HELSINKI, FINLAND

Representing the four groundbreaking innovations shortlisted for the world's biggest technology award, the six Laureates for the 2008 Millennium Technology Prize are meeting each other for the first time today at a Millennium Technology Week press conference in Helsinki City Hall. The winner of the prize will be announced at a ceremony in Helsinki on 11 June.

"Our world is facing gigantic problems. Mankind needs scientific and technological breakthroughs. It is in this spirit that the Millennium Technology Prize is awarded every second year – to recognize and inspire innovations offering solutions that promote quality of life and sustainable development," said **Stig Gustavson**, Chairman of Technology Academy Finland. All four shortlisted innovations are benefiting the lives of billions of people.

The DNA fingerprinting technique developed by Professor **Sir Alec Jeffreys** has revolutionized the field of forensic science and methods of defining family relationships. Jeffreys's innovation has brought a new level of justice to the world, exonerating the innocent, reaffirming family

relationships through kinship testing, and identifying the victims of disasters." I am enormously proud of this recognition of DNA fingerprinting, a pride I am sure will be shared by countless police officers, lawyers, DNA practitioners and forensic scientists in whose lives DNA fingerprinting now plays such a major role," said Alec Jeffreys.

Professor **Robert Langer** has developed innovative biomaterials for controlled drug release. Over 100 million people already use these advanced drug delivery systems every year and the number is rising rapidly. Langer's work has also brought about significant advances in tissue engineering, including synthetic replacements for biological tissues such as artificial skin. "It's a tremendous thrill to be a Millennium Prize Laureate and an honor to be included in the same group as the other Laureates who have made such important contributions to the world," said Robert Langer.

Dr. **Andrew Viterbi's** innovation, the Viterbi algorithm, is used to avoid errors in wireless communications systems and digital devices such as mobile phones. The Viterbi algorithm decoder is a component in almost all digital mobile phones, improving the efficiency of phone networks and reducing costs. "It's a great honor to be considered for this award, particularly in a nation renowned for its contributions to wireless communication and home to the world leader in the cellular phone market," said Andrew Viterbi.

The fourth innovation competing for the Prize, the erbium-doped fibre amplifier (EDFA), invented by Professor **Emmanuel Desurvire**, Dr. **Randy Giles** and Professor **David Payne**, has resulted in a vast increase

in the transmission capacity of global optical fibre networks. Almost every phone call, e-mail or downloaded file passes through an optical amplifier on the way to its destination. The EDFA has enabled an almost indefinite increase in the range of terrestrial and undersea data links and has permitted fibre-based telecommunications to be extended to all corners of the earth. "Being a Laureate for such a prestigious Prize is a source of pride for our professional community," said Emmanuel Desurvire. "Inventions by every one of the Laureates are remarkable and are making their indelible marks in the record of human achievement," said Randy Giles. "This is an accolade not only for my co-laureates and myself, but also a recognition for the global photonics community," said David Payne.

The prize pool for the 2008 Millennium Technology Prize is EUR 1.15 million. The Winner of the Millennium Technology Prize will be awarded EUR 800,000 and the other innovations will each be awarded EUR 115,000.

MORE INFO

Read more about the Laureates and their innovations and see video presentations online at www.millenniumprize.fi/en/laureates

FURTHER INFORMATION on Millennium Technology Week events (June 9-12) can be found at www.millenniumprize.fi/en/news/press-room

PHOTOGRAPHS of the finalists can be found at www.millenniumprize.fi/en/media/2008-laureates
Images from the events on Monday, Wednesday and

Thursday of Millennium Technology Week will be available after each event.

A LIVE WEBCAST of the Grand Award Ceremony on Wednesday 11 June will begin at 15.35 Eastern European Summer Time (UTC/GMT +3 hours). The link for this live webcast will be available at www.millenniumprize.fi prior to the event.

MILLENNIUM TECHNOLOGY PRIZE

The Millennium Technology Prize is Finland's tribute to life-enhancing technological innovation. The prize is awarded every second year for a technological innovation that significantly improves the quality of human life and encourages sustainable development. The world's biggest technology prize is awarded by Technology Academy Finland, an independent foundation established by Finnish industry in partnership with the Finnish state. The finalists were selected by the Board of the Foundation on the basis of recommendations made by the International Selection Committee.