PRESS RELEASE

ROLEX NAMES 22 FINALISTS OF 2014 ENTERPRISE AWARDS
Young pioneers from 13 countries chosen as potential Laureates

Geneva, 17 March 2014 – Twenty-two young innovators from 13 countries, as diverse as Mexico, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh and Fiji, have been singled out as finalists in the 2014 Rolex Awards for Enterprise.

Five of the 22 pioneers will soon become Young Laureates of the Rolex Awards, winning not only vital funding for their ambitious projects, but also an international profile that will mark them out as potential leaders, both at home and internationally.

Chosen from more than 1,800 applicants from around the world in a competitive pre-selection process, these pioneers have demonstrated their determination to solve some of society’s greatest challenges in five general areas: science and health, applied technology, exploration, the environment and cultural heritage.

This is the second series in the programme’s nearly four-decade history dedicated exclusively to visionaries under the age of 30, and the first edition of the Young Laureate series with an open application system.

The five winners will each receive 50,000 Swiss francs to further their work, a Rolex chronometer and the benefits of an ongoing, international publicity campaign. They will also have access to the network of more than 100 previous Laureates of the Rolex Awards.

“The spirit of enterprise is vibrantly alive. We are deeply impressed with the ingenuity and perseverance of the younger generation as they pursue their goals to expand knowledge and solve some of the daunting problems of the 21st century,” said Rebecca Irvin, head of Rolex philanthropy.

“Between them, the finalists represent a range of nationalities, backgrounds, languages and levels of education – but each and every one of them has the credentials and fortitude to become a Young Laureate,” she said. “Their projects range from engaging local communities in promoting biodiversity in Brazil to advancing solar energy in developing countries,
documenting indigenous knowledge in Canada and creating novel electronic tablets for uses from conserving coral reefs in Hawaii to reducing the rate of cardiovascular disease in the Republic of Cameroon and beyond.”

In April, the Rolex Jury, eight distinguished scientists, environmentalists, conservationists and social entrepreneurs, who comprise the independent panel, will meet in Geneva to select five Young Laureates from among the finalists shortlisted.

The winners will be announced in June and honoured at a ceremony later this year.

Profile of finalists

The majority of finalists are just under age 30 and the gap between males (59 per cent) and females (41 per cent) is closing, as compared with previous series. About a third of the finalists hail from Asia, nearly a quarter from North America and the rest are almost evenly divided between Latin America, Africa, Europe and Oceania/Pacific, with slightly fewer from the Middle East.

Of the Awards categories represented by the shortlisted candidates, the environment was most popular, followed by science and health, exploration, applied technology and cultural heritage.

“As ever, the Jury will be faced with the difficult task of selecting five winning candidates from a list of highly innovative and committed young people, all of them seeking much-needed support for their groundbreaking projects,” said Irvin. “All of the candidates demonstrate the spirit of enterprise so cherished by Rolex and supported by the company over the past century. We will be very excited to learn the names of the five winners following the Jury meeting – and we look forward very much to helping the new Young Laureates implement their pioneering projects and presenting them to a global audience.”

Awards for Young Laureates

The biennial Rolex Awards were begun in 1976 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the waterproof Rolex Oyster chronometer, a milestone in watchmaking, and invest in individuals worldwide who have the courage and conviction to carry out groundbreaking projects to benefit humankind and the planet in areas generally encompassing science, the environment, exploration and cultural heritage. In 2009, Rolex decided to encourage the next generation of leaders by dedicating every second series of the Rolex Awards for Enterprise to young innovators between the ages of 18 to 30 – the Young Laureates.

Rolex philanthropy

The Rolex Awards for Enterprise and its sister programme, the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative, comprise the two major international philanthropic programmes run by the Rolex Institute. Both the Rolex Awards series dedicated to Young Laureates and the Arts Initiative were designed to foster innovation and advance the work of young people who exemplify the vision, ingenuity and excellence that defines the Rolex brand.

For further information on the Rolex Awards for Enterprise, visit: rolexawards.com

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2014 ROLEX AWARDS FINALISTS

Andie Ang – Singapore
Reconnect groups of Indochinese silvered langurs in Vietnam with aerial bridges to permit breeding between fragmented populations, strengthening the gene pool and increasing the likelihood of their survival.

John Burns – United States
Develop novel waterproof electronic tablets to promote community-based monitoring and conservation of coral reef ecosystems in Hawaii, where the coastal populations depend on marine resources.

Marita Cheng – Australia
Develop an easily mounted, smartphone-controlled robot arm for disabled people who use wheelchairs as a result of spinal injuries or debilitating diseases such as multiple sclerosis.

Rafael Morais Chiaravalloti – Brazil
Apply community-based mapping that will enable locals, conservationists and tourist operators to create a sustainable management plan for the western border of Brazil’s Pantanal wetland.

Sayam Chowdhury – Bangladesh
Curtail hunting and poaching of endangered wildlife in three fragile ecosystems of Bangladesh by involving the local community and educating them about the benefits of conservation.

Eden Full – Canada
Advance solar energy in developing countries by promoting a solar-tracking device that generates more electricity than a stationary solar panel and filters water at the same time.

Medhavi Gandhi – India
Revive and preserve the traditional arts, crafts and culture of Indian tribes to help alleviate poverty through the development of creative, sustainable businesses.

Neeti Kailas – India
Develop a unique system to carry out early and mass screenings of newborns in resource-poor settings to monitor hearing loss and prevent the consequent loss of speech.

Divya Karnad – India
Build a sustainable fisheries model in India by bridging the divide between seafood producers and consumers through conservation programmes linking the community with fishermen.

Yashraj Khaitan – India
Develop cutting-edge, smart-grid technology to make rural power distribution more efficient, reliable and economically sustainable.

David Lang – United States
Support a global community of professional and amateur ocean explorers who collaborate to create innovative tools such as low-cost underwater robots for citizen exploration and science.
Jeffrey Marlow – United States
Launch schoolchildren worldwide on a journey of discovery by involving them in the science behind NASA’s Opportunity Mars rover and educating them about space exploration and astrobiology.

Sarah McNair-Landry – Canada
Circumnavigate Canada’s Baffin Island, the world’s fifth largest island, to collect and document the dog-sledding knowledge of the Inuit communities before it is lost forever.

Soham Mukherjee – India
Educate and train rural communities in India’s Gujarat state to prevent venomous snakebites and administer appropriate first aid.

Olivier Nsengimana – Rwanda
Save Rwanda’s Grey Crowned Crane, which faces increasing threats to its habitat and a growing illegal trade, in order to conserve Rwanda’s biodiversity.

Akosita Rokomate – Fiji
Encourage sustainable management of natural resources on Fiji’s Kia Island, which is part of the Great Sea Reef and a biodiversity hotspot, by incentivizing the community to practise long-term conservation.

Gerardo Ruiz de Teresa – Mexico
Install solar-energy systems to eradicate energy poverty in Mexico’s rural communities and create employment.

Francesco Sauro – Italy
Lead a multidisciplinary team of scientists to explore ancient quartzite caves in table-top mountains between Venezuela and Brazil and uncover the secrets behind the landscape’s evolution.

Livio Valenti – Italy
Use silk biomaterials to create a heat-stable polio vaccine that does not require refrigeration and can efficiently reach people living in remote areas of the world.

Nathalie Vlcek – Brazil
Document and revitalize the endangered Tuyuka language, spoken by 20 indigenous communities in Brazil and Colombia, and engage the people in composing a theme-based dictionary of their language.

Arthur Zang – Cameroon
Reduce the rate of cardiovascular-disease mortality in countries with a shortage of cardiologists by using a Cardio-pad medical tablet to perform cardiac examinations and permit remote readings.

Hosam Zowawi – Saudi Arabia
Develop faster laboratory tests for superbugs and raise awareness of antibiotic resistance in the Gulf States through an education campaign.