

HFSPPO Press Release
Strasbourg, June 9th, 2008

Ernst-Ludwig Winnacker to be appointed Secretary General of HFSPPO

The Board of Trustees of the International Human Frontier Science Program Organization (HFSPPO) is pleased to announce the appointment of Ernst-Ludwig Winnacker to serve as Secretary General of the Organization as from 1 July 2009. He will succeed Torsten Wiesel, who will leave HFSPPO after more than 9 years of dynamic leadership.

Professor Winnacker brings to HFSPPO many years of high level experience in scientific research and policy. He will join HFSPPO from his current position as the first Secretary General of the European Research Council (ERC), where he is playing a crucial role in setting up this innovative agency for fostering basic research in Europe. Before joining the ERC he spent 9 years as President of the German Research Foundation (DFG). There, he was instrumental in promoting scientific excellence at an international level and in improving research opportunities for women and junior scientists. In both the ERC and the DFG, he has been a strong supporter of interdisciplinary approaches to scientific research. Professor Winnacker has been a consistent advocate for frontier science and has never shied away from speaking up on issues such as gene technology and stem cell research. At a time in the 1980s when genetic engineering provoked controversy in Germany, he lobbied successfully for the establishment of a centre for research into gene technology, leading to the establishment of the Gene Center at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) Munich, where he is still Professor of Biochemistry.

HFSPPO President, Professor Masao Ito comments “We are delighted that Ernst-Ludwig Winnacker has agreed to take this position. His dedication to the support of research at the highest level and his experience in major research organisations makes him an ideal choice to lead the Organization in the next years. He steps into the shoes of Torsten Wiesel, who has done so much to pursue the original mission of HFSPPO during his tenure as Secretary General. I am sure that Professor Winnacker will be a worthy successor in taking up this challenge”.

The Human Frontier Science Program Organization was founded in 1989 to support international research and training at the frontier of the life sciences with particular emphasis on research at the interface between life sciences and the physical sciences and on creating opportunities for young scientists. It is supported by contributions from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and the European Commission, representing the non-G7 states of the European Union. With its collaborative research grants and postdoctoral fellowship programs it has supported almost 5000 scientists from 64 countries over the last 18 years.