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Media Release

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For immediate release:

South Africa tops the world in talking science

South African science communication has been placed in the spotlight by Dr Nehemiah Latolla of the Nelson Mandela University who has come out tops in the international science communication competition. He becomes the second South African contestant to win the International FameLab competition since its inception in South Africa in 2013.

Six countries, including Czech republic, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Thailand and South Africa, from across the world competed for the first time in the new format of FameLab International. The event was streamed live today (25 November 2022) on Cheltenham Festivals FameLab YouTube Channel and saw contestants vie for the title of the world's best science communicator.

“I am so incredibly overwhelmed and overjoyed by the wonderful honour that has been bestowed upon me as the international FameLab winner 2022. This has been an incredible journey realized by sharing the indigenous knowledge systems of South Africa and their possibilities to address drug discovery. I am carried on the backs of amazing local and international young scientists who were brilliant in the delivery of all their research. I look forward to engaging more in this journey with FameLab. Thank you to all the support I have been given and all the opportunities I have been afforded by this achievement” said Nehemiah.

“Over the years, FameLab has built trust between scientists, researchers and the public, and has been an incredible stepping-stone for early-career scientists. The international FameLab network has strengthened relationships within the scientific community around the world,” said Head of Programming at Cheltenham Science Festival Dr Marieke Navin.

“Today we have shown the world that South Africa have science communication capabilities that are world-class. Dr Nehemiah Latolla is a young, proudly South African researcher who has done a sterling job of putting our local research on an international stage”, says Dr Mamoeletsi Mosia, the Managing Director of the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement.

“For science to have positive impacts on people’s lives, it has to leave the laboratory. Science has tremendous potential to cause positive change for society and for the environment – but first it has to be shared” said Robert Inglis; Director at Jive Media Africa.

FameLab, an initiative of Cheltenham Festivals in the UK, has been running in South Africa since 2013 through a partnership between the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (NRF-SAASTA) and research communication specialists, Jive Media Africa.

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Notes:

To find out more about FameLab in South Africa, go to:
<https://www.saasta.ac.za/competitions/famelab/>

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About Jive Media Africa:

Jive Media Africa supports top researchers with innovative, cutting edge communications. They are winners of the National Science and Technology Forum Award for Science Communication and have brought the FameLab competition to South Africa in 2013. Jive Media Africa has been getting creative to connect researchers, engineers and scientists with the public. Through communication strategy, media production, training and mentorship their aim is to activate African knowledge and grow capacity for great research and innovation on the African continent. Find out more about Jive Media Africa here: <https://jivemedia.co.za/>

About the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA):

SAASTA is a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF) with the mandate to advance public awareness, appreciation and engagement of science, engineering and technology in South Africa. SAASTA’s contribution to the NRF’s vision of “Research for a Better Society” through strengthening the science and society interface. The organisations aims to be the leading science advancement agency in the country by promoting and communicating the value and impact of science, technology and innovation in a dynamic knowledge economy. It also intends to contribute significantly towards building a science, engineering and technology (SET) human resource base. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit www.saasta.ac.za

About the National Research Foundation (NRF):

The National Research Foundation (NRF) was established on 1 April 1999 as an independent statutory body in accordance with the National Research Foundation Act. The NRF is a key public entity responsible for supporting the development of human resources for research and innovation in all fields of science and technology. The organisation is one of the major players in educating and training a new generation of scientists able to deal with South African and African needs. The organisation encourages public awareness and appreciation of science, engineering and technology, and facilitates dialogue between science and society. Its vision is to contribute to a prosperous South Africa based on a knowledge economy. For more information on the operations and programs within the NRF please visit www.nrf.ac.za

