

Solvay launches *Chemistry for the Future Solvay Prize* to reward major scientific discoveries

Brussels, 21 November 2012 at 2:00 pm -- Solvay announced today the creation of the *Chemistry for the Future Solvay Prize* to reward a major scientific discovery that could shape tomorrow's chemistry and help human progress. The EUR 300,000 Prize will be awarded every two years.

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the creation of the chemical company Solvay by **Ernest Solvay**, and to perpetuate the founder's commitment as a strong supporter of scientific research, Solvay's Executive Committee has decided to set up this prize. It is intended to endorse basic research and underline the essential role of chemistry as a science and an industry to help solve some of the most pressing issues the world is facing.

An independent Nomination Committee composed of 15 eminent scientists will propose candidates for the Prize. The Committee will look for achievements in various fields, including biochemistry, material sciences, soft matter, biophysics and chemical engineering. The independent Prize Jury, chaired by Prof. Hakan Wennerström (University of Lund, Sweden), will then select the final winner. The first Awards ceremony will be held in Brussels in November 2013.

As a result of the integration of Rhodia into the Solvay Group, the *Rhodia Pierre-Gilles de Gennes Prize for Science and Industry* that was created in 2008 will no longer be awarded, but will find a continuation in its spirit in the *Chemistry for the Future Solvay Prize*.

SOLVAY is an international chemical Group committed to sustainable development with a clear focus on innovation and operational excellence. It is realizing over 90% of its sales in markets where it is among the top 3 global leaders. Solvay offers a broad range of products that contribute to improving the quality of life and the performance of its customers in markets such as consumer goods, construction, automotive, energy, water and environment, and electronics. The Group is headquartered in Brussels, employs about 31,000 people in 55 countries and generated EUR 12.7 billion in net sales in 2011 (pro forma). Solvay SA (**SOLB.BE**) is listed on **NYSE Euronext** in Brussels and Paris (Bloomberg: **SOLB.BB** - Reuters: **SOLBt.BR**).

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Ce communiqué est également disponible en français – Dit persbericht is ook in het Nederlands beschikbaar

Notes to the editors

The Belgian industrialist and philanthropist Ernest Solvay (1838 - 1922) is notably known for his development of a commercially viable ammonia-soda process for producing soda ash (sodium carbonate), used among others in the manufacture of glass, soap and textiles.¹

With the help of his younger brother Alfred and a handful of investment partners he founded Solvay & Cie in 1863 to run the ammonia-soda process on an industrial scale. The company grew quickly and became the largest international chemical group worldwide before the First World War. The towns **Rosignano-Solvay** in Italy and **Solvay** in the State of New York where the group built soda ash plants were named after him. In these two places, and in many others, Solvay developed very advanced welfare schemes, including housing, social benefits, pension funds well before it became widespread practice.

As the Solvay-process made it possible to mass produce soda ash at low price and this way fuel the industrial revolution, the company was very successful and brought Ernest Solvay significant wealth. Passionate about science, he used his wealth to fund and foster several philanthropic and scientific organizations and institutes, active in chemistry, physics, sociology, physiology and also business with the founding of the internationally renowned **Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management**.

The famous Solvay conference on physics organized by Ernest Solvay and several specialists in Brussels in October 1911 was the very first of its kind. Gathering **the most brilliant minds of the time**, that council and the following ones laid the groundwork for a large number of major breakthroughs in quantum physics. These groundbreaking scientific conferences have continued to this day. The **last conference of its kind** was held in Brussels from 19 October until 23 October 2011. The next conference on physics is scheduled in Brussels from 9 October 2014 to 11 October 2014. In the same context Ernest Solvay organized also Solvay conferences on chemistry and both institutes later merged into the **International Solvay Institutes for Physics and Chemistry**. The next Solvay conference on chemistry is planned from 16 October to 19 October 2013 in Brussels.

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¹ For a comprehensive history of the Solvay company, see Kenneth Bertrams, Nicolas Coupain, and Ernst Homburg, *Solvay: History of a Multinational Family Firm*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013.