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**Dr. Charles Elachi, Director of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, to receive the 2016 National Space Trophy**

**Bay Area, Houston, Texas** (January 19, 2016). The Rotary National Award for Space Achievement (RNASA) Foundation has selected Dr. Charles Elachi, Director of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, a division of the California Institute of Technology, to receive the 2016 National Space Trophy on April 29, 2016, at the Houston Hyatt Regency in Houston, Texas.

Rodolfo Gonzalez, President of the RNASA Foundation said, "The Foundation is very pleased with the board of advisors' selection of Dr. Elachi and is looking forward to recognizing him as the guest of honor at the RNASA Space Awards Gala.”

Dr. Elachi was nominated for the award by A. Thomas Young, former Director of NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center. Young said, “Charles Elachi’s distinguished leadership and sustained technical achievement has had a profound impact on the U.S. robotic exploration of space across the late 20th and early 21st centuries…His contributions and vision have impacted space science and technology, generations of young people and professionals, and society at large.”

Dr. Elachi said, "I'm honored to receive the National Space Trophy from this prestigious organization. I feel so fortunate to be involved in space exploration during an extremely exciting time, when we are rewriting science books, fulfilling humanity's innate quest for discovery, and bringing tangible technology and science advances back to Earth. I am grateful for the invaluable contributions of the teams of dedicated and immensely talented men and woman I've worked with through the years."

Dr. Elachi is credited with pioneering the use of radar remote sensing techniques, overseeing missions such as the Shuttle Imaging Radar series, the Magellan Imaging Radar at Venus and the Cassini Titan Radar currently studying Saturn’s moon Titan.

Young describes the 15 years that Dr. Elachi has been director of Jet Propulsion Laboratory as an “exceptionally productive” time in which Dr. Elachi has led the development and operation of robotic spacecraft systems that have studied Earth, the solar system, and deep space.

The study of Earth has included a satellite mission that used advanced radar to study the inner structure of clouds, as well as missions and instruments that have studied the oceans, Earth’s gravity field, air pollutants, global temperatures and greenhouse gases. These efforts have contributed enormously to our understanding of weather and climate, including climate change. They include Cloudsat, Jason-1 and Jason-2, the Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE), the Tropospheric Emission Spectrometer (TES), the Microwave Limb Sounder (MLS) and the Atmospheric Infrared Sounder (AIRS) instruments.

Study of Earth’s moon has included the study of its interior structure by the twin Gravity Recovery and Interior Laboratory (GRAIL) orbiters, the study of surface temperatures by the Diviner instrument and the Moon Mineralogy Mapper. Further into space is the robotic exploration of Mars with the Curiosity rover, the Mars Phoenix Lander, the Spirit and Opportunity rovers, the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter and the Mars Odyssey 2001. Opportunity, originally planned as a three-month mission, is celebrating its 12-year anniversary this month.

Multiple space missions are exploring other parts of the solar system. The Cassini spacecraft has spent more than a decade exploring Saturn, its rings and its moons, and its intriguing discoveries have included evidence of an ocean on Enceladus and lakes on Titan. Dr. Elachi leads the Cassini radar team. The Dawn spacecraft has used ion propulsion to orbit two bodies in succession: first, the giant asteroid Vesta, and currently, the dwarf planet Ceres. The Genesis mission captured and returned to Earth samples of solar wind ejected from the sun.

Comets have been the focus of several missions during Dr. Elachi's tenure. Deep Impact deliberately collided with comet Tempel 1 so scientists could study the comet's interior, and the craft later flew by comet Hartley 2. Stardust became the first mission to return material from beyond the orbit of Earth's moon, when it brought back dust samples from its flyby of comet Wild-2. JPL provided the MIRO instrument for the European Space Agency's Rosetta orbiter, which deployed a lander to the surface of a comet.

The Juno spacecraft was launched in 2011 and will arrive at Jupiter on the Fourth of July in 2016 to study its interior. The Voyager I spacecraft reached interstellar space in 2012, and Voyager II is not far behind. They continue to operate 35 years after launch.

Telescopes looking at the universe include the Spitzer Space Telescope, the Wide-Field Infrared Survey Explorer (WISE), the Kepler Space Telescope, which has confirmed 1,030 planets to date, the Nuclear Spectroscopic Telescope Array (NuSTAR) and the Galaxy Evolution Explorer. These have studied the universe in infrared, high energy x-rays, and ultraviolet. They have mapped the sky and studied comets, asteroids, planets, stars and galaxies, telling us about star formation, galaxy formation, the early universe, black holes and so much more. Other missions and instruments have studied the sun, solar wind material and cosmic background radiation in far infrared and millimeter wavelengths.

Beyond space, Dr. Elachi’s contributions include teaching the physics of remote sensing for two decades at the California Institute of Technology. As a research scientist, he has authored more than 200 publications in the fields of active microwave remote sensing, wave propagation and scattering, electromagnetic theory, lasers and integrated optics.

He has been a member of the National Academy of Engineering since 1989 and has received numerous awards and medals, both in the United States and internationally. These include the NASA Exceptional Scientific Achievement Medal and Outstanding Leadership Medal, the COSPAR Nordberg Medal, the German Wernher Von Braun Award, the Nevada Medal, and the Dryden Medal. The Takeda Foundation of Japan awarded him its medal for his work in developing space radar instruments to monitor the global environment. He also has an asteroid named after him: 4116 Elachi. In 2007, U.S. News and World Report named Dr. Elachi one of America’s Best Leaders.

The RNASA Foundation invites members of the public and the aerospace community to attend the black-tie event on April 29, 2016, at the Houston Hyatt Regency, where Dr. Charles Elachi will be recognized with the National Space Trophy. This year will be RNASA’s 30th annual National Space Trophy Banquet. Please visit **http://www.rnasa.org/tables.html** to reserve your table for the RNASA Banquet and find information about sponsorships and tickets. To reserve a room at the Houston Hyatt Regency, please visit **http://www.rnasa.org/houston.html** or call 713-654-1234 and request the RNASA group rate.

*About RNASA: The Rotary National Award for Space Achievement (RNASA) Foundation was founded by the Space Center Rotary Club of Houston, Texas, in 1985 to organize and coordinate an annual event to recognize outstanding achievements in space and create greater public awareness of the benefits of space exploration. The nonprofit Foundation presents the National Space Trophy and Stellar Awards each year. The RNASA website is http://www.rnasa.org/.*