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Press release

Atmospheric detective receives Volvo Environment Prize award for 2015

Henning Rodhe, Professor of Chemical Meteorology at Stockholm University, Sweden, receives the Volvo Environment Prize 2015 for his contributions to the understanding of the world's atmosphere. His pioneering work explains how gases and particles are transported and deposited and how they affect climate, ecosystems and human health.

Particles and other air pollutants are still a major threat to human health. The formation of so called atmospheric brown clouds is one of the research topics in which professor Henning Rodhe has been involved in recent years. Atmospheric brown clouds are a by-product of road traffic, slash-and-burn agriculture, coal fired power plants, and cooking on dung or wood fires. They are most pronounced in Asia, where they can dramatically reduce sunlight and influence regional climate. The particles in atmospheric brown clouds can penetrate the lungs and are estimated to kill some three million people a year, globally.

When Henning Rodhe started his scientific work in the early 1970s there was little knowledge on how particles and gases were formed and transported in the atmosphere. In fact, when he and research colleagues suggested that acidification in lakes and forest soils in Norway and Sweden was caused in part by emissions from coal-fired power plants in Great Britain, they were met with disbelief and dismissed. But later, other scientists confirmed their results, policy and regulations were changed and emissions cut.

Henning Rodhe's research can be described to some extent as detective work, combining data collection with scientific theories and fieldwork. He has demonstrated that long-range transportation, as for mercury and radioactive fallout, is more widespread than previously believed. The atmosphere can carry particles a very long way, and the fallout and environmental problems can occur where not expected. The recent severe air pollution affecting regions in South East Asia, caused by slash-and-burn in Indonesia, is one example of that.

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Henning Rodhe has worked in Europe, Asia and Africa, often becoming a mentor for young researchers in the developing world. He has been a lead author in reports from the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), was the director of the International Meteorological Institute in Stockholm for almost 20 years and has been visiting professor at several universities in the US.

Says the jury of the Volvo Environment Prize:

“Henning Rodhe has made groundbreaking contributions to the understanding of the world’s atmosphere, its constituents, and why this knowledge matters for our well-being. He is an outstanding atmospheric scientist with 50 years of engagement in and impact on environmental issues.”

The Volvo Environment Prize was founded in 1988 and has become one of the world’s most prestigious environmental prizes. It is awarded annually to people who have made outstanding scientific discoveries within the area of the environment and sustainable development. The prize consists of a diploma, a glass sculpture and a cash sum of SEK 1.5 million and will be presented at a ceremony in Stockholm on 25 November 2015.

For more information about the 2015 laureate and the Volvo Environment Prize:

www.environment-prize.com



Henning Rodhe, Professor of Chemical Meteorology at Stockholm University receives the Volvo Environment Prize 2015.

Photographer: Tore Marklund

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For more information about the Volvo Environment Prize and this year's winner, please contact the chairman of the jury, professor Will Steffen, Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University, e-mail:

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