

Professor Kyriacos C. Nicolaou

Winner of the Takis and Louki Nemitsas Award in Science

The presentation ceremony for the Takis and Louki Nemitsas Award took place last night (Tuesday) at the Presidential Palace.

Kyriacos C. Nicolaou, Professor at Rice University in Houston, Texas, was awarded the Takis and Louki Nemitsas Award for his work in the field of chemistry, on 7 October 2014.

In a speech presented by Panayiotis Antoniou, the Director of the President's Office, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades, praised the laureate's work and the role of the Foundation.

"We are proud because people like Kyriacos Nicolaou go beyond the narrow borders of our island and project our country's intellectual achievements on an international level. For this, we thank him. Rewarding people such as him in their homeland is the least we can do to honour them and to reciprocate. We are also obliged to give our thanks to the Takis and

Louki Nemitsas Foundation because, through its efforts and work, it spotlights and rewards our worthy and distinguished compatriots across the globe. Such initiatives confirm the greatness and selflessness of our people and our readiness to be useful and beneficial to our country and the world", said President Anastasiades, among other things.

Marios Mavronicolas, Professor and Vice Chancellor of the University of Cyprus, presented the award to Professor Kyriacos C. Nicolaou on behalf of the Nemitsas Foundation, and spoke of a scientist who is considered one of the leading international scientists in Chemistry.

"I am proud to say that he is a pioneering, talented and multi-faceted human being who, through his scientific work, brings honour to Cyprus internationally," Dr Mavronicolas said, highlighting that Kyriacos C. Nicolaou has published more than 760 scientific contributions





Kyriacos C. Nicolaou

to leading international periodicals in his field, and in prestigious first class international conference proceedings. He also added that he holds more than 60 Patents.

Kyriacos C. Nicolaou's speciality is in the total synthesis of natural products with a complex structure.

"As for Professor Kyriacos Nicolaou's most representative research successes in Synthetic Chemistry, I will restrict myself, due to a lack of time alone, to two: the total synthesis of anti-cancer drugs Taxol and Calicheamicin", stated Mavronicolas, who made specific reference to Taxol.

"It was first extracted in 1971 from coniferous trees of the Taxus family, but its introduction as a drug in the pharmaceutical industry was delayed due to the low concentration of its natural raw material; that is to say, the drug. Because of the observed potency against cancer, Taxol quickly became a promising anti-cancer agent and thus turned into the 'Apple of Discord', with many research teams around the world competing to achieve its total synthesis in the laboratory. The breakthrough was made by the research team of Professor Nicolaou,

who succeeded in publishing the total synthesis of Taxol for the first time in 1994".

Professor Kyriacos C. Nicolaou expressed his heartfelt thanks, and began his speech with a reminder of his childhood years in Karavas.

"Both my grandfathers were farmers, cultivating their fields to feed their families and to make a living. My father could only make a career out of building, having only attended school up to the third grade of elementary school. He wanted me to become an architect, but I was more enchanted by the stars and the universe," Dr Nicolaou said.

Referring to Taxol, he emphasised that this is probably the most widely used anti-cancer drug today. "Due to its very promising action as an effective anti-cancer agent, Taxol has become famous, with many scientific teams of chemists all over the world involved in the battle to complete the total synthesis in the laboratory. Finally, the successful total synthesis of Taxol was published for the first time by our team in 1994," said the Professor, who movingly stated that he would not exchange this honour from his home country for anything.

Takis Nemeitsas, the Chairman of the Foundation,



gave thanks for the efforts made in supporting the Foundation and welcomed everyone, with particular reference to the Dean of Rice University, Seiichi Matsuda, who came from Houston especially for this ceremony.

“The Nemitsas Foundation was created to accomplish something that was much-needed in Cyprus, a way of honouring Cypriot scientists and artists who excel in their fields all over the world. Along the way, we have found that there are many of them,” Nemitsas said in his speech, stressing that professor K.C. Nicolaou was distinguished globally for his enormously important research, which helped doctors all over the world to treat and cure a wide range of diseases with a special emphasis on the battle

against cancer. With regard to the Foundation, Takis Nemitsas said that this year, for the first time, the monetary award had been reduced from 50,000 euros to 30,000 euros due to the impact of the economic crisis on the Foundation. At the same time, however, he expressed the certainty that with the gradual improvement in our economy, the efforts of the Foundation will be successful. The Foundation will then be able to continue with the presentation of its annual awards in the long run. Finally, Mr. Nemitsas announced that the next annual award of the Takis and Louki Nemitsas Foundation in 2015 - the ceremony of which will once again be at the Presidential Palace - will be dedicated to the Arts, and in particular to painting.

The Foundation

The Takis and Louki Nemitsas Foundation was established in Cyprus, and registered as a Philanthropic Foundation on 25 September 2009. The foundation is a Charitable Organisation and a non-profit institution.

The Foundation presents the Nemitsas Prizes in accordance with the Foundation’s Memorandum and Articles of Association and Regulations.

The Foundation’s Board of Directors operates without remuneration, and selflessly. The Board of Directors manages the Foundation and administers the property which was

donated to the Foundation by its founders.

The Academic Council, the Secretary and Coordinator of the Foundation operate in the same manner, as do all other committees that may be established.

The Foundation is self-supported and relies on its own funds and financial resources, bestowed by its Founders.

Of course, like every other Foundation, considerable contributions or legacies from organizations, companies and individuals are always welcome and accepted with great appreciation and respect.