

Press Release

Freiburg
March 31, 2011
No. 09/11
Page 1

Prof. Dr. Joachim Luther – Mastermind of Photovoltaics

Former Director of Fraunhofer ISE Celebrated 70th Birthday

Over the past decades, Prof. Dr. Joachim Luther's commitment to the field of solar energy has been nothing less than impressive. In 1993 he took over as Director of the Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems ISE in Freiburg upon the retirement of Institute's founder Prof. Dr. Adolf Goetzberger. With innovative strength and dedication, Luther directed Fraunhofer ISE, the largest solar energy research institute in Europe today, for the duration of twelve and a half years. He led the Institute during a decisive phase in its history. Under his leadership, the number of employees at Fraunhofer ISE doubled, reaching 450 employees in 2006. On 31 March 2011, Prof. Dr. Joachim Luther celebrated his 70th birthday.

Under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Joachim Luther, two milestones, in particular, stand out in the Institute's history. Through his efforts, the Institute got its own building, which was financed from an equal percentage of federal and state funds. The total construction costs were 80 million Deutsche mark (DM). In 2001 the staff at Fraunhofer ISE moved into its new building. A second important milestone was the realization of a PV evaluation line for the solar cell production. This was made possible through the support of 14 million euro from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU). The so-called "Photovoltaic Technology Evaluation Center PV-TEC" was inaugurated in March 2006. The Center provides manufacturers of silicon wafers, solar cells and production systems the possibility to test and develop new products and new processing steps.

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Page 2

During his directorship at Fraunhofer ISE, Prof. Luther simultaneously held a professorship at the Albert Ludwigs University Freiburg and was further active in building up new technologies for solar energy conversion at the Freiburg Material Research Center (FMF). As he transferred his directorship in 2006 to his successor Prof. Dr. Eicke R. Weber, by no means did he go into retirement. He built up the Solar Energy Research Institute of Singapore (SERIS), becoming CEO in 2008. Today SERIS has a staff of 125 and successfully carries out industry-related research with a concentration in photovoltaics and energy-efficient building. Prof. Luther maintains his connections to Fraunhofer ISE as a consultant.

Also within the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, the largest German organization for applied research, Prof. Luther performed a central function as a member on the Senate and the European Advisory Board. He also served as chairman on the Scientific-Technical Advisory Board. He recognized the significance of the subject "Energy" for the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft and initiated the Fraunhofer Energy Alliance, becoming the Alliance's first speaker. "With his innovative power, Joachim Luther consequently directed solar energy technology - the technology of the future - towards market development. As a result, Fraunhofer know-how can meet the meanwhile booming demand for solar technologies in a wide range of areas," spoke the Fraunhofer President Prof. Hans-Jörg Bullinger at Luther's official farewell in 2006.

Prof. Dr. Joachim Luther was and still is active on numerous supervisory boards. For a period of four years, he served as a member of the German Advisory Council on Global Change (WGBU). Since three years he participates on the Expert Commission on Research and Innovation that puts together annual reports for the federal government. His achievements have been distinguished with many prizes and honors.

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No. 09/11
Page 3

In 2005 he received the European Becquerel Prize, one of the highest honors in the field of solar technology, as well as the Special Service Award of the International Solar Energy Society. For his contribution to the research and market entry of solar energy systems, the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU) bestowed Prof. Luther with the Environment Prize 2005.

Joachim Luther was born on 31 March 1941 in Hanover, Germany. After completing his doctoral work in experimental physics in Hanover, he worked in the field of atomic physics and laser spectroscopy. In 1974 he became professor for experimental physics at the newly founded university in Oldenburg. There he began his scientific research on the fundamental physics of renewable energies. At that time he focused on the theory of renewable energy systems and the energy meteorology. Parallel to his professorship in Oldenburg, Luther took over as director of the Lower Saxony Institute for Solar Energy Research GmbH, which now has become the Institute for Solar Energy Research Hameln (ISFH). In 1993 he moved to Freiburg.

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