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PRESS RELEASE

**Space Exploration and Humanity's Relationship with the Universe at the Center of
Three Talks at the Aristotle Innovation Forum**

Thessaloniki, 15/5/2026

Focusing on space exploration, humanity's relationship with the Universe, and the need for a holistic approach to science, culture, and planetary protection, the Aristotle Innovation Forum will host three talks on Wednesday, 20 May 2026, from 16:00 to 17:30, at Pavilion 15 of the Thessaloniki International Fair.

Specifically, the following talks will take place:

Wednesday, 20 May 2026

16:00 – 16:30 | “Humanity’s Epoch of Space: What We Learned After Nearly 70 Years of Exploration”

Dr. Stamatios Krimigis, Emeritus Head of the Space Exploration Sector at the Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory (APL) and full member of the Academy of Athens in the Chair of Space Science and Applications, will open the series. Dr. Krimigis served as President of the Academy of Athens in 2024 and has worked as principal investigator and collaborator with NASA and ESA on instruments flown on 21 space missions to all the planets, including the Low Energy Charged Particle Experiment aboard Voyager 1 and 2. He was one of the principal investigators of the Cassini/Huygens mission to Saturn and a co-investigator on the Galileo, Ulysses, ACE, MESSENGER, New Horizons, JUICE, and Solar Probe Plus missions. Among other distinctions, he has received NASA’s Exceptional Scientific Achievement Medal (1981, 1986, and 2014), the COSPAR Space Science Award (2002), the Gold Cross of the Order of the Phoenix (1997), the gold medal of the Council of European Aerospace Societies, the Jean Dominique Cassini Medal of the European Geosciences Union, and more than 40 group awards for space missions.

In his talk, Mr. Krimigis will review nearly seven decades of space exploration, from the launch of Sputnik on 4 October 1957 to the latest discoveries of the Hubble and

James Webb space telescopes. He will also focus on the most significant discoveries within the solar system, on phenomena such as neutron stars and black holes, and on evidence of galaxies that appeared 300 million years after the Big Bang, challenging fundamental theories. Finally, he will discuss the possibility of biological activity in other stellar systems.

16:30 – 17:00 | “Delos Mission”

The next presentation will feature Alexandra Mitsotaki, co-founder and Executive President of the World Human Forum, a global citizens’ initiative symbolically based in Delphi that launches international actions from emblematic locations such as Delos, Aristotle’s Lyceum, and Elefsina. Ms. Mitsotaki is a lawyer with postgraduate studies from Paris V University, founder of the Action Finance Initiative and the “Convergences Greece Forum,” and a member of the High Level Roundtable of the European Commission’s New European Bauhaus.

The talk will present the Alpha Mission – DELOS, an initiative that seeks to create a dialogue between mythology, art, and technology for the regeneration of the planet. According to mythology, Delos was the birthplace of Apollo and Artemis and a cosmopolitan center of the ancient Mediterranean. In the modern era, Delos becomes a symbol of a dual reminder: while humanity searches the stars through NASA’s Artemis mission, healing the planet must remain a priority, and “wings also need roots.” The mission proposes bringing together ancient wisdom and modern science, as well as fostering the coexistence of the humanities, art, spirituality, and technology in addressing the climate crisis.

17:00 – 17:30 | “Thinking Outside the Sphere: Human Exploration of Space”

Professor **Dr. Bonnie J. Dunbar**, former NASA astronaut and engineer, and one of the distinguished figures of American space exploration, will conclude the series. She studied materials engineering at the University of Washington and earned a doctorate in mechanical/biomedical engineering from the University of Houston. In 1980, NASA selected her as an astronaut, and she completed five space shuttle missions, participating in the first docking of a shuttle with the Russian space station Mir, as well as in the final crew exchange mission. She also trained for thirteen months at Russia’s Star City as a backup long-duration crew member for Mir. Throughout her career, she logged more than 50 days in space. After leaving NASA in 2005, she served as President and CEO of Seattle’s Museum of Flight and later led the STEM Center at the University of Houston. Since 2016, she has served as Professor of Aerospace Engineering at Texas A&M University, Director of the Aerospace Human Systems Laboratory (AHSL), and Director of the Anthony Wood Artificial Gravity Laboratory. Among other distinctions, she is a member of the US National Academy of Engineering, a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society, and an inductee into the Astronaut Hall of Fame.

Starting with the Greek myths of Daedalus, Pegasus, Hermes, and Nike, as well as Leonardo da Vinci’s designs, Dr. Dunbar will trace the history of human space exploration: from the Wright brothers’ first flight in 1903, to astronaut launches into low Earth orbit, moonwalks, the Salyut and Skylab space stations, the International Space Station, and the 135 missions of the Space Shuttle program. She will place

particular emphasis on the Artemis II mission, which, on 1 April 2026, once again orbited the Moon with four astronauts aboard the Orion capsule, and she will present the vision of a future human space exploration program involving many nations through the Artemis Accords.

The Aristotle Innovation Forum—one of the most dynamic innovation forums in Southeastern Europe—is organized by the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki from 17 to 23 May 2026.

The AIF takes place under the auspices of His Excellency the President of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Konstantinos An. Tasoulas. The Forum is supported by the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports, the Municipality of Thessaloniki, and the Region of Central Macedonia, while the Thessaloniki International Fair serves as strategic partner. Major sponsors include PPC and Piraeus Bank.

The event will take place in English and is open to the public.

More information: <https://aristotleforum.auth.gr/>

We kindly request that this event be published, broadcast, and covered by the media.