The Fundamental and Applied Research for Animals & Health Center is pleased to invite you to the conference of Professor Albert Osterhaus (DVM, PhD)

Human viruses emerging from the animal world

18th March, 2016 at 4.30 pm
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
University of Liège
Prof. Albert Osterhaus is one of the world’s leading virologists. After qualifying as a veterinarian, Albert Osterhaus moved into research and graduated from Utrecht University (NL) in 1978 with a PhD in virology. His first major breakthrough came in 1998 when he identified a new morbillivirus that caused a mass die-off of seals in Northwestern Europe. In 1997, his group discovered that a Hong Kong flu strain that had killed a three-years-old boy belonged to an avian influenza strain called H5N1. He was also the first scientist to show that H5N1 can be transferred into humans. In 2000, he and his team identified Influenza B virus, a type of virus that normally infects only humans – in seals off the coast of the Netherlands. In 2001, his group identified human metapneumovirus, which causes a spectrum of respiratory illnesses ranging from mild upper respiratory tract infections to severe bronchiolitis and pneumonia. In April 2003, at the height of the panic over SARS (Severe Acquired Respiratory Syndrome) in Hong Kong, he again showed his skill at moving fast to tackle a serious problem. Within three weeks he had proved that the disease was caused by a newly discovered coronavirus that resides in civet cats, other carnivorous animals or bats. Very recently, he discovered a novel coronavirus that causes a severe lower respiratory tract infection in humans of the Middle East region since 2012. His team showed that this virus, named Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS)-CoV, is phylogenetically related to bat CoVs and that other animal species like dromedary camels may potentially act as intermediate hosts by spreading the virus to humans. He just developed a vaccine that reduces virus excretion from camels and therefore contributes to human protection. Altogether, Prof. Osterhaus is particularly interested in viruses that cross species barriers, are highly pathogenic and which cause disease globally – viruses such as HIV, SARS and MERS CoV and influenza viruses. He is a pioneer of the One Health thematic.