

NITheCS Colloquium

Monday, 22 August 2022, 16h00 – 17h00 SAST

PANEL DISCUSSION

for the International Year of Basic Science for Sustainable Development:
‘Strengthening the presence and the visibility of women’

PANELLISTS



Prof Sarah Blyth
(UCT)



Dr Mary-Jane
Bopape (SAEON)



Prof Himla Soodyall
(ASSAf)



Prof Özlem Tastan
Bishop (RU)

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Join us online afterwards to meet the speakers: www.kumospace.com/nithecs_social

BIOGRAPHIES

Prof Sarah Blyth (UCT)

Sarah Blyth is an associate professor and deputy head of department of the Department of Astronomy at the University of Cape Town (UCT). She did her BSc (Physics and Astrophysics) and BSc Hons (Theoretical Physics) at UCT. After Honours she made a brief foray of a few years into the world of strategy consulting before returning to academia to do her Masters and PhD in experimental high energy nuclear physics through UCT. During her PhD she spent 2 years at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, California, USA, performing research on data from the STAR experiment at the Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider (RHIC). After her PhD, she switched fields to astronomy and has since been working in the field of galaxy evolution, particularly probed through radio observations of neutral hydrogen gas. Prof Blyth has previously held the positions of co-chair of the SKA Science Working Group for HI Galaxy Science and co-director of the National Astrophysics and Space Science Programme at the UCT node. She is currently the chair of the SARAO Users Committee and co-PI of the deep neutral hydrogen survey, LADUMA, on the MeerKAT radio telescope.

Dr Mary-Jane Bopape (SAEON)

Mary-Jane Bopape is MD of the SA Environmental Observation Network (SAEON). Dr Bopape has a C2 NRF rating. She holds a PhD degree in meteorology from the University of Pretoria, and also worked as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Reading. She worked at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and South African Weather Service (SAWS) where she focused on weather and climate studies. She co-supervises postgraduate students at the Universities of Venda, Witwatersrand, Pretoria and North West. She is one of 21 2019 Climate Research for Development (CR4D) fellowship grantees and a 2021 AIMS Women Fellow in Climate Change Science. The President of South Africa recognised her as a pathfinder in 2019. She is a co-recipient of the 2008 World Meteorological Organization (WMO) award for young researchers, and was listed as one of the most influential Africans of 2021 by *New African* magazine. She also served as co-President of the South African Society for Atmospheric Sciences (SASAS) during the 2018-2020 term.

Prof Himla Soodyall

Prof Soodyall has done ground-breaking genetic research into the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa. Her studies have identified some of the oldest DNA found in living people today. She was awarded the National Order of Mapungubwe: Bronze by President Mbeki in 2005 for her contribution to science. In the same year, she was appointed as sub-Saharan African principal investigator on the Genographic Project. In 2012, she received the Gabriel Ward Lasker Prize for the best paper published in *Human Biology*. In 2017, she was rated as one of the top 10 most visible scientists in South Africa in a study by the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST) at Stellenbosch University. An ASSAf Member since 2003, she was elected to the ASSAf Council in 2011, and appointed General Secretary in 2014. She is a profiled ambassador for science, with experience in research and knowledge of governance and public administration, as well as engagement at all levels.

Prof Özlem Tastan Bishop

Özlem is full Professor in structural bioinformatics at Rhodes University (RU), and distinguished adjunct Professor at Saveetha University, India. She received her BSc degree in Physics from Boğaziçi University, Turkey. Then she moved to the Department of Molecular Biology and Genetics for her MSc degree. She obtained her PhD from Max-Planck Institute for Molecular Genetics and Free University, Germany, in 2003. During her PhD, Özlem became interested in structural biology, and during her postdoctoral positions gained experience in structural bioinformatics and structural biology. In 2009, Özlem took up an academic position at RU and established the Research Unit in Bioinformatics (RUBi) in 2013. She has graduated 21 PhD and over 35 MSc students since then. She received the Vice Chancellor's Distinguished Senior Research award for 2020 and the SA Society for Bioinformatics (SASBi) Silver Award in 2022. She serves on the editorial board for *Frontiers* and is an advisory board member of F1000 Research Bioinformatics Gateway. Her research interest is structural bioinformatics and its applications to drug design and development. Her recent interest is in the allosteric mechanisms of proteins and understanding the effects of nonsynonymous single nucleotide variations on protein structure and function. She has published over 85 research articles.