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Press Release

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COAF & Starmus Sign MoU to Bring International Science & Art Festival to COAF SMART Center in Lori, Armenia

YEREVAN — On July 11th, COAF Managing Director Korioun Khatchadourian and Starmus Founding Director Prof. Garik Israelian signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at COAF Headquarters in Yerevan. The main purpose of this MoU is to host a STARMUS Day at the COAF SMART Center in Lori Province on September 10th, in order to expand the reach of the 6th Starmus science and art festival, to be held in Yerevan, Armenia, to the countryside of Lori.

Starmus is an international festival founded in 2011 by Spanish-Armenian astrophysicist Garik Israelian and the legendary guitarist of Queen Brian May. Over the years, the annual festival has become a platform that unites world-renowned scientists and artists—among which the most prestigious Stephen Hawking—to inspire new generations of youth to explore the world of science. The sixth edition of Starmus, titled “STARMUS VI: 50 Years On Mars,” will be held in Yerevan, Armenia, from September 5-10, 2022.

“The decision to bring Starmus to the COAF SMART Center in Lori is a global message that Starmus is not just in one place; Starmus is everywhere. Therefore, if there is an opportunity to bring the mission of Starmus to the villages of Armenia, then we should do it. And this is what we are doing now; we are bringing Starmus to Lori,” states Garik Israelian.

The MoU between COAF and Starmus highlights the shared commitment of the two parties to stimulate rural children’s interest in, and knowledge of, science and culture. COAF will host a “STARMUS Day at SMART,” inviting local and international guests to a wide offering of musical performances, panel discussions, stargazing, a planetarium, and an agricultural fair. The event will also feature a compelling line-up of artists, scientists, and Nobel laureates.

The “STARMUS Day at SMART” is powered by Starmus and organized within the “Lori, Your Next Destination” project, implemented jointly by the German Development Cooperation (GIZ) and COAF.

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About COAF

The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that employs community-led approaches aimed at improving the quality of life in rural Armenia, with a particular focus on children and youth. COAF's target development areas are education, healthcare, social and economic development. COAF launched its programs in 2004, starting in one village and expanding to 64 villages in Armavir, Aragatsotn, Lori, Gegharkunik, Shirak, and Tavush regions, impacting more than 107,000 beneficiaries.

Since 2015, COAF has developed and started implementing the SMART Initiative. COAF SMART is designed to advance a generation across the rural world through education that will benefit individuals, societies, and the environment. As an exemplary model of development, COAF SMART will be replicated in other regions and communities throughout Armenia. The first COAF SMART Center was inaugurated on May 27, 2018, near the village of Debet, Lori Region.

About Starmus

STARMUS is an international festival associated with the names of Steven Hawking, Brian May, Alexei Leonov and other world-renowned artists, scientists and musicians. It was launched in 2011 in Tenerife (Canary Islands, Spain) and later was also organized in Norway and Switzerland.

STARMUS is the only festival in the world connecting the brilliant minds and Nobel Prize laureates from science, education, technologies, as well as renowned musicians and artists on the same stage to collaborate and to enhance science communication, to popularize it through interdisciplinary cooperation.

The most prestigious the Stephen Hawking Science Medal awarding ceremony is also one of the key events of the Festival. Named after the greatest scientist of the 20th and early 21st centuries, Stephen Hawking, and sponsored by Starmus, it is an ambitious award which recognizes the merit of popular science on an international level.