**PRESS RELEASE (10.30GMT December 31st 2021)**

**Professor Chandra Wickramasinghe, pioneer of the theory that life originated in space, has been awarded an MBE in tomorrow’s UK New Year’s Honours list for his contributions to Science, Astronomy and Astrobiology.**

Sri Lankan-born Professor Chandra Wickramasinghe, who has been an Honorary Professor at the University of Buckingham since 2011, is a world-renowned astrophysicist and a pioneer of astrobiology. In 1992 he was conferred the national Sri Lankan titular honour of *Vidya Jyothi*.

Chandra Wickramasinghe was a Professor at Cardiff University from 1973 to 2010, and continues to live with his family in Cardiff. He has a steady output of research journal publications as well as books, actively collaborating with scientists around the world. He is currently an Honorary Professor both at Ruhuna University in Sri Lanka as well as at the National Institute of Fundamental Studies in Sri Lanka.

In the 1970’s, together with the late Sir Fred Hoyle, Chandra Wickramasinghe first proposed the theory of cometary panspermia - the theory that comets carry the seeds of life (bacteria and viruses) and that life is distributed throughout the Universe. Life on Earth began with the introduction of bacteria from comets 4200 million years ago and its subsequent evolution was spurred on with the continuing arrival of new microbiota from space. This theory which was considered controversial in the beginning is now moving fast into the mainstream of science. Discoveries in astronomy, geology and biology continue to provide evidence in support this theory.

Chandra Wickramasinghe was a former Fellow of Jesus College Cambridge and a Founder Member of the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge (1963-1973).

He has published over 350 peer-reviewed papers in scientific journals and over 30 books.