



GLOBAL
CENTRE FOR
PLURALISM CENTRE
MONDIAL DU
PLURALISME

**Building Opening, May 16th, 2017
Secretary General's Welcome**

Delivered by John McNee

Your Excellency, Your Highness, Madame la ministre, Excellencies, friends of the Global Centre for Pluralism. My name is John McNee and it is my honour to serve as the Secretary General of the Global Centre for Pluralism. I wish you all a very warm welcome on behalf of His Highness the Aga Khan and the Board of Directors.

Je vous souhaite une très chaleureuse bienvenue à l'ouverture officielle du siège social international du Centre mondial du pluralisme. Il nous fait grand plaisir de vous accueillir en si grand nombre aujourd'hui.

At the Global Centre's first public event, on March 30th, we were honoured to have Elder Evelyn Commanda of the Algonquin Nation, bless this building and the Centre with a smudging ceremony. Today, the Algonquin drummers of Ottawa River Singers add their voices of welcome and the heartbeat of the drums.

We are coming together in Ottawa, on this traditional territory of the Algonquin Nations, to celebrate the rebirth of 330 Sussex Drive—this impressive heritage building—as the international headquarters of the Global Centre for Pluralism.

Sited at the juncture of three rivers—the Ottawa, the Rideau and the Gatineau—the land we stand on today remains an historic meeting ground of peoples—not only for the Algonquin peoples and other First Nations, but also for the many millions of individuals and families who have come to Canada, both before and since Confederation, as immigrants and refugees.

A belief in the country's dualism—French and British—defined the creation of modern Canada 150 years ago. Today, Canadians claim roots in almost every region of the world. But it is not our differences that define us. Canadians are defined by what we share: a commitment to inclusive citizenship through practices of recognition and belonging.

Tous n'ont pas cette chance. Même si presque toutes les sociétés du monde sont diversifiées d'une manière ou d'une autre, rares sont les pays qui perçoivent leur diversité comme un véritable atout. La compétition et la peur entraînent la discorde au sein des peuples.

S'inspirant de l'expérience canadienne du pluralisme, le Centre cherche à aider les sociétés diversifiées et divisées à reconnaître et à valoriser les différences humaines comme moyen de parvenir à une paix durable.

Le Centre mondial entame des programmes de recherche et d'éducation pour identifier les fondements de la réussite du pluralisme.

This handsomely restored heritage building is a global destination for dialogue for people from every quarter seeking to effect lasting change.

Today, we express deep thanks to the Centre's two founding partners: His Highness the Aga Khan, whose vision and inspiration led to the creation of the Centre, and the Government of Canada, which has invested in the institution as an equal partner. In addition to creating a new global institution to advance pluralism, this unique partnership has made possible the revitalization by His Highness of this historic building.

We are delighted to welcome His Excellency the Governor General of Canada and to count him among the Centre's most ardent champions. His pursuit of excellence and innovation for Canadians is matched only by his commitment to the "diplomacy of knowledge"—that is, the

belief that knowledge-to-a-purpose has the power to change the world. This belief shapes the work of the Centre as well.

I now welcome to the Ottawa River Singers to the stage.