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Global Centre for Pluralism Announces the 2019 Global Pluralism Award Winners

Deborah Ahenkorah (Ghana), the Center for Social Integrity (Myanmar) and 'Learning History That Is Not Yet History' (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia) recognized as outstanding leaders promoting inclusion worldwide

Ottawa, Canada – October 15, 2019 – Today, the [Global Centre for Pluralism](#) announced the three winners of the 2019 [Global Pluralism Award](#): **Deborah Ahenkorah** – a young Ghanaian social entrepreneur and book publisher bringing African children's stories to life; the **Center for Social Integrity** - an organization giving youth from conflict-affected regions in Myanmar the skills and voice to be leaders for change amidst the many overlapping conflicts ongoing in the country; and '**Learning History that is not yet History**' - a network of history educators and specialists in the Balkans pioneering a new approach to teaching the controversial history of conflict.

Meredith Preston McGhie, Secretary General of the Global Centre for Pluralism, said, "The Centre is honoured to be supporting the work of this year's award winners. Their creative initiatives offer hope that negative trends toward exclusion and division can be reversed. The impact of their work is proof that we can build more richly diverse, peaceful and inclusive societies. These are examples we can all learn from."

Joe Clark, former Prime Minister of Canada and Chair of the Award Jury, said, "The jury was inspired by the vital work of the award winners and the hundreds of impressive submissions received. They are all deeply committed to equipping the next generation of leaders with the knowledge and empathy to respond to the biggest challenges to pluralism today and in the future."

The Global Pluralism Award celebrates pluralism in action. As a result of their sustained achievements to promote respect across differences, the Award winners are helping to build more inclusive societies, in which human diversity is valued and thrives.

Award winner, **Deborah Ahenkorah** said, "I feel incredibly blessed to receive this award and after a decade of work championing the importance of African literature for children, this honour highlights how much closer we are to the goal of placing African children's literature on a deserving global pedestal. I continue to look forward to that day

when you can walk into a bookstore anywhere in the world and find incredible African stories available for all."

Aung Kyaw Moe, Executive Director of the award winner, Center for Social Integrity, said, "This award recognizes that change can come from within, and that what started out as a small-scale local initiative, can become a strong and meaningful movement. It is a great achievement to be able to depict Rohingya people advocating for tolerance and pluralism hand-in-hand with other ethnic and religious peoples. I hope that one day, diversity in Myanmar will not only be accepted but celebrated."

Bojana Dujkovic, representative of the award winner, the 'Learning History that is not yet History' team said, "It is very significant to our team to be receiving international recognition for work we have been developing with minimal support for over 16 years. Dealing with the sensitive history of the 1990s Yugoslav wars in our classrooms is very difficult for teachers. We have personal connections to this topic and many, including this team, have buried the topic for decades. It is now the moment to face the past responsibly and to teach about the 1990s conflicts, in order to build a future of mutual understanding, peace and reconciliation."

This year, the Global Centre for Pluralism received over 500 applications spanning 74 countries for the 2019 Global Pluralism Awards—more than double the submissions to the inaugural awards in 2017. All nominees undergo a rigorous review and jury selection process.

The Global Centre for Pluralism, founded by His Highness the Aga Khan and the Government of Canada, will recognize the three winners and seven honourable mentions at an award ceremony on November 20, 2019 in Ottawa, Canada. The three winners will each be granted \$CAN50,000 and in-kind support to advance their work in promoting pluralism.

Past winners include conflict mediator Alice Nderitu (Kenya), victims' rights advocate Leyner Palacios Asprilla (Colombia) and human rights lawyer Daniel Webb (Australia).

About the Global Centre for Pluralism

Founded in Ottawa by His Highness the Aga Khan in partnership with the Government of Canada, the Global Centre for Pluralism is an independent, charitable organization. Inspired by Canada's experience as a diverse and inclusive country, the Centre was created to advance positive responses to the challenge of living peacefully and productively together in diverse societies.

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About the 2019 Global Pluralism Award Winners

Deborah Ahenkorah (Ghana) is a social entrepreneur and children's book publisher who co-founded Golden Baobab to empower African writers and illustrators to tell African children's stories. She advocates for more representative children's literature, helping readers access accurate portrayals of Africa produced by Africans. Golden Baobab offers the world's only prize celebrating African writers and illustrators. Ahenkorah also created African Bureau Stories, a children's publishing house.

*"With an inspiring entrepreneurial spirit, Deborah Ahenkorah creates opportunities for African children to access high quality books recounting stories they connect to. In a region where publishing is difficult and costly, Deborah is raising the bar for the entire industry and promoting more inclusive representation in children's literature," said **Joe Clark**, former Prime Minister of Canada and Chair of the Award Jury.*

The Center for Social Integrity (Myanmar) is an organization developing a non-discriminatory and inclusive society in Myanmar where pluralism is valued. Founded in 2016, the Center's vision is of a new, modern, secular national Myanmar identity founded on social cohesion, non-violence, non-partisanship and neutrality. The Centre works with youth affected by conflict, providing them with training on conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding, cultivating a generation of leaders with pluralistic mindsets.

*"By fostering inclusion and peacebuilding in Myanmar, the Center for Social Integrity is responding to a pressing need. Despite facing repressive and volatile conditions, CSI is creating meaningful social change by leveraging the power and energy of youth," said **Joe Clark**, former Prime Minister of Canada and Chair of the Award Jury.*

The 'Learning History that is not yet History' team (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia) are historians and educators who have been working for over 16 years to develop a responsible way of teaching the history of conflict in the former Yugoslavia. Recognizing that teachers often feel ill-equipped to teach these sensitive and controversial topics, the network created an online database of free resources and provides training for teachers. They represent the only regional effort to provide a non-biased approach to learning and teaching about the recent wars.

“Teachers often go unnoticed and unrewarded, yet their work is crucial to building societies where diversity is valued. Sometimes risking their reputations and their jobs, this network gives the next generation an empathetic perspective of very divisive history to forge a peaceful future. Their work is internationally relevant as it is countering a worrying global trend: the manipulation of facts to divide societies,” said **Joe Clark**, former Prime Minister of Canada and Chair of the Award Jury.

About the 2019 Global Pluralism Award Honourable Mentions

Adyan Foundation (Lebanon) promotes cultural and religious diversity through grassroots initiatives in education, media, public policy and intercultural exchange.

“Adyan’s projects have successfully engaged thousands of citizens, bringing together youth, families and volunteers, to break down cultural and religious barriers and open up a conversation around shared citizenship and belonging. Despite religious tension in the region, Adyan is forging an inspiring vision for inclusive communities and spiritual solidarity across Lebanon and the Middle East,” said **Joe Clark**, former Prime Minister of Canada and Chair of the Global Pluralism Award Jury.

The Afghanistan National Institute of Music (Afghanistan) uses the power of music to transform lives, promote peace and restore music to Afghan society.

“The Afghanistan National Institute of Music is sharing a critical message of reconciliation, unity and reconstruction. Its achievements demonstrate how music contributes to pluralism – promoting peaceful, inter-ethnic community building, as it encourages students from diverse backgrounds to collaborate in literal harmony,” said **Joe Clark**, former Prime Minister of Canada and Chair of the Global Pluralism Award Jury.

Artemisszió Foundation (Hungary) advances the social inclusion of Hungary’s most disadvantaged populations, including youth from underprivileged backgrounds, Roma women, migrants and refugees, through intercultural education and mentoring.

“After years of funding cuts from the government and attacks by state-controlled media, Artemisszió is one of the last remaining organizations that is explicitly promoting pluralism in Hungary. This committed team has created a network of welcoming Hungarians resisting the xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment in the country,” said **Joe Clark**, former Prime Minister of Canada and Chair of the Global Pluralism Award Jury.

onBoard Canada, a program of **Ryerson University's Chang School of Continuing Education**, supports more inclusive and diverse leadership on Canada's not-for-profit and public sector boards with governance training and board matching programs.

*"Canada is a great example of a pluralistic country and yet, we still struggle to get it right. onBoard Canada has helped change the way leadership looks in this country with an approach that should serve as a model to other countries struggling with representation and access to equal opportunities," said **Joe Clark**, former Prime Minister of Canada and Chair of the Global Pluralism Award Jury.*

Rupantar (Bangladesh), the largest awareness and social mobilization organization in Bangladesh, works for democracy and just governance through mass participation.

*"The jury was impressed by Rupantar's creative approach of using cultural performances to address sensitive social issues. Rupantar is truly working at the grassroots – mobilizing the most vulnerable in Bangladesh, including women and youth – to help build a vibrant democracy," said **Joe Clark**, former Prime Minister of Canada and Chair of the Global Pluralism Award Jury.*

SINGA (France), a citizen movement, supports refugees and migrants in 19 European cities to create meaningful relationships and professional networks in their host countries.

*"In today's media cycle, bad news about migration often eclipses positive stories. The SINGA community offers a much more optimistic outlook. SINGA's programs have opened up avenues for connection and empathy and are actively challenging misinformation and xenophobia around asylum," said **Joe Clark**, former Prime Minister of Canada and Chair of the Global Pluralism Award Jury.*

Soliya (USA) uses virtual exchange to bring cross-cultural experiences to youth around the world, preparing the next generation to engage constructively across differences and lead with empathy.

"Soliya is at the forefront of its field – harnessing technology as a bridge across differences to connect and engage young people. It is a young success story, already increasing empathy and understanding among its participants, and helping a new generation of leaders set foot into the world with a direct personal experience of the values of pluralism, and a commitment and capacity to confront its biggest challenges,"

said **Joe Clark**, former Prime Minister of Canada and Chair of the Global Pluralism Award Jury.