



GLOBAL
PLURALISM
AWARD

PRIX
MONDIAL DU
PLURALISME



A PROGRAM OF /
UN PROGRAMME DU :
GLOBAL
CENTRE FOR
PLURALISM

WITH THE SUPPORT OF /
AVEC LE SOUTIEN DE :


Princess Zahra Aga Khan

Opening Remarks, Global Pluralism Award Ceremony November 14, 2023

Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great pleasure to welcome you, on behalf of His Highness the Aga Khan and the entire Board of the Global Centre for Pluralism, to the 2023 Global Pluralism Award Ceremony.

Merci à toutes et à tous de vous joindre à nous ce soir. Depuis sa création, la cérémonie de remise du Prix mondial du pluralisme est une occasion importante de mettre en avant le courage et l'engagement déployés dans le monde pour faire avancer le pluralisme.

Ces initiatives sont inestimables à bien des égards, mais surtout, ces histoires contribuent à inspirer d'autres personnes à relever le défi d'aborder les différences au sein de leurs propres communautés, secteurs et sociétés de façon positive.

Meredith spoke about the Global Centre for Pluralism being founded as a joint partnership between His Highness the Aga Khan and the Government of Canada based on a shared vision about the value of pluralism for societies worldwide.

From the early discussions with the Government of Canada about founding such a centre, to the signing of the Founding Agreement in 2006, to the opening of the Centre's headquarters on Sussex Drive in 2017, Canada has demonstrated its commitment to pluralism and for this we are deeply grateful.

When the headquarters were opened, His Highness said, "In an ever-shrinking, ever more diverse world, a genuine sense of pluralism is the indispensable foundation for human peace and progress."

He went on to say that, "Genuine pluralism understands that diversity does not weaken a society, it strengthens it."

A society made stronger by the very diversity that defines it – that is a value that Canada has embraced both at home and in the world, while acknowledging that this is not easy and that there is much work to be done.

This principle may feel far off in our troubled global times, even more so when the divisions in society appear so vast. However, this is a message that the world needs to hear.

While pluralism is at the heart of the Centre's vision and mission, it can be a difficult concept to fully grasp. The Right Honourable Joe Clark, the first Chair of the Award jury, said that it is sometimes easier to demonstrate pluralism than to define it.

The exceptional laureates that we have celebrated over the years – now 40 recipients from 30 countries – demonstrate, very concretely, what is possible when we start seeing diversity as an asset, even in some of the most challenging contexts.

I am delighted that their deserving work is being acknowledged and celebrated this evening. On behalf of the Board, please accept our congratulations!

I am also very appreciative to the independent jury for having brought the laureates' work to the fore. Through the course of the Awards, the Board has insisted on a rigorous and independent selection process.

We are grateful to the distinguished jurors, drawn from various parts of the world and from different professional and personal backgrounds. I congratulate the jury's Chair, Dr. Marwan Muasher, Bishop Precious Omuku, The Honourable Ratna Omidvar, Ms. Reeta Roy and Ms. Yásnaya Aguilar Gil.

The result is this exemplary and varied group, reminding us that there is no blueprint for pluralism. Rather, pluralism is an ideal that expresses itself in a multitude of locally rooted ways. Nonetheless, the laureates share a dedication to the difficult and creative work of imagining the way differences of all kinds can be a source of collective strength when they are respected and embraced.

I invite you to sit back and enjoy this evening with us – to feel energized by the stories of the laureates and to reflect on the ways we can all support pluralism in our own communities and societies.