



GLOBAL  
PLURALISM  
AWARD

PRIX  
MONDIAL DU  
PLURALISME



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

CENTRE  
MONDIAL DU  
PLURALISME

WITH THE SUPPORT OF /  
AVEC LE SOUTIEN DE :



**Meredith Preston McGhie**  
**Opening Remarks, Global Pluralism Award Ceremony**  
**November 14, 2023**

Thank you, Merci et Chi Miigwetch, Elder Commanda, for such a powerful blessing.

To begin the evening, your words set the stage so beautifully for tonight's ceremony in reminding us the power of love, and the power of compassion and empathy, which so exemplify the work of the exceptional awardees that we are going to be recognizing tonight.

This is my third time as Secretary General addressing a ceremony of the Global Pluralism Award. The last one was virtual. I was sat at my parents' backyard in North Vancouver delivering my speech to a camera. And the time before that, I was less than a month into the job.

**Dans les quatre dernières années, j'ai eu le privilège d'échanger avec des personnes, des organisations et des gouvernements du monde entier sur le pouvoir transformative du pluralisme.**

But at the same time, so much has changed in the last four years. We see pluralism challenged in all of our societies and communities around the world.

I joined the Global Centre for Pluralism because I believe so deeply in the vision that was set forth by the founders His Highness the Aga Khan and the Government of Canada – a vision that when diversity is seen as a strength, rather than a threat, societies and their people thrive.

And we see evidence of this, every day, we see it working.

We see how a positive response to diversity leads to greater peace, justice and prosperity.

While our belief in the transformative power of pluralism does not waiver, we recognise that it is incredibly difficult – and it feels even more difficult in these challenging times.

We live in a global moment marked by violent conflict and division, by marginalization and inequality, by mistrust and disinformation – we've lost trust in our institutions, and we've lost trust in one another.

In such moments, the challenges can feel insurmountable, pluralism can feel too aspirational. But I can assure you, it is the only aspiration that matters.

I listened last week to **Maria Ressa speak at the Paris Peace Forum**. She called for us, as we stand in the rubble of the world that was, to build the world that we want to live in.

And so, while the challenges feel great, in this moment, **striving towards pluralism in every society simply cannot be optional**. It is *essential* to our collective success.

It is necessary for us to **build the future** that we want that is peaceful, just and equitable.

It is a **different journey in each society**, but we see, over and over again, real transformative change in different field of practice in different contexts around the world. We see it happening.

We see it in the incredible leadership of the laureates that we are recognizing tonight.

**I share their powerful stories** ever where I go around the world and the **stories resonate and inspire action in others**.

Their achievements are proof that even in the most difficult spaces, taking action to advance respect for diversity, to build spaces for dialogue is not only possible, but is the responsibility of all of us.

**Laureates challenge their own communities** to think beyond singular notions of identity, to think about how we can engage with “the other” and collectively overcome division.

This year’s **10 recipients** were selected by an independent, international jury from over **200** submissions from over **60** countries around the world.

They are strengthening democracy with unbiased civic education in **Brazil** and building empathy across extreme divides from film-making. They are supporting **LGBTIQ+ people of faith** to advocate for an end to violence and persecution.

They are committed to **building peace and social cohesion** in some of the most difficult spaces in the world, in Cameroon, Lebanon and Palestine.

They are changing the way their societies understand and address issues, from anger and aggression in **Belgium**, to non-traditional relationships in **India**.

They are providing essential services, from language interpretation for **Indigenous persons in Mexico** in order to equally access justice systems. They are building technology solutions to help **peacebuilders** ensure that diverse voices are heard in peacebuilding processes.

Some of these initiatives are led by an exceptional new generation of **youth** that is passionate about their work; and many of them have been at this for decades working tirelessly and also passionately.

**Le Prix est à son quatrième cycle, et les lauréats passés et présents constituent les solutions créatives pour créer les sociétés plus pacifiques et plus inclusives, dans lesquelles la diversité est respectée et valorisée.**

The Award laureates' work exemplifies the kind of **leadership** we need right now, in this moment, in all of our societies. They speak to what Elder Commanda was speaking here before: empathy, humanity, passion and love.

**There is much to be learned from them.** And the Centre is excited to be learning from them and working with them in the coming year to help them expand their reach to new partners and deepen their impact.

But first, I want to make a few **words of sincere appreciation** to those who help make this award possible.

A very special thanks to **TD Bank Group** and **President and CEO of TD Securities Riaz Ahmed** and his wife **Nimet Ahmed** for their incredibly generous support to the Award over the **next 10 years**. We are very grateful for TD's belief in the Award's vision and its commitment to our sustainability and success.

Finally, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to our distinguished Jury Chair, **Dr. Marwan Muasher**, for his leadership in the jury deliberations, and to our **international jury** for the hours of thoughtful discussion and deliberations that have led us here, with these ten exceptional recipients.

It is now my great pleasure to **welcome Princess Zahra Aga Khan** to the stage to deliver remarks on behalf of His Highness the Aga Khan and the Board of Directors of the Global Centre for Pluralism.