

## Speech by HRH Prince Constantijn at the 2017 Prince Claus Awards

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*(Please check against delivery)*

We hear a lot about a crisis of trust and the erosion of authority. Universal doubt has replaced universal truths. Anyone's reality is as good, as the other's. When all is fake, then all is true. Or is it?

If the universality of human rights is challenged globally;

If establishing liberal democracy and open societies is no longer an objective;

When the global multilateral governance structures and organisations are waning; then what holds us together?

Where do we find common ground for collaboration and co-habitation?

What brings us here today?

In all the talk of doom and gloom, fake news and media hypes, polarization and populism, threats to our judiciary and representative democracy, we sometimes forget that there actually are values we all seem to relate to. Things like uncompromising loyalty, love, endurance, resilience, suffering, generosity, compassion.

*[ For example: Migration suddenly became debatable at the recent EU-Africa summit when images emerged of people being auctioned like slaves in Libya].* When numbers become faces; where statistics turn into stories: we ourselves are forced to feel, listen, see and think...again. In acknowledging this humanity, we are drawn together.

And you: You are among amazing people tonight, though you may not even know it. This audience is a treasure trove of passionate people with the most amazing experiences.

Like PCF partner, Syrian exile, Samer Al-Kadri of the Pages Bookstore Café in Istanbul who couldn't return to work and his family in Turkey after attending the awards last year. Instead of falling in despair he started a Pages Bookstore here in Amsterdam. Quickly establishing a lively cultural meeting point, some support from the Fund, but his strongest resource: his resilience, generosity and true and optimistic belief in the goodness of man.

Or this year's laureate Khadija Al Salami from Yemen who was abused as a child, married off at 11 yrs of age, disowned and cast out by her family when she left her husband. But she fought back against social stigma and family rejection. She pursued an education, sustained herself and became an award-winning film director. She is a role model for young Yemeni women, encouraging them to develop their talents. She asks no pity, but commands our respect for all she has achieved and the impact she is making.

Or Francis Kéré, now an award-winning architect. From Gando in Burkina Faso, where there was no school until he decided to build one. He grabbed the opportunities to develop his talents in Ouagadougou and Berlin and now he helps his people to develop theirs.

All of the Laureates we are honouring today have their own impressive stories of working against odds and obstacles, using cultural tools to bring positive change to their societies.

The point I try to make is, that there is a deeper humanity in these stories, reflecting a certain universality. Something we can all relate to: Good people who develop their talents; that stand up for what they believe; who will not rest till they achieve their goals and do GOOD. We feel their suffering, we are inspired by their brilliance. No cynicism is strong enough to deny us that.

Therefore we need to take more time to sit down and listen, eat and drink together and share cultures. Only with tangible contact and deep dialogue will we start to understand and inspire each other. Only then new forms of trust can build among us.

This is truly a time where anyone can make a global impact. That is why PCF connects the big issues with the stories and endeavours of people. Celebrating real people with their failings, struggles, breakthrough successes, making a difference world-wide.

And what bigger challenge to address than climate change, the environment and the struggle for survival? The topic is so big and diverse that the jury decided to award not one but TWO main prizes.

Vincent Carelli and Ma Jun are two cultural practitioners working in different continents, with different approaches, on different aspects of the same major problem. Both addressing aspects of environmental degradation and achieving incredible impact. One by raising awareness of the scope of the damage to the environment and the other by empowering local people who suffer the consequences to raise their voices and sound the alarm to the broader public.

Vincent and Jun are honoured here today also to show that local heroes keep battling on despite global challenges to the Paris Climate Accord. This award is a plea from the community of good people worldwide who are working to save the planet to keep on fighting. It is an honour to welcome you in our midst. It is a privilege to reward you and your work with the PCF principal award.