His Highness the Aga Khan receives Champion for Global Change Award

Underscores importance of partnerships between government, private enterprise, and civil society for effective progress

New York City, New York, 18 October 2017 - Upon receiving the Champion for Global Change award at the United Nations Foundation’s Global Leadership Dinner in New York City, His Highness the Aga Khan suggested that the question was not whether government action or private enterprise was more effective, but rather how these sectors can become effective partners in the quest for development. “The partnerships that will most dramatically change the world are those in which all three components - private, public and civil society institutions can connect in all-embracing common efforts,” he said.

The Aga Khan told the audience that the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the United Nations Foundation were aligned in their emphasis on creating and sustaining enabling environments, working in “countries of opportunity,” and on creating public-private partnerships, which have been key factors in AKDN’s work in many fields and in many countries.

Presenting the award to the Aga Khan, former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan congratulated the Aga Khan on his Diamond Jubilee, marking 60 years of his service as Imam (spiritual leader) of the Shi’á Ismaili Muslim Community, and founder of the Aga Khan Development Network, and for his tireless dedication to improving the lives of people everywhere. “As a global leader he continuously demonstrates that what unites us is far greater than what divides us,” he said.

Noting that the most important aspect of the Aga Khan’s work was pluralism, Kofi Annan said, “the world, especially in these difficult times, needs people of vision and goodwill like the Aga Khan. He is a living example that there is no inevitable contradiction between religion and democracy, that pluralism and diversity are possible, and that interaction of cultures enriches and empowers humanity.”

In recognition of the role individuals, organizations, and corporations play in supporting the work of the United Nations to advance global peace and prosperity, United Nations Foundation (UNF) and United Nations Association - USA also presented awards to Mars Inc., for its commitment to the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals; Ellie Goulding, for her commitment to action on climate change; United Nations Mine Action Service, for mitigating threats from mines and explosives; and to Senator Bob Corker, for his involvement in attempting to end modern-day slavery.
"Instead of sitting on the sidelines in a world of suffering, they have acted with courage and commitment to help solve problems alongside the UN," commented Kathy Calvin, President and CEO of UNF on the contributions of the five honorees, adding: "Tonight, we recognize these incredible leaders and the lesson they’ve taught us: to reach a better world, we shouldn’t turn our backs on each other; we should extend our hands."

“With the wisdom, the tolerance, and the compassion of His Highness the Aga Khan, I think we can win the battle for a better world,” said United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, at the ceremony.

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The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) was founded by His Highness the Aga Khan, 49th Hereditary Imam (spiritual leader) of the Ismaili Muslims. It is a group of private, non-denominational development agencies working to empower communities and individuals to improve living conditions and opportunities, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South Asia, and the Middle East. The Network’s nine development agencies focus on economic and social development, and cultural initiatives, for all citizens, regardless of gender, origin or religion. The AKDN’s underlying ethic is compassion for the vulnerable in society. Its annual budget for philanthropic activity is in excess of US $900 million.

For additional information on the Aga Khan Development Network, please visit www.akdn.org