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Press release

For immediate release

University of Calgary bestows highest academic honour on His Highness the Aga Khan

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Calgary, Canada, 17 October 2018 – The University of Calgary, one of Canada’s most esteemed universities, today conferred His Highness the Aga Khan with a Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, in recognition of his exceptional contributions to humanity.

The conferral of an honorary Doctor of Laws is the highest academic award given by the University and reserved for the most select individuals who have made extraordinary achievements in community, national, and international services. University President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Elizabeth Cannon paid tribute to His Highness’ achievements at a special conferral ceremony that included University supporters and various notable leaders from across the country.

“In the great chain of thinkers, those who encapsulate the poetry and vision of human reason, His Highness has fostered social justice as a dream that all yearn to achieve. He stands as a living legend, a model for every conscience,” remarked President Cannon reading the citation.

She further described His Highness as “a living manifestation of how we must work together to support human advancement, at home and around the world”. Against this backdrop, President Cannon noted that the award of this academic distinction recognises “the friendship, partnership, and the spiritual example of His Highness the Aga Khan, the Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims”. She went on to say that the example set by His Highness is an aspirational ideal for us all to follow and is characterised by word and deed conveying the same message, one that is “so fiercely necessary at this time, in this current climate of division and disrespect”.

President Cannon also expressed admiration for the scope and impact of His Highness’ work through the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) describing the Network as “His Highness’ tangible way of bringing together faith and action, actively seeking solutions to hunger, poverty, illiteracy and ill-health”. Cannon also distinguished His Highness for his ability to confidently and effectively address the challenges of our changing planet. Testifying to His Highness’ visionary leadership, President Cannon remarked:

“... His Highness apprehends the intricacies of a sometimes turbulent era with engaging grace. In that spirit, the entire world looks to his generous and constructive éminence with respect and admiration. In these disquieting times, His Highness has undertaken to grapple with challenges. His work seeks to better material conditions for those less fortunate, but also to deploy strategic resources at a time when sudden changes and unexpected developments

discourage progress. His concern for health and education goes far beyond mere aspiration. He is a meaningful force in international development, reshaping the horizon of hope and ethically pragmatic progress.”

His Highness’ contributions towards human progress and his quest for enabling a peaceful co-existence were encapsulated in the citation’s final statements emphatically delivered by President Cannon, who noted: “His Highness has been instrumental in forging universal ideals and aspirations, promoting pluralism, compassion, cultural amplitude, and human dignity. His measure is that of a significant figure in international development, one who has literally reshaped its landscape.”

Earlier in the week, His Highness, together with Honourable Premier Rachel Notley, inaugurated the Aga Khan Garden, Alberta, a cultural asset given by the Aga Khan to the University of Alberta for the benefit of all Canadians. As he continues his visit to Western Canada, His Highness will also receive honorary Doctors of Laws degrees from the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University in an unprecedented and historic joint conferral ceremony in Vancouver on 19 October 2018.

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