

Welcome Note for Global Citizen Award Gala Dinner
Dr. Christian H. Kälin
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The Global Citizen Award is one of the most important events in our annual calendar, and I am very happy that you are all here to share this evening with us.

Global citizenship means different things for different people. For me its core values and ethos are exemplified and embodied by the person receiving tonight's award. As we honor this individual over the course of the evening, we have an opportunity to reflect on what global citizenship means and commit ourselves on some level to living in alignment with this principle.

Being a global citizen entails a larger radius of compassion and empathy — one that goes beyond the immediate family, tribe, village, or even nation. Global citizens care about the fate of people in different parts of the world. Their concern for others is not a matter of superficial markers of identity, excluding those who do not look or speak like them, or do not have the luck to be born with automatic privileges based on their citizenship. Instead, they recognize that the suffering of one is relevant to all, and that responsibility should be shared. They think globally, they feel at home globally, and — most crucially — they act globally.

This is the only appropriate model for 21st century citizenship. The issues that we collectively face today transcend the family, the tribe, the village, and the nation. They involve our shared planet and its limited resources, as well as the diseases and inequality that reach beyond national borders – and are in many ways made worse by national borders.

Indeed, the UN defines 'global issues' as precisely those that are impossible for a single government to tackle on its own. Global issues require a unified, collaborative effort, and global citizens understand this. They create partnerships between public and private institutions, international organizations, and civil society.

Our libraries are filled with theories about how to tackle the world's problems. Theory has its place, especially when it is shaping policy. But the toughest of these battles are won by those on the frontlines, working directly with displaced, dispossessed, and vulnerable communities.

It is for this reason that the individuals whom we recognize as global citizens each year with our award are those working at the grassroots level, on initiatives that directly change the lives of people.

It is a myth that these humanitarians are immune to despair. In reality, they come face to face with despair every day, but they fight it with hope and determination. It is precisely this refusal to give up that defines their courage. And in driving the change that everyone around them thought was impossible, they tip the scales in favor of progress, justice, dignity, time and time again. If we see victories in the spheres of poverty, health, education, gender equality, and social justice, we actually owe it to the unrelenting efforts of such individuals.

Henley & Partners exists with global citizenship as a founding principle. Our mission as a firm is to connect individuals seeking personal freedom and security with countries seeking economic freedom and security, in a mutually beneficial exchange. But our work is not complete if we do not acknowledge and support those excluded from the benefits of globalization – excluded mostly through the very discriminatory nature of citizenship itself. This is why we support also those who are addressing this imbalance, like the humanitarian heroes who receive our award. And this is what tonight is all about.

Thank you so much.