

Pierre Schori's welcome speech to Patricia Gualinga,
recipient of the Olof Palme Prize 30th January 2022.

Welcome everyone, and a particularly warm welcome to Patricia Gualinga, currently in her home country, more than ten thousand kilometres from Stockholm, but very much present in spirit and on screen.

The pandemic prevents you from attending in person today, but we look forward to welcoming you as our guest in June this year. It will then be 50 years since Sweden hosted the first high-level meeting about the environment under the auspices of the UN.

Allow me to begin with the introduction to one of the most quoted poems in Swedish poetry.

It goes like this:

*On Nova Zembla's peaks, in vales of parched Ceylon
The man of hapless lot is as my friend and brother;
Hearing his fate, I pay my debt of tears anon,
O Nature, unto thee, thou universal mother.*

Today, 239 years later, we might paraphrase Lidner with the words:

From the scorching, deforested Amazon, to the icy-cold but melting Arctic, wherever on the globe our fellow humans find themselves, we share a common destiny and an equal responsibility for the future.

Your roots are in one of these areas, Patricia - the primeval

forest community of Sarayaku in Ecuador, so too are those of your fellow campaigner Sara-Elvira Kuhmunen. She originates from the reindeer-herding community of Sirges, in the expansive landscape of Sápmi, the homeland of the Sami people. She is also with us here today.

We meet against the backdrop of a situation that causes deep anxiety and insecurity and which demands cohesion and cooperation across national borders. Yet instead of reason and the quest for peace, environmental destruction and militarism dominate.

We live in a world of nuclear giants and ethical dwarves. The three nuclear giants also dominate the conventional arms race, which continues to progress at an unparalleled rate. The USA accounts for 35 per cent of the world's military expenditure, China 13 per cent and Russia 3.8 per cent.

At the same time we battle the legacy of war in the Balkans, genocide in Rwanda and Srebrenica, the terror of the 11th of September which led in turn to American interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, war in Syria, Jihadism and the mass forced migration of 2015. And in the wake of these we have learned through bitter experience that racism, anti-semitism and Islamophobia are also deadly viruses.

Democracy itself seems to stand on shaky foundations. Mexico's Carlos Fuentes wrote: "Democracy cannot grow on empty stomachs, empty senses and empty stores.

Democracy is not a motive but a result.”

The ten richest people in the world have doubled their wealth during the pandemic, while 99 per cent of the world’s population are worse off, say Oxfam in a new report. It is the world’s poor who bear the brunt of climate change, misery and who are forced to flee persecution, hunger and a lack of resources.

We must ask ourselves: How much poverty can democracy tolerate, how much underdevelopment can peace withstand?

All of these threats are connected. They are all interwoven into our lives, economically and politically, ecologically and 'pandemically'.

Our global common fate was propounded here in Stockholm fifty years ago. The conference attendees gathered under the motto *Only One Earth*. This event fired the starting gun for the era of global environmental political cooperation.

Olof Palme’s participation attracted great attention and his words remain relevant today. As the Swedish Prime Minister opened the conference on the 5th of June, 7000 demonstrators outside protested the Nixon regime’s spraying of Vietnamese forests with poison. In the plenary session the next day, Palme called the bombings “an outrage, sometimes described as ecocide, which requires

urgent international attention.”

The reaction this provoked was striking.

Yet liberal daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* defended Palme, asking: “Is it so completely unfathomable to them that it might seem incredibly mendacious to allow a conference about the global environment to pass without officially acknowledging that the most deliberate and technically refined environmental murder in history is progressing at the same time within the framework of the Vietnam War?”

Palme concluded his speech by saying: “Our future is common. We must share it together. We must shape it together.”

Ten years later in 1982, in the same vein, Palme launched the concept of “common security” in the so-called Palme Commission’s report *Common Security – a Blueprint for Survival*. On the commission were former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Georgi Arbatov, close confidant of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, and fourteen other politicians from East, West, North and South.

The commission laid out a well-argued route away from the stranglehold that the nuclear balance of terror had on the world; its succinct conclusion found support with the leaders of the two military superpowers, Mikhail

Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan:

“There will be no winner in a nuclear war. The use of nuclear weapons would result in devastation and suffering of a magnitude which would render meaningless any notion of victory. The size of existing nuclear stockpiles and the near certainty of devastating retaliation make it futile and dangerous to consider nuclear war an instrument of national policy.”

Today, thirty-five years later, WHO General Secretary Ghebreyesus speaks in the same terms: “...in our interdependent world no one is safe until everyone is safe.”

In other words: common security applies militarily and politically, ecologically and in terms of health.

You know as well as anyone Patricia; along with your colleagues in *Mujeres Amazónicas* you have realised this and dedicated your lives to the struggle for justice for all and the survival of the planet. In your struggle you have encountered strong resistance both nationally and internationally.

Your international opponents include some with Swedish connections.

On the 11th of November 2021, the Swedish Prosecution Authority announced that Lundin Energy’s majority shareholder, Ian Lundin, was to be prosecuted along with Director Alex Schneiter for complicity in grave war crimes

in Sudan between 1999 and 2003.

According to the prosecutor conducting preliminary inquiries, Henrik Attorps, the inquiry showed that the military and allied militias dropped bombs from cargo planes, shot civilians from military helicopters, abducted and plundered civilian populations, burned entire villages and harvests, leaving people with nothing to live on.

Attorps added: “War crimes are one of the most serious crimes that Sweden has an international obligation to investigate and prosecute.”

It emerged that the company is also active in Ecuador, according to a report in *Omvärlden* magazine in May 2017 under the headline *Lundin's gold rush plunders the Amazon*.

Our leading expert on public international law and nuclear weapons, former Foreign Minister and 2003's Palme Prize winner, liberal Hans Blix, formulates our existential dilemma thus: “...nuclear arsenals are sufficient to commit a quick suicide, whilst we have also added the risk of a slow suicide through global warming.”

Against this background, Sweden should continue Olof Palme's struggle to criminalise environmental murder/ecocide and the ultimate weapon of environmental murder, nuclear bombs! Where there's a will, there's a way!

“Today, systematic atrocities against nature are conducted on a global scale, we are in a planetary emergency,” Pella

Thiel, Chair of End Ecocide Sweden has underlined.

In recent years, this insight has also reached big politics. In July 2020, French president Emmanuel Macron joined in with the following declaration:

“When it comes to ecocide, I believe I was the first leader to use the term when the Amazon was burning last year. So I share the ambition to ensure that this term, ecocide, is established in international law, so that leaders are accountable before the International Criminal Court.”

He also wished to integrate the principle into French law. *The Guardian* agreed with the president, but pointed out that Olof Palme was first.

A number of states have since expressed an interest in the issue, including Belgium, Finland and several island nations.

We trust that the Swedish government are working on the issue ahead of the summit here in June.

So the decades-long struggle against huge environmental destruction and devastating weapons of genocide are woven together. from the 1972 UN conference, via the Palme Commission's *Common Security* to the imminent *Stockholm+50* in June.

And so it is, Patricia, that your struggle for the rights of the Amazon and its people belongs together with Olof Palme's lifelong engagement against environmental murder and doomsday weapons and for peace and freedom for all peoples.

The Olof Palme Prize 2021 is awarded to Patricia Gualinga, a leader of the Kichwa People of Sarayaku in the Ecuadorian Amazon. She is recognised for her courageous leadership in campaigning for the rights of indigenous people and of nature, as well as her struggle to ensure the survival of the Amazon, the world's largest rainforest.

In an age when biodiversity is threatened and climate change is demanding huge transformations, indigenous people are particularly vulnerable. Through her relationship with the land and the natural world, Patricia Gualinga shows us a path to sustainable societies, and shows us that we must all learn to live with nature, not in competition with it. Indigenous peoples' struggle for survival is, therefore, the struggle for the survival of humankind. As the world faces ecological catastrophe it is vital that the voices of Patricia Gualinga and her fellow activists are heard.

