

PRESS RELEASE

International Prize of Peace of Westphalia awarded to Alexis Tsipras and Zoran Zaev

"We have proven that Europe can be a catalyst for peace and stability"

Münster/Westphalia, August 28, 2021 - After a delay of almost a year due to the pandemic, the 2020 International Peace of Westphalia Prize was awarded in Münster on Saturday. Alexis Tsipras, former Greek Prime Minister, and Zoran Zaev, current Prime Minister of North Macedonia, received the award for their agreement in the Macedonian name dispute. They share the 100,000 euro prize with the climate ambassadors from "Plant-for-the-Planet", who received the youth prize. The Peace Prize is awarded every two years by the Economic Society for Westphalia and Lippe (WWL) - in memory of the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1648. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the award ceremony took place for the first time not in Münster's historic town hall, but - due to the more favorable spatial conditions - in the atrium of the State Museum of Art and Culture on Domplatz.

Tsipras and Zaev accepted the award from Latvian President Egils Levits. In 2018, the three Baltic states were honored with the Peace Prize, laudator Levits now symbolically passed on the bronze sculptures of the Westphalian horse. With the Prespa Agreement, which sealed the settlement of the long-standing Macedonian name dispute in 2018, the two prizewinners had "not only signed a legal document, but also brought a truly European solution to a problem that was disruptive for their two states and the entire region", said the Latvian President in his speech. Levits emphasized the parallels between the Peace of Westphalia and the agreement on the Macedonian name dispute: "What we have in common is the spirit and will to overcome long-standing differences and to find creative power together to create something new and better." This spirit of good compromise, which characterizes the Prespa Agreement, makes Tsipras and Zaev "worthy recipients of the Westphalian Peace Prize".

In their acceptance speeches, the two politicians acknowledged their friendly cooperation, for which they had unselfishly put their own political careers on the line. Zoran Zaev also pointed out parallels between the Prespa Agreement and the Treaty of Westphalia. "In fact, the first article of the Treaty of Westphalia does not really speak of peace, but of friendship between its signatories," said Zaev. "This is also what the Prespa Agreement stands for!"

The people of Greece and North Macedonia have shown "that common problems can be solved peacefully and on the basis of international law", said Alexis Tsipras.

"We have proven that Europe can be a catalyst for peace and stability."

Founder Felix Finkbeiner and young ambassador Jana Reiter accepted the Peace Prize on behalf of the organization "Plant-for-the-Planet", which actively combats climate change by planting trees. Sarna Röser, Federal Chairwoman of the Young Entrepreneurs Association, explained in her laudatory speech: "Climate protection can only be achieved together. Together with all stakeholders and not against them. Felix Finkbeiner and his initiative stand for exactly that: for active solutions instead of regulations and bans." The children and young people from Plant-for-the-Planet show how far you can go with courage and commitment. "They tackle the problem like a good entrepreneur would." Röser concluded by wishing the youth award winners: "Let your trees grow into the sky!"

In his speech at the beginning of the ceremony, the Chairman of the Economic Society for Westphalia and Lippe, Dr. Reinhard Zinkann, explained that the WWL wanted to use the award to set "a shining example of peace, reconciliation and relaxed coexistence in the international community". Peace and stable framework conditions make it possible for companies to make a contribution to social equality and prosperity. "Politics and business have a corresponding effect on people - not just here in Westphalia: We need each other - everywhere."

In a video greeting, the Minister President of North Rhine-Westphalia, Armin Laschet, reminded us that "peace is not something that can be taken for granted", but that people have to fight for it day after day. have to work for it every day. The hope for peace should never be given up - "a hope that courageous people all over the world have turned into action", said Laschet.

In his welcoming address, Münster's Lord Mayor Markus Lewe emphasized that the peace treaty of 1648 came about "through negotiations on an equal footing". "In view of the situation we find ourselves in, it is clear that elementary values such as peace, mutual respect, tolerance and justice are more important than ever," emphasized Lewe.

The International Peace of Westphalia Prize, which has been awarded since 1998, has already gone to Václav Havel, Helmut Kohl, Carla del Ponte, Kurt Masur, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, Kofi Annan, Daniel Barenboim, Helmut Schmidt, the crews of the ISS space station, Jordan's King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein and the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Together with personalities or representatives of states that have become role models for peace work in Europe and the world, young people are also always honored who act in an exemplary manner for balance and peace and who are committed to sustainability and the future of their generation. The most recent recipients of this award were Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste, the youth work of the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge e. V. (German War Graves Commission) and the Scouts.