

PRESS RELEASE

International Prize of Peace of Westphalia 2020

Laudatory speech for the Plant-for-the-planet youth award winners

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THE SPOKEN WORD APPLIES.

If you look online or open the newspaper, it jumps out at you almost every day: The climate crisis.

In large letters, we read about one horror scenario after another, each combined with massive pressure to act.

Everywhere we turn, we come across imperatives about what we must no longer do or should have done long ago. The narrative of the climate crisis is obviously and inherently negative.

But the narrative of the climate crisis is also very fear-based. That is never good. Politics based on fear or panic is always latently dangerous. Our history is full of examples.

However, we entrepreneurs deal with major challenges differently. We don't feel deterred or discouraged. Because for us, a crisis is a call to action.

To do better. To get active, get involved, develop new solutions and then implement them with determination. We are problem solvers.

We know with all our deep-seated entrepreneurial personality that passivity does not create prospects. Neither for companies, nor for our society, nor for the future of our planet.

If you are paralyzed by fear, it is easy to make mistakes. Those who panic never emerge victorious.

The climate crisis presents us with new challenges. (This is usually the case with real, major challenges.) Our predecessor generations may have already had this in mind, but it was not in any business plan 100 years ago.

The climate crisis affects and challenges our young generation in particular. What we need now is crisis competence.

We need to counter the doomsday scenarios. And that is precisely what distinguishes our award winner.

And it also distinguishes the jury and the board of trustees of the INTERNATIONAL AWARD FOR WESTERN PEACE. At a time when political discussions about the consequences of the climate crisis are coming thick and fast, they chose the right topic and the right message early on. The decision to award the Youth Prize was made at the beginning of 2020 for an idea that a young pupil had put on the agenda back in 2007 when he was just 9 years old.

It all started with the fact that this boy loved polar bears. And that he was worried about his favorite animal. Because it was an unusually warm winter in 2006/2007 - the images of melting ice floes went around the world and made it clear what global warming means. And it all started with a school presentation that a few years later, at the age of just 13, brought the young pupil before the United Nations - and set a global movement in motion.

In his research, he found an herb that is a match for the crisis.

Something that gives us shade, cools the environment, eats the dust of the city, holds the soil, stores water and lets us breathe - a true miracle weapon: trees.

To date, almost 92,000 children have been trained as ambassadors at over 1,600 children's academies in 75 countries.

You have set yourself an ambitious goal: you want to plant a trillion trees. That's 1,000 billion, a number with 12 zeros.

As we know, trees are not the solution to all problems - but they are the time joker that our planet needs right now.

Because the climate crisis can only be mastered together in a global effort. Neither emissions nor global warming are limited. The climate doesn't care whether the CO₂ is emitted in Germany or China. That's why we have to look beyond our national borders.

Anyone who thinks that we in Germany can tackle the climate crisis with national solutions alone should consider the following example: Even if we achieve zero emissions in Germany, we can only reduce a maximum of 2% of global emissions.

The climate is decided globally. Take Africa, for example. 1.4 billion people live there today, 2.4 billion in 30 years' time and they all have ONE goal: prosperity.

That's why it's right for Plant-for-the-Planet to start there and plant half of the trillion trees in Africa. Africa's desert sun would also make it possible to produce clean electricity.

Climate protection is only possible together. With society, politics, the media and the economy on board. With all players together, and not against them. Felix Finkbeiner and his initiative stand for exactly that: for active solutions instead of regulations and bans.

They show how far you can go with courage and commitment. They tackle the problem like a good entrepreneur would.

And just as importantly, they learn from their mistakes. They have accepted criticism, carefully examined what can be improved and put this into practice - this is the path to success, to make their project better and better and to convince even more people.

And they are achieving this with lots of fresh, digital ideas:

The young people have developed their own digital platform so that they can plant trees anytime and anywhere. Anyone can track their own renaturation project digitally, with the location, time, tree species and the name of the planter.

Plant-for-the-planet shows what a young boy's vision can become. Creating something new for our future with courage and ideas - like a start-up that has made it to global recognition.

In this combination of fresh ideas and commitment to a better future, I recognize much of what I am familiar with from my family business environment.

Courage instead of fear. Not allowing solutions to be dictated by people who are good at creating fear, but not at actually solving problems.

Entrepreneurs are courageous, take responsibility and are committed to greater sustainability and foresight. They are family entrepreneurs, just like Plant-for-the-Planet.

What impresses me about Felix Finkbeiner? I'm impressed that he didn't let himself get discouraged. His essentially justified concern did not turn into naked, helpless fear. On the contrary. He took action, did some research and found out what could be done. And he found a solution!

Young and courageous - as we young entrepreneurs say.

That's why I was very happy to accept this laudatory speech.

And that is why I would like to congratulate you, dear Felix, on behalf of the young entrepreneurs - who are the next generation in their family businesses.

We want to do everything we can to achieve efficient climate protection. And that is only possible with many more good ideas.

In order for us to grasp and implement them, we need the best possible framework, i.e. a mix of market economy, well-maintained

culture of innovation and, most importantly, openness to technology!

The economic miracle was realized with Ludwig Erhard after 1948. With Ludwig Erhard, we should now also achieve the climate miracle - not without him.

In both cases, this means hard work. Don't just look, wait and lament. Miracles can be achieved.

But we must remain courageous and not give up. So we should learn to believe in ourselves again.

With this in mind, I look forward to continuing our commitment side by side.

Dear Felix, dear Jana - congratulations on winning the 2020 Youth Prize of the INTERNATIONAL AWARD OF WESTERN PEACE.

Let your trees grow into the sky!