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Directorate of Communication

Ref: 219a09

Tel. +33 3 88 41 25 60

Fax +33 3 88 41 39 11

Internet: www.coe.int

e-mail: pressunit@coe.int



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Queen of Jordan Rania and Jorge Sampaio receive the North-South Prize

Lisbon, 17.03.2009 – Her Majesty Queen of Jordan Rania Al Abdullah and Jorge Sampaio, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilisations, have received the 14th Council of Europe North-South Prize during a solemn ceremony held in Lisbon on 16 March.

The Prize has been awarded every year since 1995 by the North South Centre of the Council of Europe. The winners are recognised for their deep commitment, outstanding achievements and the hope they have generated in the field of individual rights protection, the defence of pluralist democracy and North-South solidarity and partnership.

"The Council of Europe created this Prize to pay tribute to people who refuse to accept any divides between people and between peoples," said Council of Europe Deputy Secretary General Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, addressing this year's prize winners.

"The two laureates of the Prize for 2008 are known for their devoted efforts to overcome ignorance, stereotypes and misunderstandings and they are both committed to a greater respect for human dignity and social justice," she said.

Speaking at a ceremony, PACE President Lluís Maria de Puig said the two winners represented a "meeting of civilisations" which had marked the Iberian Peninsula in the past. "The memory of humanity has been marked by this crossroads of civilisations, where the three monotheist religions were able to show that intelligence and reason can overcome destructive passions and prejudice," he said.

Extending his warmest congratulations to this year's prize-winners, Claude Frey, the Chairman of the North-South Centre's Executive Council, said the prize was a tribute and a sign of the accession of the principle, of the reason and of the heart of their actions which call upon shared responsibility and which reminds us that humanity is accountable to humanity."

In her acceptance speech Queen Rania said that the world could learn from unprecedented willingness to seek out and understand other cultures of the great Portuguese discoverers almost 500 years after Magellan's first expedition.

"While it seems we are closer together than ever before, in many respects we have never been further apart. Physically, we might be living side by side, but mentally, emotionally, there's a gulf between us, she said.

"That's why we need to make a greater effort to learn more about each other, explore beyond our cultural borders. And this is where the efforts of institutions like the North/South Centre, the Council of Europe, and the Alliance of Civilizations come into focus. Because people need a nudge to get them talking and role models from which to learn," she added.

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.

Accepting the Prize, Jorge Sampaio spoke about “two struggles for human dignity” he has been currently involved in, namely the fight against the growing scourge of tuberculosis and promotion of the dialogue between peoples of different cultures and faiths. He also underlined that the respond to the global problems in today’s world should come through a greater co-operation between states, structured on the open, democratic principles of responsible multilateralism.

Closing the ceremony, Portuguese President Anibal Cavaco Silva said: "We still count on the experience and dedication of the winners of the Prize. They are essential in building of a fairer world and the examples like those that they provide are essential if we are to believe that a better world can truly be achieved."

The award ceremony, which has been held this year for the fourteenth time, was attended by over 250 members of the diplomatic community, members of the Portuguese Parliament and representatives of Council of Europe institutions and other international organisations.

[Information about this year's winners of the North-South Centre Prize](#)

All [winners](#) of the Prize since 1995

[File “Council of Europe North-South Prize”](#)

Contacts :

Ulvi Akhundlu, Press Officer, Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 26 38 ; Mob:+33(0)6 61 14 83 16;
Ulvi.Akhundlu@coe.int