

Royal patron for the Rolex Awards 2008

The five winners of the 13th Rolex Awards for Enterprise will be announced on 18 November at an official ceremony in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.). H.R.H. Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, a leading member of several key international, humanitarian and sporting organisations who is married to H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the U.A.E. and Ruler of Dubai, has agreed to be patron of the event.

In an interview granted to *The Rolex Awards Journal*, Princess Haya said that she was very pleased to be patron of an awards scheme supporting those who show "true leadership to the betterment of mankind".



H.R.H. Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein

The daughter of His Late Majesty King Hussein of Jordan and Queen Alia, Princess Haya was raised in Jordan and educated in England, where she graduated with an honours degree in politics, philosophy and economics from St Hilda's College, Oxford.

She has won deep respect worldwide for achievements across a wide spectrum of activities, from sports to humanitarianism. The first Arab woman to compete in equestrian events at the Olympics – at the 2000 Games in Sydney – Princess Haya was elected as a member of the International Olympic Committee in 2007. She is also the first Arab to be chosen, in 2006, as president of the International Equestrian Federation.

She is even better known for her commitment to humanitarian work, with a special focus on promoting health, education, youth and sports through close collaboration with various regional and global charities and organisations.

In September 2007, the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, named Princess Haya as a U.N. Messenger of Peace, one of the highest honours bestowed by the U.N. The following month, the former U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, invited the princess to become a founder member of the board of the Global Humanitarian Forum, which he heads in Geneva. She has also served, from 2005 to 2007, as Goodwill Ambassador for the U.N. World Food Program; and she is chairperson of the International Humanitarian City in Dubai, a global humanitarian hub set up to facilitate aid and development efforts.

"Princess Haya has an impressive list of achievements to her name and is an enthusiastic member of key international organisations committed to improving life for all mankind," said Rebecca Irvin, head of the Rolex Awards Secretariat in Geneva. "To add to that, Princess Haya is a key figure in enlightened efforts to advance Dubai as a city for the 21st century. All of this makes her the ideal patron of the 13th Rolex Awards."



One of the largest property developments in the world, the Jumeirah Beach Residence, with its 40 towers, exemplifies the vast and burgeoning development in Dubai.

Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein was interviewed by Rebecca Irvin, head of the Rolex Awards Secretariat.

ROLEX AWARDS: *Why did you agree to be the patron of this series of the Rolex Awards?*

H.R.H. PRINCESS HAYA BINT AL HUSSEIN: The Rolex Awards recognise enterprise, and by doing so they distinguish between leaders and thinkers. The recipients of these Awards are innovators in five different areas; they have implemented their concepts and by doing so have shown true leadership to the betterment of their fellow man. I am very pleased to be a part of an Awards scheme which recognises that quality, but I am particularly pleased to be patron of the first Rolex Awards to be hosted in the Middle East.

The Rolex Awards ceremony, which will take place in Dubai on 18 November, is a celebration of innovation and dedication to humanity. What difference do you think pioneering individuals can make for all of us?

Pioneers are the personification of difference. As a society, if we stand still, ultimately we go backwards. It is pioneers now and throughout history who have caused the seismic shifts in society and moved us forward – it is they who have created the difference.

To be accorded the title "pioneer", your concepts and ideals are deemed to be relevant to the age in which you live. It is a high accolade and marks you out as a person of vision and purpose, but with high accolades comes great responsibility. If you have relevant ideas and you are a pioneer, then it is your responsibility to deliver them.

You are a person of many achievements, making a strong personal contribution to society, to humanitarian efforts in your region and beyond, and now as a U.N. Messenger of Peace, Global Humanitarian Forum board member and chairperson of the International Humanitarian City in Dubai. You have also participated in equestrian sports at Olympic level and are a member of the International Olympic Committee. What drives you to achieve so much?

My mother, the late Queen Alia, was a great humanitarian whose work I have endeavoured to continue. She had a particular interest in initiatives which nurtured the education, culture and health of the people of my homeland, Jordan, and this was where my path began. From there the path has led me to further initiatives both in the U.A.E. and at an international level. With each step my drive to succeed has increased and my determination to eradicate the twin evils of hunger and poverty increases. They are problems for which we have solutions now and yet we lack the resolve to do so. But in short what drives me is what my father (HM the Late King Hussein) told me constantly as a child, and my husband reminds me of constantly every day: "We are here to serve our people, that is our sole duty."

The U.A.E., and Dubai in particular, was relatively little known to the wider world 20 years ago and is now seen as a centre of growth in many areas, from tourism to culture. Why has this change come about now and why is the change so rapid?

The change has come about through the vision of my husband, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed, and before him his father, the late Sheikh Rashid. Sheikh Mohammed has turned the desert city state of Dubai, roughly the size of Rhode Island, into a futuristic global hub in the span of just one generation, and managed, with a bold vision of urban planning, to raise the GDP from US\$8 billion to \$37 billion in 15 years. This opportunity has benefited not only Emiratis, but the peoples of another 180 nationalities who live in peace and harmony in Dubai.

As to why the change is so rapid, that is straightforward: His Highness Sheikh Mohammed wants to see his people benefit from his vision, as he says: "Now". He is simply not satisfied with anything less. All of us have found energy from his relentless drive towards modernity, inspiration in his creations and hope from the teamwork he forges.



During a visit to a World Food Program distribution centre in Chiradzulu, southern Malawi, Princess Haya, a U.N. Goodwill Ambassador from 2005 to 2007, meets one of the children receiving assistance. ■

Although the U.A.E. is seen as a stable country with high standards of living, the Middle East as a whole is sometimes viewed in some of the Western media as a region in violent conflict and a source of extremism. What qualities of the citizens of the region do you think should be highlighted to give a more accurate picture?

It is an indisputable fact that in the history of the world no group has had more influence than the Arab people. Our history has seen the birth of the first civilisations, the three monotheistic religions, and cultural practices that have been globalised more than any other peoples.

The role of Arabs in today's world should not be restricted or defined by religion, trade and economics alone. The role of Arabs can and should encompass science, art, literature, knowledge creation, and the advancement of humanity. We must once again find our pride and be justified in being proud of Arab achievement, in partnership with the rest of the world.

Often in life, when there is much to win, there is also so very much to lose. The stakes are high with the diversity and richness that I have mentioned, and many throughout history have pulled and pushed for a piece of the pie in our region. But we have come to a stage where we must all work together for peace and stability, and it cannot be denied by any that bloodshed and instability have destroyed lives here for centuries.

On the flip side of the coin, the media has a responsibility to impart a more accurate picture of the region – perhaps not of this region alone, but of the whole world, and make sure that as we race towards globalisation we don't forget the individual human faces that often get caught in the crossfire, and suffer most. Many, if not all of them, are not people with fundamentalist tendencies, they are people who just want to live in peace.

There have been some reports criticising the unfavourable working conditions for low-income workers in Dubai, yet the government is working to rectify these conditions. How is the government doing this?

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed reiterated the need to create favourable working conditions and provide for fair pay for foreign labour working in Dubai. Recently Sheikh Mohammed asked the Cabinet to prepare a full study on the pay and housing conditions of workers, he instructed that the study be conducted with the employers and workers alike to ensure that the rights and interests of workers and their employers are met.

We have had a very positive response in the media to the decision by Rolex to hold our next Awards ceremony in Dubai. Why do you think people are so enthusiastic about an award favouring innovation coming to the region?

Innovation is opportunity, and Dubai is the living embodiment of both innovation and opportunity, harnessed together for the people of the U.A.E. by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed and His Highness Sheikh Mohammed. The symbolic lighthouse that he has created through his groundbreaking approach has given people in the region a wider vision for a peaceful and prosperous Middle East, for all of us in the Arab World. We are traditional people with an ancient history and we have survived for these thousands of years because we are innovators and we can adapt, and I think this is why we have welcomed the Rolex Awards – because they reflect a part of our character. ■