

AWARD CEREMONY

Great Hall of Acts, “Sala dos Capelos” University of Coimbra

Welcome Address by Amílcar Falcão

Rector of the University of Coimbra

Honorable President of the World Cultural Council, Professor Sir Fraser Stoddart

Delegates of the World Cultural Council

2022 Laureates

Members of the General Council and Senate

Directors of Faculties and other Organic Units

Mayor of Coimbra City Hall

Distinguished guests, from Portugal and abroad

Dear students, ladies and gentlemen

In the name of the University of Coimbra, it is my great privilege and honor to welcome you all to the 37th World Cultural Council Award Ceremony, which, for the first time in its history, will be held in Portugal.

The World Cultural Council is an international non-profit organization founded in Mexico in 1982 by an initial group of 124 distinguished scientists, academics and university leaders from the five continents, with the mission of promoting a culture of tolerance, peace and fraternity, looking for a true understanding among all, regardless of ideology, opinion, religion, race or gender. The World Cultural Council pursues its mission by selecting, recognizing and rewarding international excellence in the fields of Science, Education and Arts. Annually, it therefore grants the “Albert Einstein” World Award of Science, the “José Vasconcelos” World Award of Education and the “Leonardo da Vinci” World Award of Arts to outstanding individuals or organizations across the globe, whose work has had a significant and positive impact on the cultural enrichment and progress of humankind.

Founded in 1290, the University of Coimbra is the oldest seat of higher education in Portugal and in Portuguese-speaking territory, as well as one of the oldest in the world. For over seven centuries, the University of Coimbra has left an indelible mark on education, science, innovation and culture at a global level. It therefore clearly and durably shares the same pillars that support the core values and the mission that distinguish the WCC.

The worldwide pandemic context did not make it possible to organize the Award Ceremony in 2020, as initially designed — a date that had a deep institutional meaning, because it was the year in which the University of Coimbra celebrated its 730th anniversary. However, by hosting the Ceremony in 2022, we are being able to take this great symbolism even further. On this date, we are celebrating the 250th anniversary of the important achievements associated with the reforms of the Marquis of Pombal, which resulted in a profound reformulation of Portuguese higher education. That is why the concept of "Create to Renew" was adopted as the common guiding theme for the Award Ceremony and for the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Pombaline Reforms.

In fact, after more than seven centuries, no organization can survive and remain dynamic if it does not have the capacity to continuously recreate itself. This is why we believe that the University of Coimbra is in itself a living example of cultural sustainability. Next year we will celebrate the tenth anniversary of the UNESCO World Heritage classification of the University of Coimbra. However, we are not just the oldest World Heritage University in a worldwide restricted group of five, but also the only one classified on account of its tangible and intangible assets. That is the reason why the University of Coimbra is highly committed with the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and was the first higher education institution in Portugal to make a public and unequivocal commitment to them.

The 2022 ceremony will be the first in WCC history where all three awards will be given simultaneously. The winner of the 2022 "Albert Einstein" World Award of Science is Professor Victoria M. Kaspi, Lorne Trottier Chair in Astrophysics and Cosmology, and Distinguished James McGill Chair at McGill University, and Director of the McGill Space Institute, Canada. She is a world leader in studies of neutron stars.

The 2022 "José Vasconcelos" World Award of Education will be granted to Professor Claudia Mitchell, Distinguished James McGill Professor in the Faculty of Education of

McGill University in Canada. The prize is awarded for her life commitment to education as an inspiring teacher and passionate advocate for youth, especially transforming lives of thousands of young people, from marginalized backgrounds.

The Architect and educator J. Meejin Yoon, the Gale and Ira Drukier Dean of the College of Architecture, Art, and Planning at Cornell University, USA, has been selected as the winner of the 2022 “Leonardo da Vinci” World Award of Arts.

The World Cultural Council will grant, as well, this year, Special Recognitions to thirteen young researchers and scholars from the University of Coimbra who have performed outstandingly in the fields of Science, Education or Arts. They have distinguished themselves in the way they transfer the World Cultural Council values to society, putting their knowledge, energies and commitment at the service of the common good of humankind.

Thanking you again for the great honor we have been given to host the 2022 Award Ceremony, I would like to conclude by expressing the wish that we may jointly promote a culture of tolerance, peace and fraternity, in a more sustainable world, as essential values commonly shared by the World Cultural Council and the University of Coimbra.