



NIWANO
PEACE FOUNDATION

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PRESS RELEASE

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Mr. Benki Piyãko to receive the Niwano Peace Prize

The Niwano Peace Foundation announces that the 43rd Niwano Peace Prize is awarded to Mr. Benki Piyãko, an Indigenous spiritual leader of the Ashaninka People in Brazil's Amazon.

He is recognized for sustained leadership in defending Indigenous land and culture and for pioneering reforestation and environmental protection over the past fifteen years.

Through founding the Yorenka Tasorensi Institute and the Indigenous Ayahuasca Conference, he has advanced education, community-based ecological restoration, and the transmission of traditional knowledge, mobilizing youth and communities for large-scale reforestation and biodiversity conservation.

Guided by Indigenous spirituality and committed to intercultural dialogue, Mr. Benki Piyãko has become an influential voice for environmental stewardship nationally and internationally. In recognition of these achievements, the Niwano Peace Prize Committee selected him as the recipient.

The presentation ceremony will take place in Tokyo, Japan, on Tuesday, May 12, 2026. In addition to an award certificate, Mr. Benki Piyãko will receive a trophy and twenty million yen.

To avoid undue emphasis on any particular religion or region, every year the Peace Foundation solicits nominations from people of recognized intellectual and religious stature around the world. In the nomination process, some hundreds of designated nominators and organizations throughout the world from many religions and academics across the globe are asked to propose candidates. Nominees are rigorously screened by the Niwano Peace Prize Committee, which presently consists of nine religious leaders from diverse geographical areas, all of whom are involved in movements for peace and inter-religious cooperation.

Here are some impressions of Mr. Benki Piyãko from members of the committee responsible for selecting this year's recipient:

- "Mr Benki Piyãko serves as an exemplary figure whose service in the Amazon rainforest has been a vital source of knowledge and protection for the sustenance and peace of the global community. As an ambassador of the Ashaninka people, Piyãko has led environmental and reforestation projects in his community of Apiwtxa, inhabiting the indigenous territory of Terra Kampa do Rio Amônia in the Brazilian state of Acre, located close to the border with Peru and covered by the Amazon rainforest. Mr Benki Piyãko is a premier figure in the fight against climate change, a crisis whose peril looms over the whole world. His contribution to protecting his tribal community extends beyond just the Amazon to all people who have forgotten their connection to the earth. Mr Benki Piyãko's work is rooted in his indigenous spirituality and connection to the land. Keeping this as the center of all that he does, Piyãko has continued to serve not only his tribe but all people

around the world who receive the benefits of a healthy Amazon rainforest. Mr Benki Piyāko stands for the preservation of nature and the safeguarding of traditional wisdom, indigenous culture, and spirituality."

- "Mr Benki Piyāko is a pioneer in the sustainability and ecology movement at a critical time when the environment and physical world is in crisis. He is inspired by indigenous spirituality and focuses his work especially with young people to create a more conscious relationship with the earth which respects the earth and preserves its biodiversity. As founder of the Yorenka Tasorensi Institute, he has established reforestation projects, whilst also focusing on education and community building. Recognizing his efforts on environmental stewardship rooted in traditional wisdom, culture, and spirituality will shine a light on this work which has the potential to inspire current and future generations. "
- "Benki Pyānko stands as a vital figure in a world increasingly marked by the indiscriminate destruction of nature for economic gain and self-interest. As an Indigenous leader from the Amazon, he exemplifies the responsibility we all share in protecting our planet. His advocacy for preserving forests, rivers, and a return to simplicity inspires a renewed connection to nature and the profound interdependence between humanity and the environment. By intertwining these natural values with spirituality—a perspective deeply rooted in Indigenous traditions—he reminds us of life’s essence and the harmony essential for sustainable living. Benki’s efforts highlight the urgent need for ecological respect and the preservation of cultural wisdom, offering a benchmark for global responsibility in caring for our shared Earth."

The Niwano Peace Prize

The Niwano Peace Foundation established the Niwano Peace Prize to honor and encourage individuals and organizations that have contributed significantly to inter-religious cooperation, thereby furthering the cause of world peace, and to make their achievements known as widely as possible. The Foundation hopes in this way both to enhance inter-religious understanding and cooperation and to encourage the emergence of still more persons devoted to working for world peace.

The Prize is named in honor of the founder of this foundation, Nikkyo Niwano, also the first president of the lay Buddhist organization Rissho Kosei-kai. For Niwano, peace was not merely an absence of conflict among nations, but a dynamic harmony in the inner lives of people as well as in our communities, nations, and the world. Seeing peace as the goal of Buddhism, Niwano devoted much of the latter half of his life to promoting world peace, especially through inter-religious discussion and cooperation.

Niwano Peace Prize recipients are:

1. Archbishop Hélder P. Câmara (1983)
2. Dr. Homer A. Jack (1984)
3. Mr. Zhao Puchu (1985)
4. Dr. Philip A. Potter (1986)
5. The World Muslim Congress (1987)
6. Rev. Etai Yamada (1989)
7. Mr. Norman Cousins (1990)
8. Dr. Hildegard Goss-Mayr (1991)
9. Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne (1992)
10. Neve Shalom / Wahat al-Salam (1993)
11. Paulo Evaristo Cardinal Arns (1994)
12. Dr. M. Aram (1995)
13. Ms. Marii K. Hasegawa (1996)
14. The Corrymeela Community (1997)
15. Ven. Maha Ghosananda (1998)
16. The Community of Sant'Egidio (1999)
17. Dr. Kang Won Yong (2000)
18. Rev. Abuna Elias Chacour (2001)
19. Rev. Samuel Ruiz García (2002)
20. Dr. Priscilla Elworthy (2003)
21. The Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative (2004)
22. Dr. Hans Küng (2005)
23. Rabbis for Human Rights (2006)

24. Dharma Master Cheng Yen (2007)
25. His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal (2008)
26. Rev. Canon Gideon Baguma Byamugisha (2009)
27. Ms. Ela Ramesh Bhatt (2010)
28. Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa (2011)
29. Ms. Rosalina Tuyuc Velásquez (2012)
30. The Rt. Rev. Dr. Gunnar Stålsett (2013)
31. Ms. Dena Merriam (2014)
32. Pastor Esther Abimiku Ibanga (2015)
33. Centre for Peace Building and Reconciliation (2016)
34. Bishop Dr. Munib A. Younan (2017)
35. Adyan Foundation (2018)
36. Dr. John Paul Lederach (2019)
37. Venerable Pomnyun (2020)
38. Venerable Shih Chao-hwei (2021)
39. Father Michael Lapsley, SSM (2022)
40. Mr. Rajagopal P. V. (2023)
41. Prof. Mohammed Abu-Nimer (2024)
42. Musawah (2025)

The Niwano Peace Foundation

The Niwano Peace Foundation was chartered in 1978 with the aim of contributing to the realization of world peace and enhancing a culture of peace. The foundation promotes research and other activities based on the spirit of religious principles and serves the cause of peace in such fields as education, science, religion, and philosophy. The Foundation's assets, totaling approximately 4.7 billion yen, enable the Niwano Peace Prize as well as other activities such as grants, research projects, lectures, symposia, and international exchanges. The Niwano Peace Foundation is a government-recognized charitable organization.

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