



*the MAX VAN DER STOEL award  
2024*

*Programme*



# Contents

Invitation .....	4
Programme.....	5
Max van der Stoel.....	7
Max van der Stoel Award.....	8
Award Winners.....	8
Foreword (Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands) .....	9
Feature about the 2024 Max van der Stoel Award winner: <i>Natur og Ungdom: the power of solidarity among majority and minority youth</i> .....	11
Official justification of the International Jury of the 2024 Max van der Stoel Award .....	18
Members of the Jury of the 2024 Max van der Stoel Award .....	20
Rules of Procedure for the Max van der Stoel Award .....	24





## *The 2024 Max van der Stoel Award Ceremony*

*In 2001, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands established an award honouring the first High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE HCNM), the late Max van der Stoel.*

*The prize is sponsored by the Dutch Government and awarded biennially to a person or institution in recognition of their extraordinary and outstanding achievements aimed at improving the position of national minorities in the OSCE area.*

*This year the prize will be awarded to*

***Natur og Ungdom from Norway***

***6 November 2024***  
*Academy Hall of the Peace Palace*



Ministry of Foreign Affairs



## *Programme*

**15:30 – Registration**

**16:00 – The 2024 Max van der Stoel Award  
Ceremony**

*Music to open the ceremony*

Welcome Remarks by Ambassador Marek Szczygiel  
Director and Officer-in-Charge  
Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities

Video Address by His Excellency Ian Borg  
OSCE Chairperson-in-Office  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and  
European Affairs and Trade of Malta

Statement on behalf of the Jury  
by His Excellency Kairat Abdrakhmanov  
former OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities and  
Chair of the 2024 Max van der Stoel Award Jury

Presentation Speech by the Representative of  
the Government of the Netherlands

Short Film about the Laureate

Congratulatory Remarks by Her Excellency Ellen Svendsen  
Permanent Representative of Norway to the OSCE

Acceptance Speech on behalf of the Laureate  
Natur og Ungdom

*Music to close the ceremony*

**17:30-19:00 – Reception**



*Max van der Stoep, first OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, 1992–2001*

## *Max van der Stoel*

Max van der Stoel was appointed as the first High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE HCNM) in 1992. He served an unprecedented eight and a half years in this post. Born in 1924, Van der Stoel was a senior statesman who had a long and distinguished career. As well as being twice Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (1973–1977 and 1981–1982), he held seats in both the upper and lower houses of the Dutch Parliament. He was also a member of the European Parliament (1971–1973) and the North Atlantic Assembly (1968–1973, 1978–1981) as well as the Council of Europe Consultative Assembly and the Western European Union Assembly between 1967 and 1972. Between 1983 and 1986 he served as Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations and in 1991, he was awarded the honorary title of Minister of State by Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands for his exceptional accomplishments. The following year he was appointed by the UN Commission on Human Rights as Special Rapporteur on Iraq.

Van der Stoel became familiar with the work of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE, later OSCE) in his roles as Foreign Minister during the Helsinki consultations from 1973 to 1975, as Chairman of the Netherlands Helsinki Committee for several years and as head of the Netherlands delegation during the CSCE conferences on the human dimension in Paris, Copenhagen and Moscow. After several renewals of his mandate as OSCE HCNM, he was succeeded, in July 2001, by the Swedish diplomat, Mr. Rolf Ekéus.

In 1999 Van der Stoel was awarded the Order of the Golden Lion of Nassau; the first citizen of the Netherlands to receive the award since 1919. Several honorary doctorates have also been awarded to him, including the Cleveringa Chair at Leiden University. The Max van der Stoel Human Rights Award at the University of Tilburg is named in his honour.

## *The Max van der Stoel Award*

The Award of €50,000, named in honour of Max van der Stoel – a prominent Dutch statesman and the first to hold the position of OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities – was established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands in 2001. It is awarded biennially<sup>1</sup> to an individual or an institution in recognition of their extraordinary and outstanding achievements aimed at improving the position of national minorities in the OSCE area.



### *Award Winners*

- 2024 Natur og Ungdom, Norway
- 2022 Social Justice Center, Georgia
- 2020 Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, Ireland
- 2018 High-school students from Jajce, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 2016 The Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR), Cyprus
- 2014 Spravedlivost, Kyrgyzstan
- 2011 The Nansen Dialogue Centre Skopje, North Macedonia
- 2009 The Integration and Development Center for Information and Research, Ukraine
- 2007 The European Roma Rights Centre, Hungary
- 2005 The “Memorial” International Historical Enlightenment, Human Rights and Humanitarian Society, Russian Federation
- 2003 The Latvian Centre for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies, Latvia.

---

<sup>1</sup> The 2013 Award was postponed to 2014 to avoid overlapping with the change in HCNM.

The 2020 Award ceremony was postponed to 2021 because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on all in-person events in 2020.



# *Foreword*

## *by Caspar Veldkamp*

*Minister of Foreign Affairs  
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands*

At the heart of any stable, safe, prosperous and just society lies the principle of human rights. Armed conflict increasingly revolves around identity and belonging, while underlying tensions are often aggravated by the maltreatment or perceived marginalization of minority groups. This is true for *intrastate* as well as interstate conflict. Since the protection of minority rights and conflict prevention are inextricably linked, it is vital to foster inclusivity and respect for diversity. This is where the essential work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities comes into play.

The Max van der Stoel Award helps remind us that diversity should not only be respected but embraced as an integral part of a just society where all peoples and groups can flourish. By recognizing and celebrating individuals and groups that support the rights of minorities, the award reaffirms civil society's essential role in making human rights a lived reality for all.

The Max van der Stoel Award is named in honour of a pioneering figure in Dutch diplomacy. Max van der Stoel – politician, diplomat and activist – was born 100 years ago this year. His unwavering support for civil society during the Cold War, and his groundbreaking work as the first OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, cemented his legacy. In this role he recognized that the protection and promotion of the rights of national minorities is essential for maintaining social cohesion and preventing future conflicts. By addressing the root causes of societal tensions, particularly those based on ethnicity, Mr. Van der Stoel helped mitigate the risk of conflict escalation, fostering an environment conducive to peace. This award honours individuals, groups or institutions that have made exceptional efforts to advance the rights and well-being of minorities.

The 2024 Max van der Stoel Award is presented to the Norwegian organization Natur og Ungdom. This organization, also known as Young Friends of the Earth Norway, is dedicated to the protection of the rights of the Sámi minority, and particularly Sámi youth. By supporting this indigenous community – the oldest

culture in large areas of northern Norway – Natur og Ungdom helps safeguard the traditional Sámi culture, while raising awareness of the crucial role the Sámi play in preserving Norway’s natural environment. It is therefore my great pleasure to congratulate Natur og Ungdom on its inspiring achievements in advancing cultural preservation and environmental stewardship.



## *Natur og Ungdom: the power of solidarity among majority and minority youth*

Natur og Ungdom<sup>1</sup> from Norway was awarded the 2024 Max van der Stoep Award because it gives young people of all backgrounds a voice in environmental policy. In particular, it creates bridges between youth from different communities, gives youth a voice in environmental policy and increases the integration of society.

### **A voice for youth**

Since its founding in 1967, Natur og Ungdom (Nature and Youth) has harnessed solidarity among generations of youth from majority and minority communities to successfully address environmental challenges. Beginning in 1979, the organization began to specifically link environmentalism with protection of the rights of the Sámi. Its core mission is to empower youth to advocate for the protection of nature and the environment. Today, it has approximately 7,000 members aged 13 to 25, operating in 80 local groups. They deal with local environmental concerns, and target their human and financial resources at issues that have the potential for successful outcomes.

---

<sup>1</sup> All photos in this article are credited to © Natur og Ungdom.



Many young people are concerned about climate issues, but they do not feel that they have meaningful avenues to affect policy. Through Natur og Ungdom, the young people of Norway have an opportunity to have their opinion heard.

### **Solidarity with Sámi youth**

The Jury of the Max van der Stoel Award was impressed by how Natur og Ungdom brings youth of all backgrounds together, acting as a bridge between cultures. Its partnership with Sámi youth is particularly notable. Youth from all backgrounds – including but not limited to Sámi and Norwegian – collaborate on common challenges related to environmental protection, climate change and the impact of industrial activities on traditional Sámi areas.

Many Sámi are engaged in traditional activities, such as reindeer herding, fishing and land husbandry. This means they are often witness to the effects of climate change. Natur og Ungdom recognizes this and works with Sámi communities to highlight the disproportionate effects of climate change on indigenous populations.





Natur og Ungdom also recognizes how Sámi traditional activities are closely tied to responsible environmental stewardship. They work to incorporate Sámi knowledge into their broader environmental campaigns, amplifying Sámi voices in environmental decision-making. They empower Sámi youth to participate in environmental activism and advocate for their rights.

### **Real impact on environmental policy**

What is remarkable about Natur og Ungdom is how they blend peaceful protest, civil disobedience, awareness-raising and legal actions to achieve their ends. As a group made up mostly of children, the majority of whom have not yet had a chance to vote, they have a passionate desire to make a difference.

One of their most visible and effective campaigns has been against the windmills in the Fosen region. The Government awarded permits for six wind farms with a total of 278 windmills in traditional Sámi reindeer pastures.

When construction started in 2016, protesters objected because of its effect on a reindeer habitat of great importance to southern Sámi reindeer herders. The reindeer herders demanded that the district court stop





the construction. They said the windmills disturb the reindeer and therefore disrupt their traditional herding activities. The reindeer herders took the case to court, eventually reaching the Supreme Court, which found in their favour. However, the windmills were not dismantled.

On 23 February 2023, the 500-day anniversary of the court verdict, Natur og Ungdom and the youth wing of the Norwegian Sámi Association joined forces to protest against the lack of action. The protesters blocked the entrance of the Petroleum and Energy Ministry in Oslo, and refused to move until the Government obeyed the court ruling.

As a result of the protests, the Government issued an apology and began dialogue to find a solution. A partial settlement has now been reached, but some issues remain outstanding.

### **Building bridges to address common challenges together**

The Jury of the Max van der Stoep Award found this action to be a good example of how “Natur og Ungdom [shows] how environmental issues – such as climate change, sustainable development and the allocation of resources – can be an opportunity to unite society around effective policies that also respect fundamental human rights.”





The Jury said: “Natur og Ungdom uses these issues to build bridges between communities by incorporating Sámi youth as active members and by carrying out its environmental advocacy in co-ordination with other Sámi activists and organizations. The organization has demonstrated that environmental issues can be addressed in solidarity among majority and minority populations, fostering a sense of common purpose on a topic of crucial importance to youth in Norway.”



## *Timeline*

**1967:** Natur og Ungdom was founded on 18 November 1967 to give young people a voice in environmental advocacy.

**1970s:** Natur og Ungdom opposed the development of nuclear power in Norway. They advocated for alternative, renewable energy sources.

**1980s:** Natur og Ungdom focused on conservation and pollution, with campaigns to protect Norway's natural landscapes and address air and water pollution.



**1990s:** Natur og Ungdom started to campaign intensely against Norway's oil industry, including protesting against further oil drilling, particularly in ecologically sensitive areas.

**2000s:** As understanding of the effects of climate change increased, Natur og Ungdom focused on promoting renewable energy and reducing carbon emissions.

**2010s:** Natur og Ungdom campaigned to prevent oil drilling and oil exploration in the Arctic. They filed a lawsuit with Greenpeace against the Norwegian government for opening up the Barents Sea to oil drilling, citing Norway's obligations under the Paris Climate Agreement. This case became known as the "People vs. Arctic Oil" lawsuit. They ultimately lost the case but raised awareness of these issues.





**2020s:** Natur og Ungdom continues to be at the forefront of climate activism in Norway, including protests and lobbying for stricter climate policies. They remain active in opposing oil and gas exploration in Norway, particularly in sensitive ecological areas like Lofoten and the Arctic. In 2021, they took the “People vs. Arctic Oil” case to the European Court of Human Rights, seeking a final decision.

Natur og Ungdom continues to campaign for climate justice, focusing on renewable energy, reducing fossil fuel dependence, and protecting natural ecosystems in Norway.

# Official justification of the International Jury of the Max van der Stoel Award

## The grounds on which the 2024 Max van der Stoel Award was made to Natur og Ungdom from Norway

The Jury of the Max van der Stoel Award has decided to honour Natur og Ungdom from Norway with the 2024 Max van der Stoel Award in recognition of its efforts to give young people of all backgrounds a voice in environmental policy. Since 1967, Natur og Ungdom has harnessed solidarity among generations of youth from majority and minority communities to successfully address environmental challenges and protect minority rights.

Natur og Ungdom has a long tradition of advocating on issues at the intersection between the environment and Sámi rights. This dates back to the Alta Case in the late 1970s, which sought to protect traditional herding and fishing areas threatened by the damming of the Alta River. The organization provides an effective platform for youth aged between 13 and 25 years from all communities in Norway to participate in public affairs. It advances the interests of minorities by giving a voice to Sámi youth, empowering them in the protection of their rights and traditional culture, and raising public awareness about the important role that Sámi communities play in protecting Norway's environmental heritage.

Natur og Ungdom has been highly effective in using youth activism and legal means to bring about positive change. For instance, in 2023, Natur og Ungdom helped organize peaceful actions calling on the Government to respect a 2021 Supreme Court ruling that it had violated the international minority rights of the Sámi by granting windmill farm licenses in traditional reindeer grazing areas. Reindeer herding is an important part of indigenous Sámi culture and traditions. As a result, the Government issued an apology and initiated consultations to address the Supreme Court ruling. The Jury also notes that Natur og Ungdom takes concrete steps to ensure that their activism is peaceful and with clear objectives.

The Jury applauds Natur og Ungdom for showing how environmental issues – such as climate change, sustainable development and the allocation of resources – can be an opportunity to unite society around effective policies that

also respect fundamental human rights. Natur og Ungdom uses these issues to build bridges between communities by incorporating Sámi youth as active members and by carrying out its environmental advocacy in co-ordination with other Sámi activists and organizations. The organization has demonstrated that environmental issues can be addressed in solidarity among majority and minority populations, fostering a sense of common purpose on a topic of crucial importance to youth in Norway.

In recognition of how this youth organization builds bridges among diverse communities and advocates for Sámi interests as a means to achieve its objectives focused on environmental issues, the Jury has unanimously awarded Natur og Ungdom with the 2024 Max van der Stoel Award.



## Members of the Jury of the 2024 Max van der Stoel Award

---



### **Kairat Abdrakhmanov**

Ambassador Kairat Abdrakhmanov of Kazakhstan is the Chair of the 2024 Max van der Stoel Jury and former OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (2020-2024). He is currently Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Kairat Abdrakhmanov first joined the Kazakhstan Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1993 where he held a number of key positions, including Foreign Minister and Deputy Foreign Minister. From 2013 to 2016, he was Kazakhstan's Permanent Representative to the UN, when he led Kazakhstan's bid to become the first Central Asian State elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. He then represented his country as the Foreign Minister on the UN Security Council between 2017 and 2018. Ambassador Abdrakhmanov served as Kazakhstan's Permanent Representative to the OSCE from 2007 to 2013 and Chaired the OSCE Permanent Council in 2010 when Kazakhstan held the Chairmanship. He was instrumental in organizing the first OSCE Summit in 11 years in December 2010, during which *The Astana Commemorative Declaration: Towards a Security Community* was adopted. He also served as the Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Sweden, Denmark, Austria, and Israel and was Deputy Chief of Mission – Minister Counsellor at the Embassy of Kazakhstan to the United Kingdom.



### **Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark**

Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark is Professor of Law at Åbo Akademi University, Finland. Spiliopoulou Åkermark's work focuses on pluralism, minorities, territorial autonomy and limitations on armed force. Sia has served as director at the Åland Islands Peace Institute, as member and president of the Advisory Committee on The Framework Convention on National Minorities of the Council of Europe, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Tornedalen in Sweden, on the advisory board of many institutions and in various capacities in civil society. Her works

*Photo ©: Theresa Axén / The Åland Islands Peace Institute.*

include: *Justifications of Minority Protection in International Law* (1997); *Towards Openly Multilingual Policies and Practices Assessing Minority Language Maintenance Across Europe* (co-authored, 2016); and *Demilitarisation and International Law in Context* (co-authored 2018)

---



### **Irene Käosaar**

Irene Käosaar is Director of Narva Estonian High School. She is also a spokesperson on integration and education for the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Estonia and has been Estonia's representative to the EU Directors General for Education since 2009.

Before joining Narva Estonian High School, Irene Käosaar was Director of the Estonian Integration Foundation where she managed and co-ordinated activities stemming from the Government's Estonian Integration Plan 2021-2035. Between 2007-2017, Irene Käosaar held two consecutive positions at the Ministry of Education and Research: Head of the General Education Department (2009-2017) and Head of the Minorities Department (2007-2009). During this period, Irene Käosaar helped shape and co-ordinate the implementation of national minority education policies in Estonia. As Head of the Estonian Language Immersion Centre, Non-Estonians Integration Foundation (2004-2007), Irene Käosaar also successfully implemented the early- and late-stage language immersion programme in both schools and kindergartens. Language immersion subsequently became an inseparable part of Estonia's education system. In 2014, in recognition for her contribution to national security by promoting education in Ida-Viru County, Irene Käosaar was awarded the Gold Cross of the Estonian Academy of Security Sciences.



Photo ©: Council of Europe.

### **Petra Roter**

Dr. (Cantab.) Petra Roter is a Professor of International Relations at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, and senior researcher at the Centre of International Relations at the Faculty of Social Sciences.

She is a national director of the European Master programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (Venice) and a member of the Scientific Board of the EURAC Institute for Minority Rights. She is the President of the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and serves her second term as an independent expert in the Advisory Committee. She was a co-chair of the 2023 UN Forum on minority issues and regularly contributes to the thematic work of the HCNM.



### **Giorgi Sordia**

Dr. Sordia is a Professor at the University of Georgia (UG) and Executive Director at the Centre for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (CSEM).

Giorgi Sordia's areas of research are nationalism, ethnicity, minority governance and inter-ethnic relations. He has extensive experience in designing and implementing action-oriented projects targeting the development of civil integration and minority governance in Georgia. He has also been employed for several years as a Programme Manager at the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI). In addition to possessing a wealth of practical experience in the field of diversity management, he also has a solid academic background which includes research fellowships at the Davis Center of Harvard University; the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Fribourg, Switzerland and Ankara University. Giorgi Sordia's works are regularly published in both Georgian and international journals.



### **Lamberto Zannier**

Ambassador Lamberto Zannier is a High-Level Expert at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and has occupied this position since September 2020.

Lamberto Zannier served as the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities from July 2017 until July 2020. Previously, he was OSCE Secretary General for two consecutive three-year terms, from 1 July 2011 until 30 June 2017. Other senior positions include UN Special Representative for Kosovo and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) from 2008 to 2011, Director of the Conflict Prevention Centre of the OSCE (2002-2006), Chairperson of the negotiations on the adaptation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (1998-1999) and Head of Disarmament, Arms Control and Cooperative Security at NATO (1991-1997). Lamberto Zannier joined the Italian Foreign Ministry as a career diplomat in 1978 and also served in Rome, Abu Dhabi, Vienna and The Hague, mainly specializing in multilateral and security affairs. He has authored several publications on security, conflict prevention and crisis management issues. He holds a Law degree and an honorary degree in International and Diplomatic Sciences from the University of Trieste, Italy.

# *Rules of Procedure*

## *Max van der Stoel Award*

### **1. GENERAL**

- 1.1 The Max van der Stoel Award will be presented in recognition of extraordinary and outstanding achievements aimed at improving the position of national minorities in the OSCE area. It will be awarded to international organizations, non-governmental organizations, research institutes, government bodies or individuals with a record of excellence in this field.
- 1.2 The Award shall be presented every two years.
- 1.3 The Award shall consist of a cash sum of €50,000 and a certificate.
- 1.4 Award winners must indicate in advance how they wish to receive the cash award.
- 1.5 Award winners may spend the cash award as they deem appropriate. No restrictions may be imposed in this respect.

### **2. MANAGEMENT**

The management of the Award will be executed by the office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (OSCE HCNM) in The Hague.

### **3. THE JURY**

- 3.1 The HCNM will be responsible for the constitution of the Jury.
- 3.2 Members of the Jury shall be appointed for a maximum period of three terms leading to the presentation of the Award. When selecting candidates for the Jury, preference shall be given to persons with an international reputation for their work on behalf of national minorities and European security policy in relation to national minorities.
- 3.3 If a member of the Jury has a hierarchical or comparable relationship with a prospective Award winner (e.g. is on the board or the supervisory council of a legal entity or is a relative or partner of a natural person), the Jury member in question shall not take part in compiling the list of five nominees for the Award. If, at the deadline for nomination, a relationship of this kind exists between more than two members of the Jury and prospective Award winners, the Jury shall be dissolved for one year. A new Jury shall be appointed for a period of eight months, consisting of the uncontested members of the previous Juries and the reserve members next in line on the reserve list, subject to the rules set out above concerning hierarchical or comparable relationships.



- 3.4 The Jury shall formulate, in writing, the grounds on which the Award is given.

#### **4. NOMINATIONS**

- 4.1 Nominations for Award winners shall be submitted to the Jury by:
- a) the OSCE Missions and Institutions;
  - b) the OSCE Participating States through their Permanent Representations with the OSCE in Vienna; and
  - c) the OSCE HCNM in The Hague.
- 4.2 The Award may not be shared.

#### **5. AWARD CEREMONY**

- 5.1 The Award shall be presented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the HCNM. The Minister shall incorporate in his speech the grounds for the Award, as formulated by the Jury.
- 5.2 Two representatives of the winning organization, or, if the winner is a natural person, the winner and one other person, shall be entitled to travelling expenses to The Hague and hotel accommodation for three nights, and shall receive the equivalent of the UN daily subsistence allowance (DSA). An extra allowance shall be granted if hotel bed and breakfast rates exceed 50 per cent of the UN DSA rate.
- 5.3 In consultation with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the HCNM shall produce the certificate and a book for all guests present on those occasions.

#### **6. ACCOUNTABILITY**

The HCNM shall submit biennial reports to the Security and Defence Policy Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for approval by the Ministry's Financial and Economic Affairs Department. Both the Ministry's internal and external accountants shall be authorized to inspect and comment on the reports.



*Max van der Stoep, first OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, 1992-2001.  
(Photo: Andy BurrIDGE)*