Press Release - 17 November 2023

**2023 Balzan Prizes Awarded in Bern***750,000 Swiss Francs (approx. €780,000, $840,000, GBP 680,000) for each award*

*Bern,17 November 2023 -*Today, During the Awards Ceremony at the Federal Palace in Berne, this year’s **Balzan Prizes** were presentedto:

**■ David Damrosch** forWorld Literature,  
**■ Jean-Jacques Hublin** for Human Evolution: Palaeoanthropology, **■ Eske Willerslev** forHuman Evolution: Ancient DNA and Human Evolution,  
**■ Heino Falcke** forHigh-resolution Images: from Planetary to Cosmic Objects, **■ Francesca Rava Foundation** for Humanity, Peace, and Fraternity among Peoples.

As in 2020, two of the four annual prizes (one in the humanities and one in the sciences) were united by a single denominator, which this year is that of human evolution. The criterion adopted is that of interdisciplinarity, in the conviction that only the fruitful cross-fertilisation of knowledge and research from different fields can make it possible to tackle the complex problems posed by nature and society.

In the presence of the President of the National Council of the Swiss Confederation **Martin Candinas**,the parchments were presented to the 2023 Prizewinners; the Presidents of the Balzan Foundation "Prize" and "Fund", **Alberto Quadrio Curzio** and **Gisèle Girgis-Musy**, delivered the official speeches.   
In accordance with the ceremony’s usual formalities, each Prizewinner gave a speech of acceptance and thanks after being introduced by the Chairman of the General Prize Committee, **Luciano Maiani**.

According to established tradition reflecting the Italo-Swiss nature of the International Balzan Foundation, the Awards Ceremony takes place in alternate years in Rome, in the presence of the President of the Italian Republic, and in Bern, in the presence of a Representative of the Federal Council or of the National Council of the Swiss Confederation.

The International Balzan Foundation awarded **750,000 Swiss Francs** (approx. EUR 780,000; USD 840,000; GBP 680,000) for each annual prize. The winners are each required to allocate half of their prize money to funding research projects carried out by young scholars or scientists in their respective fields.

The Balzan Prize for Humanity, Peace, and Fraternity among Peoples is a special prize awarded at intervals of no less than three years. This year's award is worth 750,000 Swiss francs.

The Ceremony was preceded, on Thursday 16 November, by the Balzan **Prizewinners Interdisciplinary Forum**, a public event dedicated to the Balzan Prize subject areas for the current year, with the Prizewinners playing the prominent role.

*The International Balzan Foundation, founded in 1956, operates through two branches. The International Balzan Foundation 'Prize', in Milan, is chaired by Alberto Quadrio Curzio. Through the General Prize Committee, chaired by Luciano Maiani, it chooses the subjects to be awarded and selects the candidates. The International Balzan Foundation "Fund", in Zurich, presided over by Gisèle Girgis-Musy, administers the estate left by Eugenio Balzan, in order to provide the International Balzan Foundation "Prize" with the financial means it needs to fulfil its aims.*

**The motivations for the Balzan Prizes 2023**

To **David Damrosch** (USA) - Harvard University for **world literature***For his creative approach to world literature as a transnational circulation of works that remain alive because they are embraced and changed beyond their culture of origin. For his stupendous knowledge of Western and non-Western literatures in all their geographical breadth and historical depth;*

to **Jean-Jacques Hublin** (France) - Collège de France and Max-Planck-Institut für evolutionäre Anthropologie Leipzig (Germany) for **human evolution: palaeoanthropology***For the importance of his discoveries in the field, notably that of the oldest Homo sapiens in Africa; for his ability to synthesise data from cutting-edge technologies; for his skills in organising scientific teams, notably as head of the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig; and for his qualities as a teacher and populariser;*

to **Eske Willerslev** (Denmark) - University of Copenhagen for **human evolution: ancient DNA and human evolution***For his studies on human DNA with an evolutionary perspective focusing on population mobility and migrations and thus to a large extent contributing to transform our understanding of human history. For leading the way in using ancient DNA (from teeth) to identify human pathogens and for retrieving DNA directly from environmental samples, opening a new scientific field;*

to **Heino Falcke** Germany) - Radboud University Nijmegen (The Netherlands) and Max Planck Institute for Radio Astronomy, Bonn for **high-resolution images: from planetary to cosmic objects** *For his fundamental research that has made it possible to image the surroundings of a black hole with high precision, thanks to his leading role in the development of the Event Horizon Telescope, which was built specifically for this purpose, and provides the most accurate images of these celestial bodies to date not only in our own galaxy, the Milky Way, but also in distant galaxies such as the galaxy M87. This has made it possible to confirm Einstein’s general theory of relativity in situations where gravity is so strong that space-time is significantly curved (and to prove that supermassive black holes exist);*

**to Francesca Rava Foundation** (Italy) for **Humanity, Peace, and Fraternity among Peoples**

*For its commitment since 2000 in emergency interventions following humanitarian and natural disasters in Italy and Latin America (in cooperation with Nuestros Pequeños Hermanos) and for specific initiatives taken in favour of children in Latin America to combat educational and food shortages.*