



## Onno Poortier Receives Prestigious Prix Candide



Friday, June 20, 2025 The prestigious Prix Candide was awarded to internationally acclaimed hotelier Onno Poortier. The award honours his lifelong dedication to an ethical, sustainable, and future-focused vision of luxury hospitality.

The Prix Candide is part of the annual Prix Voltaire Awards, which recognise individuals who — true to the spirit of the French philosopher Voltaire — dare to push boundaries, challenge institutions, and leave a lasting impact on their field.

### **WHY ONNO POORTIER WAS AWARDED THE PRIX CANDIDE**

The Prix Voltaire International – Prix Candide Committee praised Poortier for his exceptional leadership, vision, and commitment to structural change within luxury

hospitality, rooted in three core principles that align directly with the spirit of Voltaire's *\*Candide\**:

### **1. Realism Over Blind Optimism**

Just as Voltaire critiqued unrealistic optimism in *\*Candide\**, Poortier is not satisfied with empty promises or surface-level sustainability. He confronts the realities of the climate crisis head-on and sees in them a unique opportunity for the hospitality industry to reinvent itself; not in spite of these challenges, but because of them. His work demonstrates that the hospitality sector can not only survive but thrive through sustainable and ethical practices.

### **2. Challenging Outdated Systems**

Poortier has actively moved away from traditional and outdated notions of what 'luxury' means. Rather than excess and extravagance, he advocates for a new definition centered on authenticity, humanity, integrity, and societal value. His platform, NOW Transforming Hospitality, serves as a globally recognised model for this shift—a radical yet necessary redefinition of hospitality for the 21st century.

### **3. Action Over Abstraction – 'Cultivating One's Garden'**

As *\*Candide\** concludes with the call to "cultivate our garden," Poortier embodies this philosophy in action. He does not stop at ideas or intentions, but takes concrete steps with measurable impact. NOW is not a temporary initiative or marketing campaign, but a lasting platform helping hotels implement real behavioural change; from energy transitions to community engagement. Under his leadership, countless hotels have become places where comfort is paired with responsibility, and beauty with awareness.

The organisation emphasised that Onno Poortier exemplifies how vision, values, and craftsmanship can come together in leadership that inspires and brings about meaningful, long-lasting change.

As the co-founder of NOW Transforming Hospitality, a global platform for sustainable change within the hotel industry, Poortier has set a new standard for defining luxury. His approach, based on realism, accountable environmental and social responsibility with measurable impact, positions luxury hotels as powerful forces for good and positive change.

Poortier's six-decade-long career has seen him work around the world and lead hotel brands including The Peninsula Group for almost two decades. As board chairman,

director and advisor of numerous luxury hotels and marketing alliances, Poortier maintains a defining role within the industry. He currently serves as chairman of Sandoz Foundation Hotels with six luxury properties in Switzerland, serve on the international advisory board for Preferred Hotels & Resorts with 650 hotels worldwide, and advise on the development of new hotel brands.

## **ABOUT PRIX VOLTAIRE INTERNATIONAL**

Prix Voltaire International was established in 2017 by Sandra Bron, Bob Bron, Stephan Stokkermans, and René van Ass to honour individuals — entrepreneurs, scientists, policymakers, and changemakers – with a prestigious global award, often referred to as the “Nobel Prize for Sustainability” for demonstrating exceptional commitment to advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 2025 Prix Voltaire was awarded to Chief Dadá Borari for his exceptional commitment to protecting the Amazon rainforest and advocating for Indigenous rights.



Chief Dadá Borari, the Brazilian ‘Voice of the Indigenous’ awarded by Minister of State and former Secretary General of NATO, Jaap de Hoop

Both the Prix Candide Award and the Prix Voltaire Award underscore the importance of courageous leadership that dares to think and act beyond conventional frameworks, challenge societal norms and drive sustainable innovation.

Presented annually at the Grand Hotel Huis ter Duin in Noordwijk, the award ceremony brings together global thought leaders to celebrate those who drive systemic change through innovation, integrity, and courage.

Past laureates include Paul Polman (former CEO of Unilever), David Katz (founder of Plastic Bank), Jennifer Holmgren (CEO of LanzaTech and LanzaJet), Peter Bakker (President and CEO of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development).

During the ceremony, Polman explained the significant challenges faced by the SDGs, adopted in 2015, in achieving their targets by the 2030 deadline. While some progress has been made, many goals are off track or have even regressed and only 15% of SDG targets are on track for completion by 2030. He explained how the pandemic, climate change, and other crises have exacerbated existing inequalities and hampered progress.

Prix Voltaire International is part of a broader movement advocating for the creation of a Nobel Prize for Sustainability, recognising that sustainable progress requires visionary leadership and collective action.



## **THE FIRST LUSTRUM – WET, DRY & DIRTY**

Before the award ceremony, specialists gathered to discuss the many faces of WATER under the title WET, DRY & DIRTY, and film maker Paul O'Callaghan introduced the subject supported by images from 'Our Blue World'.

Under the guidance of Annelies Schenk, CEOs of three water related start-ups (REDSTACK, INSTRUCTION and SEA O2) discussed the business, challenges and opportunities in a talkshow with Paul O'Callaghan (Blue Tech Research), David Katz (The Plastic Bank) and Liza Faber (PureTerra Ventures). Photographer of the Nation, Ivy Njiokiktjien took us to places where we would be safer if the climate crisis would force us to leave.



## SETTING WITH A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE

The 5th Prix Voltaire International event's setting was surrounded by water in a unique spot at the dutch coast overlooking the North Sea at the legendary [Grand Hotel Huis ter Duin](#) (Big House On The Dunes). The family owned and managed hotel is committed to providing sustainable luxury travel experiences that care about the uniqueness of people and place, support local culture and communities, promote harmony with nature and making a positive difference.

A member of [NOW](#) Force for Good since 2018, Grand Hotel Huis ter Duin is EarthCheck Certified Silver and can demonstrate their commitment to sustainable practices and adherence to holistic criteria across the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit.