

Press release

Kofi Annan Awards £50,000 (CHF 100,000) Prix Pictet to Canadian Photographer Benoit Aquin

- The Prix Pictet is the first photography prize to focus on the most important issue of our time: sustainability
- New commission to record a WaterAid project in Bangladesh is awarded to Munem Wasif

Kofi Annan, Nobel Laureate and Former Secretary General of the United Nations, tonight announced the winner of the inaugural Prix Pictet as Canadian photographer **Benoit Aquin** at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris.

The £50,000 (CHF 100,000) Prix Pictet is the only photography prize to focus on the most important global issue of our time: sustainability. For the Prix Pictet's inaugural year the focus was on water.

Each year the Prix Pictet will address a distinct sustainability issue. It aims to use the power of the photographic medium to communicate crucial sustainability messages to a global audience. The series of photographs entered by **Benoit Aquin** was on desertification in China and entitled ***The Chinese Dust Bowl***.

Making the formal presentation at an awards dinner in the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, **Kofi Annan** said: *"Today, nearly 1.1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water and 2.5 billion are without basic sanitation. And it is through water, as the images in this collection illustrate, that we are seeing early and devastating manifestations of one of the greatest threats our world faces – climate change."*

"It is my hope that the Prix Pictet, the world's first prize dedicated to photography and sustainability, will help to deepen understanding of the changes taking place in our world and raise public awareness about the urgency of taking preventative action. Each artist has addressed the environmental and social challenges we face in their own personal way. The result is a series of powerful images which seeks to confront us with the scale of the threat we face and to inspire governments, businesses, - and all of us as individuals – to step up to the challenge and support change for a sustainable world."

Accepting his prize, **Benoit Aquin** said: *“I am delighted to win the Prix Pictet. It is a real honour especially when judged against such a prestigious shortlist. The Prix Pictet validates environmental photography as a subject both from a photo-journalism and an artistic point of view, bringing these different disciplines together in one competition to explore globally significant environmental issues. It is hugely welcome.”*

*“My series **The Chinese Dust Bowl** shows just what happens when we miss manage the environment. These issues should not just be seen in the context of one country, they are global issues. They effect us all. And as a global population, we must solve them.”*

Entry to the Prix Pictet is by nomination only and, in this its first year, over 200 photographers from 43 countries were nominated. Eighteen of the world’s finest photographers (biographies below) were shortlisted for the prize. They were: Benoit Aquin, Edward Burtynsky, Jesús Abad Colorado, Thomas Joshua Cooper, Sebastian Copeland, Christian Cravo, Lynn Davis, Reza Deghati, Susan Derges, Malcolm Hutcheson, Chris Jordan, Carl De Keyzer, David Maisel, Mary Mattingly, Robert Polidori, Roman Signer, Jules Spinatsch, Munem Wasif.

Francis Hodgson, Head of Photographs at Sotheby’s, led the international panel of experts who judged the Prix Pictet. The judges included the American artist **Richard Misrach**; the Iranian film director **Abbas Kiarostami**; **Régis Durand**, the distinguished art critic and curator; **Loa Haagen Pictet**, Pictet & Cie’s art consultant and **Leo Johnson**, Co-Founder, Sustainable Finance and **Peter Aspden**, Arts Writer, **The Financial Times**.

Francis Hodgson explained that judges were looking for works of outstanding artistic merit that also communicate messages of urgent global significance. He added: *“The jury were impressed by the overall standard in this the Prix Pictet’s first year. The photographers have made it a really tight competition. In the end we are pleased to acknowledge the quite excellent series that Benoit Aquin has made on desertification in China, which in the opinion of the jury just pipped a group of other excellent candidates.”*

“We are proud to have set a standard to which future Prix Pictet nominees can aspire and we are delighted to compliment Benoit Aquin on a quite splendid achievement.”

Ivan Pictet, Managing Partner of Pictet & Cie said: *“Pictet & Cie has been looking after the fortunes of families and institutions for over two hundred years. In a sense, therefore, Pictet has always followed a ‘sustainable’ way of business. More recently we have aimed to place Pictet, as a business, on a more sustainable footing, from reducing the environmental and social impact of our activities to making carefully selected philanthropic contributions. This is why the Partners of Pictet & Cie have launched the Prix Pictet, a prize that rewards photographers whose powerful images help keep issues of sustainability at the forefront of global debate.”*

The Prix Pictet exhibition runs from 29 October – 8 November 2008 at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris. Then, starting at the Dubai International Finance Centre, Dubai, on 9 November, an exhibition of selected works by artists shortlisted for the Prix Pictet 2008 will tour internationally prior to the launch of the 2009 award. Tour dates will be published on www.prixpictet.com when available.

Prix Pictet Commission to photograph WaterAid project in Bangladesh announced

Ivan Pictet, speaking at the awards, announced that **Munem Wasif**, one of the photographers shortlisted for the Prix Pictet, will be awarded the commission to photograph WaterAid’s Chittagong Hill Tracts Project in Bangladesh which is supported by Pictet & Cie.

Leo Johnson of the Prix Pictet Executive explained why Munem was chosen: *“We know the facts. We know the figures - the temperature increases, the inequity of water distribution. We know it and we are numb to it. This is a prize whose function is to counter that numbness and Munem’s work was deemed to be most capable of countering that numbness and communicating the crucial importance of sustainability projects, such as this one in Bangladesh, to the lives of people around the world.”*

Girish Menon of WaterAid added: *“The Chittagong Hill Tracts Project is typical of WaterAid’s work reaching the poorest of the poor, and enabling communities in geographically hard to reach locations to get access to life-saving essential services. With the funding WaterAid will receive from Prix Pictet we can potentially provide more than 2,300 people with a lasting supply of safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.”*

The progress of the Chittagong Hills Tract commission will be recorded on the Prix Pictet website from late November <http://www.prixpictet.com>.

Prix Pictet book *Water*

The Prix Pictet has recently published a book, ***Water***, which features the best photographs from the eighteen photographers shortlisted for the prize. *Water* is published by TeNeues and retails at EUR50.00 (€64.00). Available from all good booksellers.

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Full statement from Kofi Annan

Today, nearly 1.1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water and 2.5 billion are without basic sanitation. And it is through water, as the images in this collection illustrate, that we are seeing early and devastating manifestations of one of the greatest threats our world faces – climate change.

Climate change is an all encompassing threat which effects virtually all aspects of human life and well-being. It is a threat to health, for a warmer world is one in which waterborne diseases can propagate and spread faster. It imperils the world’s food supply, as rising temperatures and prolonged drought render fertile areas unfit for grazing and crops. In turn, it is a threat to social and political stability as it has the potential to cause heightened competition for resources, setting in motion potentially destabilizing tensions and migrations, especially in fragile states or volatile regions. And at its worst, it is quite simply a threat to life itself as rising levels could submerge island nations and flood entire coastal areas, putting millions of people at risk. The world’s most vulnerable communities – from Afghanistan to Bolivia to Myanmar – already struggling to survive are now witnessing the impact of climate change on a daily basis.

As an international community we have the responsibility to act. We must help these communities adapt and cope with their changed and changing environments. It is my hope that the Prix Pictet, the world’s first prize dedicated to photography and sustainability, will help to deepen understanding of the changes taking place in our world and raise public awareness about the urgency of taking preventative action. Each artist has addressed the environmental and social challenges we face in their own personal way. The result is a series of powerful images, which seek to confront us with the scale of the threat we face and to inspire governments, business, - and all of us as individuals – to step up to the challenge and support change for a sustainable world.

HE Kofi Annan
Honorary President Prix Pictet

Photography:

Winner's Photographs:

All the work by the shortlisted photographs can be viewed and downloaded from the following FTP sites:

View all images

<http://www.prixpictet.com/news/area/>

password: jasw4roe

Download all high resolution Images:

<ftp://storage.candlestar.co.uk>

Login: candlestar.co.uk

Password: Tha4awrug

Kallaway Prix Pictet Media Centre

A wide range of images, with captions is at: <http://www.kallaway.co.uk/prix-pictet-press-release1.htm>

Pictures, press releases and quotes from Paris

Pictures from Paris will be uploaded on the Kallaway media centre as soon as they are available. The media centre is at: <http://www.kallaway.co.uk/media.htm>

Notes to Editors:

Biographies of the photographers shortlisted:

Benoit Aquin (Canada, 1963): Aquin's series *The Chinese Dust Bowl* shows probably the largest conversion of productive land into sand anywhere in the world. Three hundred million people are affected by dust storms in China and this series of photographs examines scarce water resources, desertification and ecological refugees in the Republic. Benoit is a photojournalist and landscape photographer exploring large-scale environmental issues and their impact on humanity. He has exhibited in major photographic events in Canada, and his work is part of the collection in the Canadian Contemporary Photography Museum. His photographs have been featured in publications worldwide.

Edward Burtynsky (American, 1955): Burtynsky has submitted a series showing landscapes such as dams and oil fields transformed by human industry. He aims to inspire change to preserve the planet for future generations. Edward is an award-winning photographer and author of three books of photography. He is the founder and president of Toronto Image Works, a full service photographic lab and education facility. He has exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions and has received awards including the TED prize. Edward's photographs are housed in many private, corporate and public collections such as The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Jesús Abad Colorado (Columbia, 1967): Jesús Abad Colorado's submitted photographs document the impact of war on the environment and the devastation caused to Colombia's incredible natural habitats. Water is a major issue for the country of Colombia as only 104 out of 1013 counties have suitable drinking water despite the region being abundant with tropical rains and thousands of rivers and lagoons. Jesús Abad Colorado has exhibited throughout Latin America, Europe, Canada and the United States and has received several national awards including the Simón Bolívar National Journalist Award. He is a co-author of *Tales and Images: Forced Displacement in Colombia* and has contributed to numerous magazines and social research books.

Thomas Joshua Cooper (America, 1946): Thomas Joshua Cooper's shortlisted works are part of *The World's Edge – The Atlantic Basin Project*, which began over two decades ago with the aim of creating a photographic 'map' of the extremities of the lands and islands of all five continents surrounding the Atlantic Ocean. Thomas has exhibited worldwide in venues such as Tate St Ives and the Museum of Modern Art, Oslo. In 1982 he established the Department of Photography at the Glasgow School of Art. He is a Royal Scottish Academician and has received a number of awards in the UK and USA.

Sebastian Copeland (UK, 1964): Copeland's shortlisted photographs are from his book *Antarctica*. They examine the accelerated devastation of the Antarctica ice shelf where there is huge evidence of the severe impact of global warming. Temperatures have risen on the western slope of this most southern continent by 2.5C during the last 50 years alone. Sebastian is a photographer and environmental activist. He serves on the Board of Directors of Global Green USA, an affiliate of Mikhail Gorbachev's Green Cross International. His celebrity portrait work has been featured in hundreds of publications worldwide. He is the 2007 winner of two first place International Photography Awards.

Christian Cravo (Brazil, 1974): Cravo's shortlisted series *Waters of Hope* explores the sacred aspect of water – an element wasted by many yet revered by others. The underlying theme of these images is that water is the main source of life and not just an infrastructural source. Christian is a self-taught photographer whose work has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions internationally. His photographs are included in significant collections worldwide such as the Museum of Modern Art, Salvador and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation in New York. He has published and contributed to several books and catalogues and has received awards and scholarships for his work.

Lynn Davis (America, 1945): Davis has submitted works showing the melting of the icebergs cleaved from the Ilulissat glacier, which she photographed from 1986 – 2007. Through her images Lynn aims to bring to focus the impending fate of the sea ice and the greater impact this may have. Lynn has exhibited across the world from Tehran to Cologne. Her works are included in collections such as the J. Paul Getty Museum, California and the Guggenheim, New York. She has been commissioned for a number of projects including *In Response to Place: Photographs from the Nature Conservancy's Last Great Places*.

Reza Deghati (Iran, 1952): Deghati has entered images that address the delicate balance between the four elements. He seeks to raise awareness of this universal balance, which is gradually fracturing. Reza is a photojournalist, author and founder of AINA 'the mirror', a non-profit organisation dedicated to the education and empowerment of women and children through the use of media, communication and education. In November 2005 Reza was awarded France's highest civilian honour, the 'Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite', for his philanthropic work.

Susan Derges (UK, 1955): Derges presents a range of works from the series *Eden, The Observer and the Observed, Full Circle, River Bovey, Recycling Lucifers Fall* and *River Taw*. In her series *Eden*, a major commission for the Eden Project in Cornwall, she uses the metamorphosis of water, as it is recycled in the environment as a metaphor to explore the wider cycles of life death and renewal. Derges is an internationally recognised art photographer based in Devon. She has exhibited both throughout the UK and internationally, in venues such as The Photographers Gallery, London, New World Art Center, Houston and Tokyo Design Centre in Tokyo. Her work is held in many collections, including the Metropolitan Museum, New York and the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Malcolm Hutcheson (UK, 1966): Hutcheson's series *Lahore's Waste Water Problem* documents the people who have to work with waste water in Lahore – either maintaining the system or making money from using it. Though the long-term health risks are unclear, it is never through choice that these people chose to work in these conditions. Hutcheson works in Pakistan with a traditional handmade wooden camera from which he develops negatives at the time of exposure. He is Assistant Professor of Photographic Arts and the School of Visual Arts, Beaconhouse National University, Lahore and has exhibited in various galleries in Lahore, The Photographers' Gallery, London and the Nordlicht, Kiel.

Chris Jordan (America, 1963): Jordan's series *In Katrina's Wake: Portraits of Loss from an Unnatural Disaster* and *Intolerable Beauty: Portraits of American Mass Consumption* tackle the impact of American consumerism and the issues of personal accountability. *In Katrina's Wake* makes links between the hurricane season's extraordinary severity and global warming, which America contributes to in disproportionate measure through its extravagant consumer and industrial practices. Almost 300,000 people lost everything they owned in the disaster and Jordan forces us to question whether we are all in some way responsible. Jordan is a corporate lawyer turned award-winning photographer. His images tackle the impact of American consumerism and the issues of accountability. From 2003 – 2008 he has had 16 solo exhibits worldwide and in 2007 was part of the *Envisioning Change* exhibition at the Nobel Peace Center, Norway where he also won a Green Leaf Award.

Carl de Keyzer: (Belgium, 1958): Carl de Keyzer's series *Moments Before the Flood*, capture images of landscapes and water from the coastlines of England, Iceland, Poland and Scandinavia. If some predictions come true, the world's water level could rise 3-5 meters, which would have devastating effects on the European coastline. These photographs contain a certain uneasiness that points towards this upcoming catastrophe while also attempting to preserve the beauty of the coastline for the last time. De Keyzer is a freelance photographer. He is the co-founder of XYZ-Photography Gallery and is a member of Magnum Photo Agency. De Keyzer has exhibited his work regularly in European galleries and is the recipient of a large number of awards including the Book Award from the Arles Festival, the W. Eugene Smith Award (1990) and the Kodak Award (1992). He has lectured in numerous universities and arts schools worldwide.

David Maisel (America, 1961): Maisel entered two chapters from his series *Black Maps* which comprises aerial photographs of environmentally impacted landscapes. *The Lake Project* and *Terminal Mirage* document the environmental damage inflicted by human activities on the previously lush waterways of Owens Lake, California and the Great Salt Lake in Utah. The exposed Owens lakebed has become the highest source of particulate matter pollution in the US, emitting 300,000 tonnes of cadmium, chromium, arsenic and other materials annually. Maisel has exhibited his works internationally and many are included in permanent collections, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. His work has been the subject of two monographs: *The Lake Project* (Nazraeli Press, 2004), and *Oblivion* (Nazraeli Press, 2006). Chronicle Books will publish a third monograph, *Library of Dust*, in Fall 2008.

Mary Mattingly (America, 1978): Mattingly's series *Nomadographies*, *Time Has Fallen Asleep* and *Second Nature* present narrative illustrations of future conditions that large populations can and may face. For this series, she travelled to places in danger of drought or experiencing an excess of water due to melting glaciers or storms to experience and document the hardships imposed and the subsequent relief efforts. Mattingly has exhibited her work in solo and group shows around the world at numerous venues including Galerie Adler, Germany and White Box, New York. Her photographs have been featured in a range of publications such as ARTnews, Artforum and Time Out New York. She has co-curated interventions called Waterways alongside the Venice Biennial and the Istanbul Biennial.

Robert Polidori (Canada 1951): Polidori's series *After the Flood* documents the impact of Hurricane Katrina and the devastating levels of destruction. Originally planning to record the rebuilding of New Orleans, he realised that this would never happen 'as the city's economy vanished with the resident evacuation'. What is shown is therefore only 180° of the recovery cycle, rather than the 360° that the artist had imagined. Polidori has exhibited extensively in Europe and America and has published a number of books including *After the Flood* (2006) and *Fotografie: Portfolio* (2006). His works are included in important collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York. He has twice received the Alfred Eisenstadt Award for Magazine Photography and won the World Press Award for his coverage of the Getty Museum's construction in 1998.

Roman Signer (Switzerland 1938): Signer is a visual artist who works in sculpture, photography, and video. Signer's "action sculptures" involve setting up, carrying out, and recording "experiments" or events that bear aesthetic results. His work has been shown at numerous galleries and museums in Europe, North America and Asia over the last thirty years.

Jules Spinatsch (Switzerland, 1964): Spinatsch presents his series *Snow Management*, which documents the extraordinary measures that resorts are taking to combat the effects of global warming to maintain the winter sports industry. It demonstrates, for example, the heavy use of technology and huge energy consumption required to turn water into snow, night after night. Spinatsch has exhibited worldwide in venues such as the Museum of Modern Art, New York and Centre de la Photographie, Geneva. He has won numerous prizes including Prix du Livre, Rencontre d'Arles-F, Best Photography Book Worldwide in 2005 and the first International BMW Photography Prize at Paris Photo in 2004 for the series *Snow Management*. He also teaches at Geneva University of Art and Design.

Munem Wasif (Bangladesh, 1983): Wasif's series *Climate Refugee of Bangladesh* documents the climate refugees of Bangladesh who have to relocate as a result of too much or too little water as caused by global warming. Wasif has worked as a photojournalist for the Daily Star, a leading English daily in Bangladesh, DrikNEWS and Agency VU. His photographs have been published in numerous national and international publications including Le Monde and Forum. He won an "Honorable Mention" in the 2007 All Roads Photography Program by the National Geographic Society. His global exhibitions portfolio includes the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography in Japan and Getty Image Gallery in England.

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