



**Heineken
Prizes**



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2016 Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for Environmental Sciences, awarded to Georgina Mace

Presentation speech by Louise Vet, Chairperson of the 2016 Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for Environmental Sciences Jury

Ladies and gentlemen,

Most people agree these days that the human species is damaging our planet's ecosystems at worrying rates.

Oceans and climates are heating up, natural habitats are shrinking, and species are going extinct.

Genetic diversity that evolved over billions of years is rapidly being diminished.

Losing all that natural beauty breaks our hearts just in itself.

But even more alarming is the fact that we are cutting the very resources that we depend upon for our survival.

Reversing that trend will be an enormous challenge.

We will have to make many difficult choices if we are to succeed.

But for more than 25 years, Georgina Mace has been helping us to make those tough choices.

Early in her career, Georgina Mace took a hard look at so-called 'Red Lists of endangered species'.

At the time, Red Lists helped to put nature conservation on the agenda, but the lists themselves were not very reliable.

They did not tell you much about which species were actually most in danger to go extinct.

Georgina Mace developed a system that was based on research, hard numbers and logic.

It measured objectively how serious the situation is for individual species.

Today, her science-based system solidly underpins all Red lists of threatened species.

The World Wildlife Fund, for example, uses it to rank the extinction risk of more than 10,000 populations of mammals, birds and other animals.

Governments and conservation groups can now use these lists to focus their efforts on the most urgent problems.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This science-based approach is no longer confined to lists of endangered species.

Georgina Mace has been at the heart of a move towards setting rational, science-based priorities when saving entire ecosystems.

Because our ecosystems are not a luxury item, to be enjoyed by nature lovers and tourists.

They also provide us with essential services such as fresh water, clean air, healthy food and effective medicines.

Those services we cannot afford to lose.

Saving them for future generations will carry enormous economical costs, and we will need to prioritize.

Georgina Mace has been one of the pioneers in redefining healthy ecosystems and biodiversity as forms of natural, economical capital.

She helped to create a theoretical framework that can help preserve and exploit that capital in the most efficient way.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Georgina Mace has been and still is one of the most important thinkers in the ecology field.

Her pragmatic, solution-oriented approach has had a great impact on the debate in the environmental sciences.

Her voice is calm, scientifically sound and always highly respected.

Because of all that, please join me and the jury in a round of applause for Georgina Mace, winner of the 2016 Heineken Prize for Environmental Sciences!