



International ethecon Blue Planet Award 2024

Justification

deutsche **english** französische portugiesische spanische Version

Berlin, international Day of Peace, 21. September 2024¹

„If wars can be started by lies, peace can be started by truth“

(Julian Assange)

Part 1

Honouring Julian Assange

Human rights and peace activist from Australia

The Board of Trustees and Executive Board of ethecon Foundation Ethics & Economics honour Julian Assange, peace and human rights activist from Australia, with the International ethecon Blue Planet Award 2024 for his outstanding observance of fundamental ethical and moral principles in the area of conflict between ethics and economics, thus protecting the Blue Planet and defending it against the danger of becoming a dead, uninhabitable planet. He opposes oppression, exploitation, human rights violations, the destruction of nature, social misery and war in an outstanding manner.

Julian Assange has always acted in a spirit of solidarity, characterised by honest motives and with no personal gain in mind. He accepts conflicts with rulers and disadvantages to life and limb or his own existence without hesitation for the social and peace policy interests of his fellow human beings. He demonstrates what is commonly known as social responsibility and empathy.

In a world increasingly focussed on profit as the sole criterion for all decisions and development, Julian Assange defends the interests of humanity in resistance to the interests of the powerful. Often disadvantaged, marginalised and oppressed. Exposed to inhumane prison conditions, tortured (UN assessment in the "Assange case"), severely damaged health and threatened with possible death. He is one of those who strengthens humanity in the fight for peace, justice and the protection of the environment.

Julian Assange will be recognised and personally honoured with the International ethecon Blue Planet Award 2024. On behalf of all those who are committed to saving the Blue Planet and opposing its demise to a dead, uninhabitable planet. May his award be an incentive for him and his actions a shining example for us all!

Accordingly, the International ethecon Blue Planet Award 2024 also sees itself as a mobilisation for the commitment to peace, justice and environmental protection and for resistance against warmongering, exploitation and environmental destruction. It is intended to sensitise the public, name those responsible and uncover the connections.

¹ The ethecon foundation deliberately chooses 21 September to announce the winners of the two annual international ethecon Awards: 21 September is the international Day of Peace.



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The honouring of peace and human rights activist Julian Assange with the International ethecon Blue Planet Award 2024 is in line with the objectives of the ethecon Foundation Ethics & Economics and is a logical complement to the vilification of Mathias Döpfner (Chairman of the Axel Springer SE Executive Board and major shareholder), Ralph Büchi (Chairman of the Axel Springer SE Supervisory Board) and Friede Springer (Co-Chairwoman of the Axel Springer SE Supervisory Board and major shareholder) with the International ethecon Dead Planet Award 2021.



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Part 2

Justification if the honour

The Board of Trustees and Executive Board of ethecon Foundation Ethics & Economy base their decision to honour Julian Assange, peace and human rights activist from Australia, with the International ethecon Blue Planet Award 2024 on news reports, on facts that have been known to the public for years, on information gathered by journalists around the world, on publicly available documents, on investigations by government agencies and social movement activists in various countries, including in particular the documents of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, Nils Melzer, on the "Assange case", and not least on the materials published by Julian Assange and WikiLeaks.

Here are just a few examples from the wealth of facts researched during the nomination process for the International ethecon Blue Planet Award 2024 to be presented to Julian Assange:

Julian Assange founded and launched the WikiLeaks whistleblowing platform in 2006. In doing so, he has made an extraordinary contribution to peace, environmental protection, human rights and freedom of the press, because documents and information can still be published anonymously on the internet portal today, which are of the utmost importance for the investigation of unethical crimes, but are subject to secrecy and/or are under lock and key.

Julian Assange and his colleagues have created a special network that allows Wikileaks to upload data anonymously, secure it and protect whistleblowers.

In 2010, Julian Assange published secret text and image data about US military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which also documented the most serious war crimes committed by the USA and uncovered "corruption", despite the highest risks. This attracted worldwide attention and at the same time intensified the persecution of Julian Assange by the USA, which had already begun.

WikiLeaks also published reports on how the law was violated in the Guantanamo prison and how profits were made from the illegal dumping of toxic waste, causing enormous environmental and health damage.

Julian Assange has massively strengthened the peace movement, among others. The legend created by US and G7 propaganda dominated opinion-forming around the world that the combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, which were trivialised as "missions", were a "complete success for human rights". The Wikileaks publications have permanently refuted and destroyed these lies, exposing the wars for what they were: Criminal massacres.



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In 2012, Julian Assange had to flee to the London embassy of Ecuador due to political persecution and lived there for seven years in a very confined space. In 2019, he was finally granted political asylum, but the UK threatened to storm the embassy. In the same year, pressure from the USA on Ecuador resulted in his stay in the embassy being revoked and he was imprisoned in inhumane conditions in the UK. It took decades of international solidarity to pave the way for a political-legal agreement that allowed Julian Assange to be released after five years in prison on a partial guilty plea.

Throughout the years, Julian Assange has remained an outstanding example of perseverance and resilience in the face of repression. He resisted all persecution and repression. Especially those of the USA, which were conducted with an openly vengeful motive, with the most brutal possible harshness and with an absolute will to destroy.

Despite decades of massive political persecution, seven years of de facto imprisonment in the Ecuadorian embassy and five years of inhumane prison conditions, which doctors and the special rapporteur categorised as "torture", he insisted throughout his years of imprisonment on the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press, which he considers indispensable in a democracy.

The release of Julian Assange on 25 June 2024 was only possible thanks to a political and legal agreement with the US authorities. In turn, the authorities only agreed to this because, since the beginning of the persecution of Julian Assange, they had faced decades of worldwide protests from millions and millions of people who kept up the pressure on the authorities and ensured that the case remained in the public eye without interruption.

Free and independent reporting is of the utmost importance for a democratic society as well as for peace, environmental protection and social justice. Julian Assange has shown us this through WikiLeaks and through his steadfastness. He has encouraged whistleblowers around the world to do the same and not be intimidated.

Conclusion

The Board of Trustees and the Executive Board declare:

The human rights and peace activist Julian Assange courageously confronts injustice, state violence and war crimes, regardless of his own safety and the dangers to his health and life. He resolutely stands up not only for human rights, peace and freedom of the press, but also for the expansion of universal fundamental rights. He acts for the benefit of the human community. He upholds morals and ethics and opposes the demise of the earth as a dead, uninhabitable planet.

In a world increasingly focussed on profit as the sole criterion for all decisions and development, ethecon sees Julian Assange's actions as an outstanding contribution to saving and preserving our Blue Planet. For this admirable cultivation and development of human ethics, ethecon Foundation Ethics & Economics honours Julian Assange with the International ethecon Blue Planet Award 2024.



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The International ethecon Blue Planet Award 2024 to the human rights and peace activist Julian Assange will be presented together with the International ethecon Dead Planet Award 2024 to Mathias Döpfner (Chairman of the Axel Springer SE Executive Board and major shareholder), Ralph Büchi (Chairman of the Axel Springer SE Supervisory Board) and Friede Springer (Co-Chairwoman of the Axel Springer SE Supervisory Board and major shareholder) in a public ceremony in Düsseldorf on 9 November 2024.



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Part 3 Background

The two international ethecon Awards

Our blue planet is in serious danger. This can no longer be denied, even by politicians and scientists. Wars, social misery and environmental ruin are spreading. The collapse of ecological systems is imminent.

However, the cause is denied. The profit principle, which is inextricably linked to the prevailing global capitalist economic system, and the destruction of fundamental ethical principles by the economy that goes hand in hand with this disastrous economic law, are responsible for the developments that are dangerous for people and the environment. The economic law's inherent compulsion to maximise profit systematically and inevitably promotes injustice, exploitation and ecological ruin. All the more so as the profit principle is increasingly becoming the sole criterion for shaping society and the environment.

ethecon is committed to anchoring ethical principles in the economy and society, for a shift away from the profit system towards a system of solidarity. Saving the planet will only be possible by overthrowing the profit principle.

As early as 2004, the year in which ethecon was founded, the idea of a foundation prize to promote efforts to preserve and save fundamental ethical principles matured. There were and are many prizes that honour achievements in various areas of society, but far too few prizes that honour resistance to the abuse and ruin of ethics and morals resulting in environmental destruction, war and exploitation.

However, the discussion process that began about this prize quickly showed that it was not enough to honour deeds in the struggle for ethics and morals, but that it was equally important to denounce misdeeds against ethics and morals. The idea of two interlinked ethecon prizes was born: The ethecon Positive Award Blue Planet Award and the ethecon Negative Award Dead Planet Award. They form a unit, they are two sides of the same coin. Together they reflect the state of the ethical principles that characterise our world. At the same time, they illustrate the vision of ethics and morals that make a world without exploitation and oppression possible.

The two ethecon prizes outlaw exploitation, war and environmental destruction and follow the ideals of peace, environmental protection and justice. They call for resistance, change and commitment in the spirit of these ideals; they stand up for a future worth living for this, our world. While one prize, the International ethecon Blue Planet Award, honours the commitment to preserving or saving the Blue Planet and draws attention to the urgent possibilities for action and opportunities, the other, the International ethecon Dead Planet Award, denounces the desecration of our planet and the danger of a dead, uninhabitable planet and denounces indifference and ignorance. Together, the two International ethecon Awards show that there is hope. The power lies within us, within each and every one of us.



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In principle, the two awards only recognise individuals and not institutions. This is intended to counteract the increasing and deliberate anonymisation of decisions. Particularly in the case of negative developments, those responsible are all too happy to hide behind the facades of some kind of institution and point to alleged constraints to which the decisions are said to be due, as it were, on their own initiative. In both positive and negative cases, however, it always remains the same: it is always people who make the decisions and bear the responsibility.

The two international ethecon prizes were awarded for the first time in 2006. Since then, the awards have generally been presented annually. While the world's economic elites meet in Davos, Switzerland, each January for the Economic Forum, ethecon launches an international call for nominations for the two ethecon prizes. In a thorough selection process, the winners are chosen by the foundation by August of each year and publicly announced on the Day of Peace on 21 September.

Both prizes are awarded in November at a large public ceremony in Berlin. Only the winners of the positive awards will be invited to the ceremony; the winners of the negative awards will be informed about their award in an "open letter" published on the date of the ceremony. While the winners of the International ethecon Blue Planet Award will be presented with their trophies of honour in person at the award ceremony, the winners of the International Dead Planet Award will be presented with their trophies in person by the foundation in the months following the award ceremony as part of public campaigns.

As many civil society actors as possible from all over the world are involved in the award activities. Wisely not from the ruling circles and institutions, but from the resistant movements for peace, ecology and justice. In this way, the inseparable connection between the two prizes and these movements and the importance of the prizes for the commitment to these goals will be emphasised and made visible.

The trophies for the positive prizes are always designed by artists. While art and culture are also increasingly subject to the dictates of profit, ethecon's artistic design of the ethecon Blue Planet trophies opens up the possibility of positioning art in resistance to exploitation, environmental destruction and war or in the commitment to peace, ecology and justice.

When the two International ethecon Awards were born in 2005, the world-famous Otto Piene spontaneously agreed to create the annual prize trophies for the respective International ethecon Blue Planet Award as unique, valuable glass and wood sculptures.

After Piene - now 82 years old - produced the award trophy for the last time in 2009, Katharina Mayer, the great photo artist and Becher student (born in 1958), created the trophies from 2010 to 2018 and gave them a new, unique character of her own.

In 2019, ethecon took a completely new approach by designing a mural as part of the Blue Planet Award 2019 trophy. With the support of Düsseldorf artist Klaus Klinger and the street art collective "Farbfieber", we brought the winner of the International ethecon Award 2019, her life's work and the International ethecon Honorary Award into the public space in a



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special way with a mural design on Toulouser Allee in Düsseldorf. The trophy itself featured an art print of Otto Piene's "Blue Planet" and a photograph of the mural signed by Klaus Klinger. The trophies for the Blue Planet Awards 2020 and 2021 were designed in glass by glass artist Günter Pohl, like Otto Piene before him. Pohl's works materialised the fragility of our planet, the imminent dangers of ruin and the possibilities for action to save it in equal measure.

The 2024 trophy was designed by the artist Mechthild Hartung. The hooked arms depicted on the trophy symbolise solidarity and collective action, which is more important today than ever in the fight to preserve our blue planet.

The prize trophy for the International ethecon Dead Planet Award is completely different. It is an industrially produced globe made of plastic under exploitative and environmentally unfriendly conditions and subsequently alienated. The alienation of this object is deliberately not carried out by an artist who creates the annual positive prize, but by a young person chosen to do so. This prevents the mischievous trophy of the International ethecon Dead Planet Award from becoming a work of art of quality. It ensures that no new prize is created in our world, which is orientated towards usability. Especially for someone who - in the truest sense of the word - does not deserve this honour. At the same time, as a representative of his generation, the young person symbolises the endangered future of the Blue Planet and all those who are threatened with a dead, uninhabitable planet. It is the youth whose future is being destroyed by the ecological, social and warlike ruin of the world.

It is significant that the people criticised with the International ethecon Dead Planet Award generally disregard the prize trophy awarded to them. To this day, not one of those criticised has personally accepted the abusive award and publicly faced up to the criticism. At best, the award trophy has been presented to a delegate, such as an employee of a press office. In most cases, ethecon witnessed the destruction of the trophy by security staff.



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