

Inaugural Nelson Mandela Lecture

Per Heggnes: an introduction

It is a great pleasure to introduce the inaugural Nelson Mandela lecture, in celebration of UWC's former Honorary President. Mandela's life was an inspiration for the UWC movement and its values of peace and sustainability – and indeed he was, in many ways, the embodiment of our mission statement - perceptively and memorably reminding us all that *'education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'*.

In discussion with the former Student Council, we decided here at Red Cross Nordic to honour the life and legacy of Mandela with our own implementation of an annual Mandela Day positioned as part of our Student Introduction Week in mid-August alongside an Annual Mandela Lecture on a humanitarian subject.

Today is also our College's Nordic Global Concerns Day. This provides an excellent framework to invite Per Heggnes, the CEO of the IKEA Foundation, to deliver the inaugural Mandela lecture.

For many of us, IKEA is synonymous with vast blue and yellow warehouses on the outskirts of major cities. It is renowned as the Swedish company responsible for revolutionising the furniture world with its affordable flat packs and, with expansion and success, it has maintained a reputation as a value-driven Nordic company with a sustainable culture.

Per Heggnes, a Norwegian, was appointed in 2009 to oversee the company's global philanthropy with the commission to make a bigger difference for children worldwide. The IKEA Foundation's website gives a compelling insight into the holistic and long-term approach to creating meaningful opportunities and sustainable change in the world's poorest communities. It places real emphasis on the four fundamentals of a child's life: a place to call home, a healthy start in life, a quality education and a sustainable income.

The IKEA Foundation programme currently benefits an estimated 100 million children. In September 2014, the IKEA Foundation gave €5 million—its largest single emergency donation ever—to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) to fight the Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa.

But it is important to recognise that the IKEA Foundation has a profile beyond that of a donor. The IKEA Foundation takes a business approach with an emphasis on risk analysis, innovation alongside measurement of efficiency and success of its programmes – and it works alongside other strategic partners such as UNICEF, Save the Children and UNHCR to advise on their operational systems and to support their projects.

The Foundation has organised that IKEA will donate 1 euro for every LED light bulb sold at an IKEA warehouse in February and March this year to a project run by UNHCR to bring electricity to refugee camps and to make them safer places for families.

It was this partnership with UNHCR which has brought Per here today. Last summer, my sister-in-law based at UNHCR in London emailed me to say that she had just read that a student from Kassala Camp in Sudan, was on his way to study at UWC Red Cross Nordic – his attendance has been facilitated by our National Committee in Sudan, UNCHR and the IKEA Foundation. I wrote to Per last term inviting him to come so that he could introduce us to the global philanthropy and projects of the IKEA Foundation and we, in turn, could introduce him to our College and what we stand for as a fellow Nordic institution with a global outreach.

Our College is proud of its commitment to providing education for refugees – over the past twenty years, students have been given scholarships at UWC Red Cross Nordic from places as diverse as Western Sahara, Tibet, the Middle East, and immigrant communities within Norway itself. Alongside our Nordic context, there are currently 13 other United World Colleges, the International Office and our worldwide network committed to providing education opportunities for refugees.

Per, I know our students and staff are excited to learn about the IKEA Foundation's work, notably its valued support towards education, tackling child labour and empowering women and girls.

It is a privilege and a pleasure to welcome you to our College and to invite you to give the inaugural Nelson Mandela lecture.

Richard D A Lamont
Rektor