



Let's celebrate collaboration and build bridges!

Welcome Address of the President of the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft

Professor Dr. Patrick Cramer

At the 2023 Max Planck-Humboldt Research Award

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– Check against delivery –

Maybe you know this feeling: When you travel, you live in your very own time zone. And when you arrive you still live in this kind of *in-between reality* for a while. That's how I feel tonight - in an unusually intense way, I have to say. I returned from Israel a few hours ago. And now I stand before you because we have a reason to celebrate and indeed: We want to celebrate!

The contrast could hardly be more pronounced. But I think that even in these challenging times, it is important to take this opportunity and pause for a moment of joy. More even: in these dark times it is our duty to seize this opportunity – and to draw strength from it. Let us be inspired by the talents and commitment of individuals – may it be in the fields of art and music, humanitarian work or diplomacy – and of course also in the field of science, which can build bridges between people.

And with that, I would like to welcome this year's prize and medal winners - Rotem Sorek, Amy Buck and Kandice Tanner. I congratulate you whole-heartedly!

Many colleagues from the selection and nomination committees came here tonight. I don't know whether I should thank you or even congratulate you as well. Because, isn't it one of the most wonderful tasks we can have? To consider the research of brilliant personalities and then to see them shine tonight? I think so!

I also extend a warm welcome to Mario Brandenburg, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Education and Research. Thank you for joining us tonight!

Also, I much welcome my dear colleague, Robert Schlögl. And I welcome all of you!

Science is a reminder of what we can achieve when two things come together: Creativity and critical discourse. These are two profoundly human possibilities and their combination is valuable.



By endowing the Max Planck-Humboldt Research Award, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research allows us to fully embrace this valuable endeavor – by letting it unfold across borders. Today we also celebrate that Germany, Israel, the United States and Great Britain – the countries that are home to our awardees – closely cooperate with each other scientifically.

What can our Award add to such international collaboration? Well, it creates a very close link, something like a small 'foothold' in Germany – that's why this award is so special. If you go to the lab homepage of Roberto Bonasio, our 2020 prizewinner, there's a disclaimer saying *"Since March 2021 also operating a German outpost in beautiful Freiburg im Breisgau thanks to the Max Planck Humboldt Research Award"*. Great to read this!

I hope that this year's prizewinner will feel just as closely connected to his partners at LMU Munich and the Helmholtz Institute in Würzburg – and that they can build something new. I congratulate you, Rotem Sorek!

And allow me to add something here.

In normal times, people from all over the world also flock to Israel, in particular because of its outstanding science. But now the institutes there are empty and many laboratories are abandoned. There is an overwhelming silence. I saw it myself yesterday. The international staff have returned to their home countries. And the Israeli students and academics are at war.

This is why I would like to say to Rotem Sorek that in these dark times: We will be friends that you and your colleagues in Israel can rely on. The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the Max Planck Society and the scientific community here wants to help you to overcome this silence. We wish to support Israeli universities and research institutes. In the short and long term.

The Max Planck Society is setting up a special fund so that we can offer to host scientists who had to leave Israel as guests at our Max Planck Institutes for some time. We hope that they can continue their research projects here – remaining under the supervision of their Israeli mentors – and later return to Israel. We also wish to increase funding for collaborative projects within the Minerva Foundation. And we will soon be opening an office in Israel – to strengthen our cooperation. I would like to thank the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, which signaled its support.

But tonight, it is our privilege to take three outstanding people into our midst and honor them, their teams, and their science. These three deserve it so much and with their research they are doing society a great service – across all borders and conflicts! Thank you.