

I am not only greatly honoured, but I am also extremely moved to be receiving this award. I am also quite stunned that this award exists! As I understand it, awards are normally conferred on those working in science, economics, medical research or in the technical fields - in short, in areas that benefit adults first and foremost. Rarely have I heard of an award for those working for the benefit of children!

I very much regret that I am unable to participate at this Congress - not only because of the award, but also because of the interesting matters being dealt with by this meeting. I have previous commitments which I must honour, and am currently once more working in a country where fifty percent of the children are malnourished; where there exists a large number of street children and children who have been abandoned and forgotten by uninterested parents; where children are languishing in poorly kept institutions; where children are seen as useless and unneeded; and where no funding exists to improve their lot.

“Useless” here is the keyword! In far too many countries, whether poor or rich, underdeveloped or developed, many adults consider children to be commodities. And when there is a lot of a given commodity, such a commodity loses or has no value.

In today’s world, so many children are valueless to the adults around them. They have no voice and even if they would dare to speak out, they simply are not heard.

This award shows that there are people who, like me, try to listen and try to understand and make improvements; there are networks which attempt to give these forgotten children improved opportunities to live their lives in dignity and safety, giving them the chance to develop into better adults than those they had to deal with in their own childhood.

This award means to me that in the end, Don Quixote’s windmills can be defeated.

Thank you very much.

Renate