

Mandela award for Edinburgh professor

Professor Appolinaire Djikeng is the Director of the Centre for Tropical Livestock Genetics and Health (CTLGH) at the University of Edinburgh. He recently gave an online presentation during a summer camp run by The UNESCO Center for Peace.

In recognition of all the work he does to 'make a difference in the lives of others', the centre presented him with a Nelson Mandela Justice Award citation signed by US Senator, Chris Van Hollen.

At Roslin Institute, the work that Professor Djikeng does is all about researching and developing programmes which focus on agricultural development and human health.

Since coming to Edinburgh in 2017 he has concentrated on genomics and working out ways for tropical livestock to adapt and become both more productive for the farmers who own them – and more resilient too. He sees this as a major contributor to ensuring that some countries in the tropics develop in a sustainable way. From 2009 to 2017 he was Director of Biosciences at Biosciences eastern and central Africa (BecA) in Nairobi, Kenya.

Professor Djikeng explained what this most recent award means to him. He said: "The UNESCO Centre for Peace is the federation of all US UNESCO clubs and associations. It's an

organisation which is probably now 16 years old. When I was in the US, I volunteered with them for a short while.

“They have summer camps every year in Washington DC and also in New York. This year, because of Covid-19 they couldn’t meet face to face but they did a week long summer programme online. As I’ve been advising them all this time they gave me a slot during the summer programme, and my talk happened while they were also celebrating Mandela Day celebration.

“I think we all know you can use Mandela for all kinds of purposes. The UNESCO Center for Peace is really about building communities where people appreciate each other, support each other, people care about each other, and people look after each other.

“My inclination is always towards improving the quality or the livelihoods of people who believe it difficult, who are exposed to so many externalities. Smallholder farmers only have that as their source of income, they have no safety net, you know, they if you understand what I mean by quite vulnerable. Peacebuilders are also those who give hope to people through their own work to agriculture, to good health, livable communities, so that is the reason for my award.

“If people are thoughtful, you know, they care about the environment, they have jobs, they have expectations and if things are happening, if they have good lives, they’re less likely to fight than otherwise.

“I talked about the United Nations’ sustainable development goals. You know these young people in 2030 will be around 30 years old and may be young professionals. I wanted to give them the opportunity to know about the challenges we face now, linking that to agricultural development. I think it is important that they take responsibility and can assess how much progress we have made by then.”

Professor Djikeng explained that there are simply not enough

young farmers in the world at the moment, even in Scotland. In an industry which provides us with food, we will need about 50% more food by 2050 according to the data. He also said this is an industry which is still the prime employer across the world, with around three quarters of global employment still related to agriculture.

He concluded: "Agriculture has to be much better, it has to be very efficient. It has to really be a good industry in order to meet that need, because people are always going to need food. It's a requirement, it's not a temporal thing. That's really what I've been trying to convince them. And the talk that I gave recently was really to energise the youth, for them to see agriculture as something that they can consider. Because we're also operating with a challenge, and that challenge is visible in Scotland. The average age of the farmer is much higher – at least 60 years old, so if we don't get young people to engage in agriculture, one could see that in ten years, our food system is going to be much more vulnerable, not because of climate change, not because of Covid-19, simply because we're not going to have as many farmers as we would need."

[Professor Appolinaire Djikeng](#) works at the Roslin Institute at Easter Bush Campus.



This Citation Is Presented To
Dr. Appolinaire Djikeng

IN RECOGNITION OF

*Your receiving the 2020 UNESCO Center for Peace International Nelson
Mandela Justice Award, and with gratitude for all that you do to
make a difference in the lives of others.*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Chris Van Hollen", written over a horizontal line.

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

*On This Day,
The Eighteenth of July,
Two Thousand Twenty*