

# Preface

It is a particular honour for me to introduce this book on the Prix Pictet's women photographers. I do so with a sense of humility. As the first female managing partner in the Pictet Group's 217-year history, I am acutely conscious of the pioneering achievements of women both in business and the arts.

When we founded the Prix Pictet in 2008, our profound hope was to play a part in raising awareness of the world's most pressing environmental and social issues through the medium of photography. Our founding President, the late Kofi Annan, was quick to grasp the potential of the Prix Pictet. 'Communication has become essential,' he said, '... and photography is probably the most effective because it is immediate and instantaneous. It is critically important to ask artists to use their creativity to address the immense challenges we face.'

At the time, the word sustainability was hardly heard in the art world. Across the continents, there were a handful of museums and galleries dedicated to such photography, but things have changed in the last 14 years. The issues arising from the spiralling sustainability crisis are now at the forefront of the global debate, both inside and outside photography. They are of central importance for organisations and individuals alike.

Ironically, while image-based mobile apps have made photographers of us all, the status of photography as a creative endeavour has grown. It is now regarded as the great democratic art form of our age. In all of this, the Prix Pictet has held a leading role, presenting, over its nine thematic cycles, images of rare power and surpassing beauty. Each cycle has addressed critical issues of global sustainability in inventive and engaging ways.

Just as the status of photography has risen, so too has the participation of female photographers in the award. From one cycle to the next, more women are being nominated and shortlisted. In fact, three of the past four laureates have been women.

The fifth of the United Nations' 17 Sustainability Development Goals states, 'ending all discrimination against women and girls is not only a basic human right, it is crucial for a sustainable future; it is proven that empowering women and girls helps economic growth and development'. In our own field of finance, we are seeing an encouraging gain in the number of women in senior decision-making roles. Together with my fellow managing partners, I consider this to be not only an essential investment in talent but also a commitment to fresh perspectives, which are vital in powering the sustainable businesses that will cater for our future needs.

So, 14 years after the launch of the Prix Pictet, this book is a timely reminder of the special qualities of the 1,200 exceptional women photographers nominated for the award to date. As you turn these pages, it will quickly become clear that women photographers have immeasurably enriched the award. This book is a tribute to their work.

**Elif Aktuğ**

On behalf of the Pictet Managing Partners