

Media release

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Dr. Michael Otto and José Maria Figueres Olsen win the SAM/SPG Sustainability Leadership Award

The annual Sustainability Leadership Award, sponsored by SAM Sustainable Asset Management and Sustainable Performance Group (SPG), has two joint winners this year: Dr. Michael Otto has been chosen for his outstanding business achievements and José Maria Figueres for his efforts to create sustainability-enhancing political conditions in Costa Rica. A total of 33 individuals had been nominated for this year's SAM/SPG Leadership Award.

Dr. Michael Otto, one of the two joint-winners of this year's Sustainability Award, is Chairman of the Board of Directors of the globally active trading and service enterprise, Otto in Hamburg. In his role with the company, Michael Otto has established high standards with regard to corporate responsibility, as well as social and ecological matters. For Michael Otto, it was the Club of Rome as well as the 1972 book "Limits to Growth" that were the catalysts behind his moves towards sustainability for the firm. The first concrete measures in the field of ecology were taken way back in the 1980s.

And as early as 1974, for instance, the company began using mailing cartons from recycled materials. Further examples of how Otto puts sustainability into practice include onsite environmental measures and the ecological optimization of product ranges, such as the supply of textiles from controlled biological cotton. Processing over 500 t of bio-cotton, Otto leads the German market. Otto catalogues also contain furniture made with wood from sustainable forests. In addition, Otto has set itself the target of keeping CO₂ emissions as low as possible during transportation. The key strategy behind this is switching transportation to rail, sea and inland waterways and consistent exploitation of the latest technologies.

The second winner of the Sustainability Leadership Award is José Maria Figueres. The former president of Costa Rica, whose period in office lasted from 1994 to 1998, made major strides to ensuring that his country and its industry are better equipped for a globalised economy. His efforts in the sustainability field were primarily aimed at a transparent, sustainable platform, strong macroeconomic indicators and major investment in human development programs. In addition, Figueres concentrated heavily on environmental protection. One consequence of these endeavors is that companies from Costa Rica have entered into closer cooperation with US companies in a bid to promote technology-based investment in their home country.

After stepping down as president, Figueres set up the Costa Rica Foundation for Sustainable Development. This foundation sponsors a raft of projects which promote initiatives for technological applications aimed at improving the quality of life in Latin America. Figueres only recently became Managing Director of the World Economic Forum (WEF). The WEF publishes the Global Competitiveness Report and organizes the annually held Davos Forum.

Criteria for issuing the award

The Sustainability Leadership Award presented at the Sustainability Leadership Forum carries a prize of CHF 60,000. It is awarded annually by the independent asset manager SAM Sustainable Asset Management and the investment company Sustainable Performance Group, which was set up by SAM, Swiss Re and Volkart Group. The prize-winners are individuals who are distinguished by their exceptional, pro-active efforts to bring about concrete success within a company or institution.

The 33 nominated candidates were evaluated in accordance with the following criteria: they should be individuals who have played an exemplary role in the field of sustainability. They must also be able to demonstrate concrete results within the private sector of the economy. The focus is on strong, persuasive individuals with a forward-looking approach, who are distinguished by their innovative powers. Criteria such as religion, gender, nationality, age or professional background do not play any role in the selection process.

The Selection Committee comprises:

- Prof. Dr. Meinrad K. Eberle, Director, Paul Scherrer Institute, Villigen, Switzerland.
- Beat Curti, founder and member of the Board of Directors of Bon appétit Group, Küssnacht, Switzerland
- Susan Davis, Chairman of Capital Missions Company, Elkhorn, WI, USA
- Prof. Dr. José Goldemberg, Instituto de Eletrotécnica e Energia, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil
- Ashok Khosla, Chairman, Development Alternatives, Inc., New Delhi, India
- Barbara Kux, Executive Director, Ford of Europe GmbH, Germany
- Prof. David Marks, Director, Laboratory for Energy and the Environment, MIT

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SAM Sustainable Asset Management was founded in 1995 as an independent asset management company specializing in sustainability investments. Today SAM ranks among the world's leading institutions in this sector. Its clients include banks, insurance companies, pension funds, trusts as well as private investors.

Through systematic analysis, SAM seeks to identify companies with sustainable success criteria. Integrating these forward-looking criteria with the investment process gives the investor the greatest possible degree of control, transparency and an attractive return.

Besides individual mandates for institutional investors and private clients, SAM offers financial products in the field of future-oriented energy technologies, sustainable food production, water, efficient use of resources, sustainability pioneers, sustainability leaders and private equity.

SAM's expertise stems from its own research as well as an active, worldwide sustainability network. In cooperation with Dow Jones and STOXX, SAM launched the world's first family of sustainability indices, tracking the performance of companies that lead their industry in terms of sustainability. For SAM this means evaluating more than 1,000 companies each year.

SAM Sustainable Asset Management is headquartered in Zollikon-Zurich (Switzerland), and has offices in Chicago (USA), Melbourne (Australia) and Milan (Italy).

Sustainable Performance Group (SPG), based in Feusisberg in the canton of Schwyz, was founded in May 1997 as a joint-stock company under Swiss law. The company's listing in the main section of the Swiss Stock Exchange (SWX) in August 1997 saw the emergence of the world's first quoted investment company for sustainability investments – an investment vehicle that enables private and institutional investors to invest their money in accordance with the principle of sustainability. The success of SPG's investment concept is borne out by the growing relevance of sustainability, both on the world's financial markets and at the corporate and political/statutory level.

The SPG portfolio comprises investments in around 15 to 20 companies, with which it maintains an intensive dialogue. In this context SPG focuses on seven to ten strategic core investments, together accounting for about 65% of the portfolio. These core holdings are diversified with seven to ten satellite holdings, which constitute the remaining 35% of the portfolio. Up to 10% of the company's assets may be invested in companies whose shares are not traded on a stock exchange.
