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Meet the 2024 Climate Breakthrough Awardees

San Francisco, December 3, 2024 – Global philanthropy Climate Breakthrough is excited to announce today the 2024 cohort of its prestigious Climate Breakthrough Award program: **Eriel Deranger, Alex Doukas, Kimiko Hirata, and Tero Mustonen.**

Over the next three years, the program will provide each with a \$4 million funding package—the largest climate funding for individuals—and other support to develop, launch, and scale their boldest **new** initiatives with breakthrough potential to address climate change. This means initiatives that could significantly reduce global annual greenhouse gas emissions, affect entire industries or regions of the world, and materially change the lives of tens of millions of people within ten years of launch.

"I'm honored to welcome Alex, Eriel, Kimiko, and Tero into the Climate Breakthrough Award program. They exemplify the kind of visionary leadership and thinking that lies at the heart of our mission. We're honored to support them in bringing their most ambitious climate action ideas to life," said **Savanna Ferguson**, Executive Director of Climate Breakthrough.

The 2024 cohort joins a long list of [Climate Breakthrough Awardees](#) who have developed their own initiatives through the program and achieved critical recognition from their peers and the press. They include Mohamed Adow (Africa Climate Energy Development Programme at Power Shift Africa), Tzeporah Berman (the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty initiative), John Hepburn (Insure Our Future), Sebastián Kind (Renewables for All/RELP), Tessa Khan (Uplift), and Nicole Rycroft (Canopy), among others.

The program

Launched in 2016, the Climate Breakthrough Award program is uniquely designed for social change leaders to develop, launch, and scale their boldest new initiatives with breakthrough potential to address climate change. It fosters breakthrough-oriented work in policy, economic, and social transformation by blending the large-scale innovation focus of institutions known for pursuing breakthrough inventions—like DARPA and ARPA-E—with the nimble and entrepreneurial spirit of startup incubators and venture capital.

The program, unlike common philanthropic models, offers our awardees a rare opportunity to expand their thinking and build transformative new initiatives to address the climate crisis, while embracing the possibility of failure without the common constraints imposed by funders that often stifle innovation.

We invest in their potential through substantial, flexible, non-directive, multiyear support—financial and otherwise. The funding package includes a \$3.5 million grant as well as an additional \$500,000 available for wraparound support and Impact and Learning (I&L) resources to help ensure their initiatives move forward

as effectively and efficiently as possible. Furthermore, we connect them with experts and specialists, elevate their visibility among key stakeholders and broader funding networks, and serve as a trusted reference.

With the new cohort, we have now selected 22 individuals and one team of awardees. Over 60% of awardee initiatives have a global scale or Global South focus. Climate Breakthrough Awardees have collectively secured over \$236 million in follow-on funding from more than 90 different funders to advance their work. Combined, their Climate Breakthrough initiatives have the potential to reduce global annual greenhouse gas emissions by more than 5.3 gigatons by 2030.

Visit [here](#) for more information about the program.

The 2024 cohort

Eriel Tchekwie Deranger is a formidable advocate for Indigenous rights and environmental justice. In 2015, she founded the Canada-based Indigenous Climate Action (ICA) and has led it to become a powerful advocate for Indigenous sovereignty and rights-based approaches to environmental protection.

Through the Climate Breakthrough Award program, Eriel is seeking to pioneer the first-of-its-kind globally coordinated effort to elevate Indigenous-led climate solutions, ensuring they receive the recognition, resources, and representation they deserve on the global stage. Indigenous-led climate solutions are undervalued and underrepresented. This work promises to reshape the global climate movement, ensuring that Indigenous voices are not just included but are central to the fight for climate justice.

"We cannot just work to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions and treat this crisis as one that is degraded to a mathematical equation to be solved. Instead, we must look at ways to decolonize the processes and the policies in order to address the climate crisis," she says.

Dive deeper [here](#).

Alex Doukas is a bold voice in the environmental and climate action sector, recognized for his strategic acumen and ability to build powerful coalitions.

Through the Climate Breakthrough Award program, Alex wants to launch a global coalition to hold the oil and gas industry liable for trillions of dollars in cleanup costs associated with fossil fuel production. He believes imposing this liability can constrain their ability to expand capital expenditure, deter further expansion, and challenge their social license. For Alex, the "polluter pays" principle is more than a cornerstone of environmental law—it's a matter of common sense.

"There is no vital exhaust port on the Death Star that is the fossil fuel industry," he says. "But it turns out that simply making the oil and gas industry clean up after themselves comes pretty close."

Dive deeper [here](#).

Kimiko Hirata is the Executive Director of Climate Integrate, an independent think tank she formed in 2022.

Through the Climate Breakthrough Award program, Kimiko is launching a large-scale effort to shift the public narrative around the feasibility and necessity of energy transition in Japan. The 2021 Goldman Environmental Prize winner wants to build innovative communication strategies to dismantle the pervasive belief within Japanese society that decarbonization is too costly or burdensome—a hurdle she believes has long dampened public urgency and significantly slowed progress there.

Japan is the world's fifth-largest carbon dioxide emitter, with the power sector being the primary source of its emissions. Success in decarbonizing Japan could have far-reaching effects beyond its borders, including catalyzing shifts in energy finance and policy across the Southeast Asia region.

"If people's understanding based on evidence prevails, we can shift the narrative and stimulate new, more powerful initiatives that lead to meaningful real policy changes," she explains.

Dive deeper [here](#).

Tero Mustonen is the founder and president of Snowchange Cooperative, a Finland-based organization with a vast network of community partners across the Arctic and boreal regions, working to mitigate climate change, protect biodiversity, and preserve the traditional and Indigenous knowledge that is vital to these ecosystems.

Through the Climate Breakthrough Award program, the 2023 Goldman Environmental Prize winner wants to kick off an ambitious effort that builds upon, but significantly expands, Snowchange's rewilding efforts. His vision is to establish "restoration hubs" in key regions: the European North; Minnesota and Alaska, US; and the Hudson Bay ecoregion of Ontario, Canada. The Arctic peatland ecosystems are crucial for mitigating climate change. Despite this, there has been limited attention and investment going to Arctic and boreal solutions.

"We need to keep the lid on the world, the boreal, and the Arctic cooling the planet. Peatlands are one of the best ways to do that," he underscores.

Dive deeper [here](#).



CONTACT

To request an interview or media assets, please contact Tony Bricktua, Senior Communications Officer, at press@climatebreakthrough.org