

INTERNATIONAL PEN

FOUNDED 1921

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JOHN RALSTON SAUL ELECTED PRESIDENT OF INTERNATIONAL PEN

Today, October 21st, the International PEN Assembly of Delegates of International PEN, meeting in Linz, Austria, elected John Ralston Saul of Canada as International President.

He succeeds Jiri Grusa, one of the most important dissident Czech writers, who has held the post for six years. Earlier presidents have included Arthur Miller, Mario Vargas Llosa and Alberto Moravia.

He is the first Canadian to be elected president in the 88-year history of the organization.

John Ralston Saul is a celebrated Canadian novelist and essayist and former President of Canadian PEN. He has been awarded, among others, Chile's Pablo Neruda medal, Italy's Premio Letterario Internazionale and the Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres de France.

"International PEN is the world's most important and oldest freedom of speech and literary organisation. Almost 1,000 writers who are in prison or are in danger around the world look to us for help. We have to invent new ways of turning back the rise of authoritarian controls," said Saul.

"Threats to freedom of speech are expanding in new directions, especially with the rise of populism in the post-9/11 world.

"In addition, hundreds of minority and indigenous languages and cultures are in danger of extinction. This is the ultimate denial of freedom of speech."

Founded in 1921 to promote literature, International PEN has 144 Centres in 102 countries around the globe.