

For Immediate Release

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Upwardly Global Honors Business and Community Leaders for Contributions to Immigrant Integration

New York, June 3, 2014—Upwardly Global (UpGlo), a national nonprofit organization that works to eliminate employment barriers for skilled immigrants and refugees and integrate this population into the professional U.S. workforce, honored three global and business leaders with the organization's prestigious Outstanding Leadership Award: CEO of Standard Chartered Bank in the Americas **Julio Rojas**; NBA legend and global ambassador **Dikembe Mutombo**; and entrepreneur and CEO of Net Element **Oleg Firer**.

The awards were celebrated at UpGlo's annual *2014 Passport to Possibilities Awards & Gala* held at historic New York City event space Guastavino's. More than 350 guests attended the event, which supports UpGlo's programs to help skilled immigrants rebuild their careers in the United States.

"Our honorees embody the spirit and mission of Upwardly Global, both in representing the incredible contributions that immigrants make to American life and in their commitment to developing the rich pool of global talent already in the U.S.," said Upwardly Global President and CEO Nikki Cicerani.

Appointed as Chief Executive of Standard Chartered Bank in the Americas in June 2011, Mr. Rojas is responsible for all of the Bank's businesses in both North America and Latin America. Mr. Rojas has been with Standard Chartered Bank for over 25 years, driving diversity through exemplary hiring and professional development practices. Since 2011, Standard Chartered Bank employees have served as mentors to Upwardly Global clients in their job searches, resulting in over 40 placements in professional jobs.

"A diverse workforce provides a competitive advantage for businesses and the larger economy. Not only does it create a deeper talent pool, diversity enables businesses to better understand the varied needs of its customers, clients, and staff," Mr. Rojas said. "Empowering communities is deeply ingrained in Standard Chartered's commitment to local communities, and we are proud that our contributions to the Americas region are recognized."

Mr. Mutombo is the Chairman and President of the Dikembe Mutombo Foundation, which he created in 1997. Located in Atlanta, Georgia, the Foundation's mission is to improve the health, education, and quality of life for the people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Mr. Mutombo is also an NBA Global Ambassador and works to grow and celebrate the game of basketball through international events while working with NBA Cares to bring attention to important social issues. He played professional basketball for 18 years before retiring from the Houston Rockets in 2009.

"I could not have done what I have if it was not for the great support I received," Mr. Mutombo said. "The services and the support that Upwardly Global provides are so important in helping immigrants and refugees to thrive in the United States."

Mr. Mutombo's award was presented by **Lievin Mwamba**, Upwardly Global's Finance and Human Resources Manager. Mr. Mwamba also hails from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and came to the United States in 2006 as an asylee. He was a program participant at Upwardly Global before being hired full-time by the organization, and last year was finally able to bring his family to the U.S.

An entrepreneur and business leader, Mr. Firer created Unified Payments in 2007. The electronic payment processing system held the number one spot on the 2012 Inc. 500 list of fastest-growing companies. His current venture is Net Element (NETE), a global technology group that continues to drive and innovate the international transaction processing and mobile payment business. Mr. Firer came to the United States at age 12 with his family as refugees from the Soviet Union.

"It's the human capital who will grow your business and make it a success," he said. "UpGlo has a direct line to talented global professionals who have track records and strong capabilities. That's a connection that employers want to make and keep."

Mr. Firer's award was presented by UpGlo alumna **Imelda Hutapea**, originally from Indonesia, who is currently the Email Marketing Manager at Aquent, a digital, creative, and marketing staffing company based in Boston.

Amir Ghavi, Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP; **Paria Goodarzi**, DDS, MS; **Alex Lipman**, Partner, Nixon Peabody LLP; and **Katherine Lipton**, Managing Director & Associate General Counsel, JPMorgan Chase & Co. served as co-chairs for the event.

About Upwardly Global

Upwardly Global, founded in 2000, is a national, award-winning nonprofit organization with offices in the San Francisco Bay Area, New York, and Chicago. Upwardly Global helps work-authorized, skilled immigrants rebuild their professional careers in the U.S. by providing professional job-search training and access to employers with global talent needs. To date, the organization has coached more than 5,000 skilled immigrants and has assisted over more than 2,000 professionals back into their career field. For more information about the organization, please visit www.upwardlyglobal.org.

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