

EUROPEAN HERITAGE AWARDS CEREMONY 2011
Amsterdam, 10 June 2011

CLOSING ADDRESS BY PLACIDO DOMINGO,
PRESIDENT OF EUROPA NOSTRA

Your Royal Highness,
Madam Commissioner,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Laureates,
Dear Friends,

What a **great** evening! Full of **inspiration** and full of **energy** given to us by these **magnificent** men and women, heritage professionals and volunteers....what an **honour** to be here with you all...And what a **pleasure** to be here in the **Concertgebouw** which brings back some wonderful memories....

This is a heritage building in **top** condition. **Beautiful** and well maintained by people who **love it** and **cherish it**. Alas, not **every** theatre or concert hall is in such good shape. Not every monument or site is safe and well cared for. But tonight's award winners make us more **optimistic** about the **future** of our heritage. You have **all** provided us a **powerful example** to follow. You have **all** made a **real difference**.

Tonight, I also wish to **pay tribute** to the **European Commission**, through you, Madam Commissioner. We **welcome** your **commitment** to enhancing the cultural action of the **European Union**. We **urge** you to pursue this **important** task. As you can see, **you are not alone!** You can **count** on the **support of us all**. Of all those **millions** of cultural **professionals** and **volunteers, entrepreneurs** and **consumers** from throughout Europe – many of whom are represented here tonight. You have indeed **an enormous constituency**, Mrs Vassiliou.

Tonight, we have so many reasons to **celebrate**. So many reasons to be **proud** about all these **remarkable** human **achievements** which have received an award.

Yet, please forgive me if I feel the necessity also to express **some serious concerns**. And I know that many of you **share** these concerns. In these times of economic and financial hardship and cuts in public expenditure in many fields, including health, social security and education, do we not hear much too often that culture is a luxury? That it costs too much money... That it places too heavy a burden on the tax-payer....

Precisely in these difficult times, we should not be focusing our attention only on the “**price**” of culture. Today, more than ever, we need to recall **the “value”** of culture?

Only **ten** days ago, the **European Convention on the Value of Heritage for Society** - the so called **Faro Convention** - entered into force. This document – adopted under the auspices of the Council of Europe - **convincingly** demonstrates the **multiple benefits** which cultural heritage brings to our **society**. Cultural heritage has, first and foremost, **an intrinsic value**: for our sense of **pride** and sense of **belonging**, our **identity**, our **memory**. For the **well-being** of our society. It brings **meaning, quality** and **beauty** to of our life. Culture can even have a **healing power**. I have witnessed it **personally** so intensely during my recent performances in **Japan**, in the aftermath of the **devastating** earthquake and tsunami. But, in addition to all the above, cultural heritage also has an **undeniable** value for the **sustainable future** of our **living environment**. And for the **prosperity** of our **economy**.

When it comes to culture and cultural heritage, Europe has always been a **super-power**. It is up to all of us to **live up** to this legacy and to develop this potential. This can only be achieved through adequate public **and** private **recognition** and **investment** in culture and education. This will bring **huge returns**, spiritually, socially **and** economically.

Cultural heritage, just like other fields of culture and the arts, constitutes a **resource**, and **not** a **burden** on Europe. They provide us indeed with a **powerful weapon to combat the crisis**. They are a true **gold-mine** for **job creation**. But not just any jobs: jobs which give **joy** and **fulfilment** to those who are working in this field. Look only at all our laureates! But also: jobs that give joy and fulfilment **not only** to Europe's citizens **but also** to the **millions** of tourists from other continents who visit our historic monuments and sites, or go to museums, concerts, theatres...

Recently, cultural organisations in Europe started a campaign with a symbolic title: **WE ARE MORE**. We are indeed **more** than the sum of our parts. More than a mere sum of historic monuments and sites of Europe. More than the sum of jobs created in the cultural field. More than the sum of cultural “consumers” or heritage volunteers....

We are the soul and the spirit of Our Europe.

And **no price should be too high** to preserve this soul and this spirit. And to let it **flourish**, as a source of **joy** and **inspiration**, for the new generation of **proud** and **responsible** citizens, **of Europe** and indeed **of the World**.