

GRAND PRIX 2011
AWARDS CEREMONY IN NICOSIA, CYPRUS
(4 OCTOBER 2011)

MESSAGE BY
MAESTRO PLÁCIDO DOMINGO,
PRESIDENT OF EUROPA NOSTRA

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

I am very sorry that I cannot be with you for the celebration of this much deserved Grand Prix jointly awarded by the European Union and Europa Nostra. What a remarkable achievement and what a wonderful Power of Example! It was a great moment for me, together with European Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou, to meet in person the two representatives of your winning research programme last June in Amsterdam.

Your study of the Buffer-zone in Nicosia is not just an important scientific work. It is a product of a fruitful cooperation between the Greek and the Turkish Cypriots. I know that such cooperation is not an easy task. But you have proven that this is possible. You managed to overcome difficulties for the sake of love: love for cultural heritage and also love for working together to create a better future.

Sharing responsibilities and looking beyond one's differences is very important, in life in general, but in situations of long-standing conflicts even more so. In such cases, it is easier to stay in the trenches and not move an inch. It is much more difficult to get out into the sunshine, to reach out to each other and to start working together on issues of common concern. Here in Nicosia, our laureates have done so and that is a great encouragement to us all.

Please allow me to take this opportunity to also ask your attention for another city - not far from here - that still needs such a large scale cooperation: the old city of Famagusta. This ancient city is of course linked to one of my most favourite opera roles: Othello.

Shakespeare's and Verdi's masterpiece is filled with misunderstandings, mistrust, betrayal and tragedy. In theatre and in opera a tragic ending can be beautiful, but in real life it is a different story. I am convinced that the today's story of the old city of Famagusta can get a "happy end": if we all work together to help overcome barriers and to find creative and constructive solutions to the many problems. Only through a spirit of cooperation and through our shared love for this beautiful heritage - which belongs to all Cypriots and to all Europeans - can we save the ancient city of Famagusta.

Here in Nicosia, you have shown us that this can be done. As President of Europa Nostra, I congratulate you most sincerely with your much deserved Grand Prix and your powerful Example.

Thank you.