

PRESS RELEASE

Agreement reached by Greek and Turkish Cypriots to join forces to save their Historic Town of Famagusta

Efforts to save Famagusta, once known as the richest city in the world, have brought together the Turkish and Greek Cypriot Representatives of this legendary town to work together on this unique and timely rescue initiative.

Paris/The Hague, 8 April 2008 - **“There is no future without the past, but the past makes no sense without the future. I am therefore here today to give whole-hearted support to our Turkish Cypriot companions in the task of safeguarding the valuable heritage of Famagusta. At the same time we ask for their support to our endeavours to ensure that promoting culture in Famagusta goes hand in hand with the respect for human rights”**, declared **Alexis Galanos**, Greek Cypriot Representative of Famagusta. Continuing in the same vein, **Oktay Kayalp**, Turkish Cypriot Representative of Famagusta, confirmed a strong desire to **“set aside political problems in order to save the heritage of Famagusta as the heritage of Europe which ought to be handed over to future generations”**. He expressed his hope that this meeting would lead to a brighter future for the citizens of both communities.

Under the guidance of Europa Nostra, the pan-European federation for cultural heritage, the highest representatives of the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot communities of the city of Famagusta, **Alexis Galanos** and **Oktay Kayalp** made a unique joint public appearance at the Representation of the European Commission in France on Friday 4 April in the aim of saving their historic city from further decay. This important bi-communal initiative of cooperation in the field of cultural heritage follows on from the public meeting which took place in December 2007 at the Ledra Palace Hotel, in the UN Buffer Zone in Nicosia under the auspices of the United Nations.

The meeting organised by Europa Nostra aimed to raise the awareness of the international community on the urgent need for launching an major conservation programme to safeguard Famagusta's remaining cultural heritage; and to facilitate the desire of both communities in Famagusta to establish the most suitable coordinating structure through which funds may be made available for such a conservation programme without giving rise to legal or political dispute.

Denis de Kergorlay, Europa Nostra's Vice-President who moderated the meeting, stated **“It is high time that Famagusta be brought out of oblivion back into the European public consciousness. Europa Nostra is prepared to work very hard to contribute to the revival of Famagusta's unique cultural heritage and to raise awareness of the public out large on the highly significant place occupied by Famagusta in shared European history. A successful “Famagusta project” should therefore become a symbol of renewal and dialogue”**.

The meeting in Paris was also the occasion for screening the international premiere of **“The Stones of Famagusta - the Story of a Forgotten City”**, a feature length documentary which showcases the beauty and the historic importance of the city. Film-makers **Allan Langdale** (Canada) and **Dan Frodsham** (UK) were present to discuss the film and to encourage its wider distribution throughout Europe and beyond.

Michael Walsh, convenor of the international expert colloquium on Medieval Famagusta used the metaphor of the setting sun in the closing scene of the documentary film to highlight that this should serve as a stark warning that



EUROPA
NOSTRA

Fédération européenne du patrimoine culturel
Pan-European Federation for Cultural Heritage

Présidente / President
S.A.R. La Infanta Doña Pilar de Borbón

Président exécutif / Executive President
Andrea H. Schuler

Lange Voorhout 35
NL - 2514 EC Den Haag
tel + 31 70 302 40 50
fax + 31 70 361 78 65
office@europanostra.org
www.europanostra.org

“Time is running out for the monuments and works of art which are in dire need of international expertise and funding”. He concluded by emphasising that the future of Famagusta is a shared European responsibility and issued an urgent plea for all actors to keep the momentum of this meeting and to put forward concrete proposals for joint action.

Costa Carras, Vice-President of Europa Nostra, underlined that **“culture can work as one of the creative forces in European society that brings people together, and that Europa Nostra stands ready to contribute towards making this a reality in Famagusta”**. To this end, **Gianni Perbellini**, President of Europa Nostra’s Scientific Council, offered the scientific expertise of Europa Nostra to accompany any future conservation work to be carried out according to the highest international standards.

During the debate that ensued, participants concluded the need for all to take up responsibility for the shared European history and for the European spirit to prevail in a future common project to safeguard and restore Famagusta’s cultural heritage. Hope was also expressed that working together in restoring common cultural heritage in Famagusta and elsewhere in Cyprus could contribute to solving other problems that are faced, conjointly and separately, by the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities in Cyprus.

FAMAGUSTA

The fabled city of Famagusta, located in North-East Cyprus, has been over many centuries at the crossroads between the West and the East and has played a pivotal role in the history of military, trade and cultural relations between the Christian and Islamic Worlds. The heritage treasures of this city combine medieval Christian churches, Venetian gateways, Ottoman mosques and baths and some of the most impressive city walls to be seen anywhere in the world. Famagusta, once known as the richest city in the world, was in medieval times (13th-16th centuries) ruled by the French dynasty of Lusignans. It then fell under the domination first of Genoa and then of the Venetian Republic (as a Venetian stronghold it served as the setting for Shakespeare’s Othello), and eventually became an important Ottoman harbour city after 1571. There is no place like it anywhere else in the world. Threatened by earthquakes, abandonment and neglect, this beautiful historic city with the tangible remains of so many cultures is now in a severe state of deterioration and action is urgently needed to salvage this precious heritage. Famagusta was therefore recently placed on the 2008 World Monuments Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites. For all these reasons, the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot representatives of Famagusta decided to join forces in an attempt to raise the awareness of the European/International community about the plight of their city and to work together in harmony for the common good.

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT COLLOQUIUM

In addition to this unique initiative between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Mayors of Famagusta, a two-day international colloquium was held (4-5 April 2008, National Archives of Paris) to bring together, also for the first time, the most prominent scholars from Europe and beyond to discuss the European and global significance of the history and architecture of Famagusta.

Photos (click on links below to download)

- 1) [Lala Mustafa Paşa Mosque / Saint Nicholas Cathedral, Famagusta](#)
- 2) [Denis de Kergorlay, Gianni Perbellini, Alexis Galanos, Oktay Kayalp and Costa Carras](#)

For further information, please contact the Europa Nostra International Secretariat:

Laurie Neale, Communications Officer, co@europanostra.org; tel +31 70 302 4055

Eléonore de Merode, Policy / Heritage at Risk Officer, policy@europanostra.org, tel +31 70 302 40 52

**Europa Nostra, the pan-European Federation for Cultural Heritage, is the representative platform of over 250 heritage NGOs active throughout Europe. It is the voice of this vast movement of European civil society active in the field of heritage towards international bodies concerned, in particular the European Union Institutions, the Council of Europe and UNESCO. Europa Nostra is dedicated to putting heritage and its benefits in the mainstream of public consciousness and to making heritage a priority for public policies both at European and national levels. Its specific objectives are to promote, at a European level, high standards of quality in the fields of heritage conservation, architecture, urban and rural planning and to advocate a balanced and sustainable development of urban and rural, built and natural environment.*

Europa Nostra supports national and international campaigns for the preservation and rescue of Europe’s heritage at risk. It encourages exemplary initiatives in favour of the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage by recognising outstanding heritage achievements, in particular through the running of the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards. Through its various activities, Europa Nostra seeks to highlight the importance of cultural heritage as a building block of European identity and as a contribution to the strengthening of the sense of European citizenship.

www.europanostra.org