

Dear Council members,

All of you received this summer the sad announcement that our Secretariat sent round to you informing you that our Honorary President **Otto von der Gablentz** had passed away on the 13th of July.

Otto von der Gablentz was, as you all know, the inspiring leader of our pan-European movement for the safeguard of Cultural Heritage from 2002 to 2006. His conviction, wisdom and sense of diplomacy, combined with his modesty and charm, remain a powerful example to all Europa Nostra's members and supporters.

Otto was a true European in every cell of his body. He believed that the diverse peoples of Europe should and could work together to build a peace - prosperous and in harmony - so that all citizens could live their lives to the fullest. Otto firmly believed that culture and cultural heritage should and could play a crucial role in turning that dream into reality.

Otto served his government of Germany in a diplomatic capacity in The Netherlands, Israel and Russia and in working as a diplomatic advisor to Chancellor Schmidt. Later he became Rector of the College of Europe in Bruges, before taking up his position at Europa Nostra. During his whole career, Otto used his considerable

diplomatic skills to advance the dream of a peaceful and free Europe, united in its diversity, and with cultural heritage at its heart.

Numerous tributes to Otto have come through the Secretariat. I will quote from two of them.

From our former President, HRH the Prince Consort of Denmark, came the words:

Otto von der Gablentz a toujours manifesté dans ses fonctions au sein d'Europa Nostra des compétences professionnelles hautement estimées de tous. J'ai grandement apprécié au cours de mes rapports privés avec lui ses qualités humaines et amicales.

From Federico Guasti, one of our Vice-Presidents :

Otto restera toujours - comme Hans de Koster - par l'ensemble de ses qualités d'humanité, d'intelligence et de modestie - un des meilleurs exemples, pour nous tous, de l'interprétation exacte du rôle d'Europa Nostra, dans l'esprit de la construction de l'Europe des peuples et des cultures.

Otto was described as a Renaissance man with qualities as:

Enthusiasm, finesse, diplomacy, a mastery of languages, a unique understanding of the cultures of many peoples and a dynamic personality. He displayed courage and serenity in facing the illness which finally took his life, while never losing his *joie de vivre*.

Our thoughts are with his wife and family.

May I ask you all to join me in a moment of silence in respect and friendship for Otto von der Gablentz.