

Speech by Dr. Andrea H. Schuler, Executive President of Europa Nostra;
Europa Nostra Festive Dinner; City Hall, Golden Hall, Stockholm, 8 June 2007

Your Majesties,

Your Royal Highnesses,

European Commissioner,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We could not have imagined a more sumptuous setting and a more illustrious company for this night's celebration of our **Europe of Cultural Heritage**. But the splendour of this Festive Dinner shall not let us forget the idealistic background of our gathering: It is our strong believe in the timeless value of our cultural heritage, in its rich variety and diversity; it is our firm conviction of the utmost importance of cultural heritage for the well-being of people; and it is our sense of a common responsibility for the safeguard and enhancement of the witnesses of our past. Indeed, it is substantially this which brings us together here in Stockholm, in the beautiful capital-city of Sweden, in these early days of June.

Tonight, we celebrate first of all the **laureates** of the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards. My warmest congratulations go out to all of them for the exemplary work or studies they have carried out, and for their outstanding, dedicated commitment, as an individual or as a group, to the cause of heritage, of our shared European heritage. We admire and are deeply grateful for the time and energy, for the skills and the personal involvement which you have all put to the service of heritage: this is what we need and what we are all about

in Europa Nostra. Without you all working in your communities and in your countries, doing the actual ground work of keeping Europe's cultural heritage alive, visible and strong, there would be no basis for Europa Nostra's main activity: namely to talk to, and to influence the decision-makers in the institutions of the European Union, in the Council of Europe, in national and regional governments and in various international organisations, to protect our cultural heritage.

In addition, with your enthusiasm and your example, you help us to reach the interest of the public at large. If we are not able to convince the public opinion that the protection of our heritage, the survival of our monuments and sites, is essential for the future of humanity, for a peaceful and respectful living together in society, we might not win our case on the long run. Therefore, dear laureates, thank you, thank you very much indeed, and once again: Congratulation!

We are also celebrating the fruitful and successful partnership between the **European Commission**, represented tonight at the highest level by Commissioner **Ján Figel'**, and **Europa Nostra**, the Pan-European Federation which regroups hundreds of non-governmental associations working in favour of cultural heritage and counting on the support of millions of citizens all over Europe. We are celebrating the many different forms of action developed by the civil society, on local, regional, national and European levels, which defend our cultural heritage and answer the challenge of protecting and enhancing it.

We further celebrate the bonds of work and friendship which have been tightened between us and Sweden, our host country. I wish to express Europa Nostra's most sincere thanks and respect to **Their Majesties The King and Queen of Sweden** who have given us the honour of their presence at our Congress, in particular at the European Heritage Awards Ceremony. Your Majesties, we are delighted to welcome you here tonight.

We are anxious and curious to discover your country still little known to so many of us. Indeed, we appreciate the actions undertaken by different public and private actors engaged in preserving the Swedish cultural heritage, built and natural, which obviously forms an integral part of our shared European Cultural Heritage, for which we have a common responsibility.

I would especially like to express all our gratitude and recognition to **HRH Princess Madeleine** for having accepted to become the Patron of Europa Nostra-Sweden. You have thus chosen to actively promote the mission and the action of our organisation in Sweden, lending your support to a group of dedicated professionals and volunteers inspired, determined and with a contagious enthusiasm. It is this group, led by **Mrs. Catherine von Arnold**, which has worked tirelessly during long months together with the team of the **International Secretariat of Europa Nostra in The Hague**, to which we owe to a great deal the success of our Stockholm Congress. It is imperative for Europa Nostra that we can rely on the support of our **country representations and of all our members** willing to act as relays of our action in the various countries and regions of Europe.

For Europa Nostra and all its members, tonight's Festive Dinner has a very particular significance. It is the very moment where we pay tribute of admiration and thanks to HRH the Prince Consort of Denmark, and say goodbye to a President who has embodied the image, the mission and the action of our Federation during the course of the last 17 years. At our General Assembly, I already had the opportunity to profoundly thank His Royal Highness for his remarkable commitment for, and his loyalty to, the cause of cultural heritage, and to highlight his numerous qualities. Here, in the presence of our noble and most distinguished guests, and in the presence of such a large number of laureates and

of Europa Nostra members who have come to Stockholm from the four corners of Europe, a few more words of praise and thanks are more than appropriate.

From the first moments of my active involvement with Europa Nostra, I could appreciate the multiple talents of HRH the Prince Consort of Denmark. He has always remained above the topics of the day, but he would never have hesitated to descend, if needed, into the arena. His innate discretion did not prevent him from advancing his ideas, nor from defending fundamental principles. Even if, as a consequence of his status, His Royal Highness was bound to being reserved, he understood that “squaring the circle” could be resolved by a strong and assiduous presence. He never missed a General Assembly or a Council Meeting, but presided them all, thus demonstrating a high degree of interest, loyalty and availability, combined with a generosity of spirit, a touching spontaneity and a very human simplicity.

Bearing this in mind, all our members join with me tonight and say, with a touch of nostalgia: Thank you, Your Royal Highness, for having been such a wonderful President of Europa Nostra!

Monseigneur,

Quel chemin parcouru depuis l'année 1990, où vous avez accepté de devenir le Président d'Europa Nostra lors d'un Congrès qui s'est tenu dans le Palais de la Paix à La Haye ! Combien de rencontres animées ; combien de débats stimulés ; combien de missions accomplies ; combien de campagnes menées pour sauver un patrimoine en péril ; combien de prix attribués ; combien d'interviews données ; combien d'articles rédigés et de discours prononcés ; combien de membres rencontrés et recrutés ...dans les quatre coins de l'Europe.

Nous avons toujours pu compter sur une aide sans faille dans les démarches qu'il nous fallait entreprendre. Nous avons également pu bénéficier de Votre courtoisie et de Votre autorité souriante que Vous prodiguez avec diplomatie quand le moment se présentait.

Peut-être doit-on Votre présidence éclairée et inspirée aussi au talent d'artiste-poète que démontrent Vos œuvres écrites ? La source d'inspiration que constituait Votre présence ne risque cependant pas d'être tarie. Nous savons que Vous continuerez à suivre de près notre action et à soutenir certaines de nos initiatives ou à encourager les jeunes de notre association.

Vous êtes un Européen convaincu. Né Français, devenu Danois par amour et citoyen du monde par vocation, il est évident que Votre départ d'Europa Nostra ne saurait jamais être une véritable retraite. Quand on est passionné aussi bien par la culture européenne que par la construction européenne et qu'on saisit tout ce que le Patrimoine culturel représente comme ciment de « l'édifice européen », on ne s'enferme pas dans un exil intérieur.

Monseigneur,

Au nom de tous les membres d'Europa Nostra, de même qu'au nom de tous les amoureux et adeptes du patrimoine culturel de l'Europe - qu'ils soient jeunes ou moins jeunes, qu'ils soient engagés en tant que professionnels ou en tant que bénévoles dans la sauvegarde de notre patrimoine - je tiens, une fois encore, à Vous remercier vivement et de tout coeur pour les 17 ans de Votre soutien fidèle et de Votre engagement dévoué.

C'est avec un immense plaisir que nous voyons **Son Altesse Royale l'Infante Doña Pilar de Borbón, Duchesa de Badajoz** reprendre le flambeau. Qui parle de flambeau évoque à la fois la lumière et l'ardeur. Nous sommes convaincus que ces deux qualités se trouvent au cœur de la personnalité que nous venons d'appeler à la tête de notre fédération, et nous nous réjouissons de continuer et de développer davantage encore notre travail sous sa présidence.