

Speech by S.A.R. la Infanta Doña Pilar de Borbón, President of Europa Nostra
European Heritage Awards Ceremony,
Durham Cathedral, 12 June 2008

Thank you, Canon Kennedy for your kind words of welcome. Thank you for opening for us the doors of this most magnificent Durham Cathedral and for enabling us to hold the 2008 European Heritage Awards Ceremony in such an impressive historic and spiritual setting. Not only is Durham Cathedral renowned as a World Heritage Site, it is also the cornerstone of local, national and European, history and identity.

Today, we are gathered here to celebrate the richness of those multiple layers and meanings of our cultural heritage.

Mister Mayor,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Members of Europa Nostra, and most importantly

Laureates of the 2008 edition of the European Union Prize for
Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards,

For the last 45 years, Europa Nostra and its members have been raising awareness across Europe of the need to understand, respect and protect Europe's works of art, historic buildings and monuments, archaeological sites and cultural landscapes. Europa Nostra has gradually become THE voice of Europe's cultural heritage.

Today, Europa Nostra must give priority to reaching the wider public, opening their eyes, inspiring their hearts and engaging them in the important task of defending one of Europe's most valuable assets. I also wish to highlight our partnership with the

European Union Institutions which has become particularly strong over the past decade.

I am therefore very pleased to greet the presence among us of the representatives both of the European Commission and of the European Economic and Social Committee. Your presence here confirms the importance which your institutions attach to this partnership with Europe's civil society committed to cultural heritage.

I also wish to greet the presence of the representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe which has been our key partner and ally from the very inception of our federation, back in 1963. And when I mention the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, I wish to pay tribute to one of my predecessors as President of Europa Nostra who also was one of the leading figures of this European Assembly: **Lord Duncan Sandys**.

Lord Duncan Sandys played a pivotal role for the development of our federation in the 70s and took the visionary initiative, exactly 30 years ago, to launch the Europa Nostra Awards Scheme. Ever since, this Awards Scheme has grown in its importance, and in particular over the last 6 years thanks to our fruitful partnership with the European Commission.

At the moment when we celebrate "**The Best of Europe's Heritage**" we should however not forget that our historic environment – both built and natural - continues to be "**an endangered species**". The **threats** to our historic environment are diverse and numerous: uncontrolled development, bad practices of urban or rural planning, environmental change, neglect and even conflict. Our heritage therefore needs us to join forces and act together as its **advocates**!

At a time when Europe's cultural heritage is also confronted with the alarming lack of public funding, we must imagine innovative partnerships and create new sources

of funding. I am therefore extremely pleased to welcome our special guest tonight:
Dame Liz Forgan, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Before closing, let me share with you my joy in seeing gathered so many Europeans dedicated to our common cause, with a special thought for my country, so well represented tonight. You all and your achievements are the proof of how **vibrant** and **creative** the heritage sector is in today's Europe.