

The Hague, 11 July 2016

Mrs Irina Bokova
Director General
UNESCO

Dear Madam Director General,

I am writing to you as President of Europa Nostra as well as UNESCO 'Good Will Ambassador', on the occasion of the 40th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Istanbul.

First of all, I wish to convey to you and to the Staff of the World Heritage Centre as well as to the member states of the World Heritage Committee, the best wishes of Europa Nostra for a successful meeting in Istanbul. I also wish to congratulate you for your impressive leadership and dedication in promoting the cause of heritage, both in times of peace and - alas - increasingly in times of conflicts. I was particularly pleased to hear about your much appreciated Europe Lecture which you delivered, upon the invitation of Europa Nostra, on 13 June in The Hague, the city where the headquarters of our organisation are located. I very much hope that UNESCO and Europa Nostra will continue to intensify their dialogue and partnership, especially as we are preparing for the European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018.

More specifically, I wish to draw your special attention to one specific World Heritage Site which is of priceless value for Europe and the World but continues to face serious threats for its present and its future: the city of Venice and its Lagoon. As you know, Europa Nostra, together with the European Investment Bank Institute, declared on 16 March 2016 that the Venice Lagoon is 'The Most Endangered Site in Europe'. Consequently, I am pleased to forward to you a document prepared by our founding member organisation, Italia Nostra, summarizing the many threats and challenges with which the Venice Lagoon is confronted today. For all these reasons we are convinced that also UNESCO should urgently put Venice and its Lagoon on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

However, Europa Nostra, together with its Italian member organisations Italia Nostra and Fondo Ambiente Italiano (FAI), wishes to express its understanding for and support to the considerations and recommendations contained in the Report on the State of Conservation of Venice and its Lagoon prepared by the World Heritage Centre for the meeting of the World Heritage Committee in Istanbul. Together with UNESCO, we wish to launch a renewed appeal to Italian authorities to urgently adopt the necessary measures for the safeguard of the City and its Lagoon. We indeed keep the hope that Italian authorities at all levels, with due involvement of civil society, will adopt - without further delay - a bold and radical plan for the safeguard of the most beautiful City in the world.



**The Voice of
Cultural Heritage
in Europe**

**La Voix du
patrimoine culturel
en Europe**

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I am convinced that Italy - with the collaboration of EU and UN Institutions -, is ready to live up to this historical responsibility. We also urge the President of the Council of Ministers of Italy, Matteo Renzi, to extend his full support to our appeal.

Europa Nostra, and other international and national heritage and environmental NGOs concerned, stand at the entire disposal of UNESCO and the Italian authorities to engage in a thorough consultation process for the sake of ensuring a more promising and sustainable future for Venice and its Lagoon.

Looking forward to hearing about your deliberations in Istanbul, and more generally to the continuation of our important cooperation for the benefit of cultural heritage which constitute such a strategic resource for Europe and indeed the entire world,

Respectfully & cordially yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Plácido Domingo', with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Plácido Domingo
President of Europa Nostra

