



EUROPEAN AWARD
HELENA VAZ DA SILVA
FOR RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS ON CULTURAL HERITAGE

HELENA VAZ DA SILVA AWARD CEREMONY
Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, 23 October 2020

Speech by Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović
Secretary General of Europa Nostra

Your Eminence, Cardinal Jose Tolentino Mendonça,
My dear Portuguese Colleagues & Friends,

It is a great honour for me to convey a special message to you from the shores of the North Sea, in The Hague in The Netherlands. I am doing this on behalf of the entire **Europa Nostra family**, and in particular on behalf of the Europa Nostra members of the **Helena Vaz da Silva Award Jury** who are following the live stream of this ceremony from Norway, Belgium and my native Serbia. I therefore hope you can feel that the whole of Europe is tonight in Lisbon to celebrate a great man of culture & human spirit, and a great European from Portugal - **José Tolentino Mendonça**.

After the moving and very poetic tribute to Tolentino Mendonça made by the **Minister of Culture**, I can only say that Europa Nostra subscribes to each and every word pronounced by **Minister Fonseca**. Let me merely add that at the time when Europe and the world are confronted with so many threats and uncertainties, José Tolentino Mendonça's work reminds us that in order to build a more peaceful, more humane, more inclusive and more just future, our society must give much bigger importance and place to **values**, to **poetry**, to the **written word** – as highlighted so eloquently by **Dinis de Abreu**. Indeed, we cannot build the future of Europe if we do not ensure an enlightened communication within our society and if we do not take proper care of the memory and of the heritage of Europe, both cultural and natural, both tangible and intangible, both secular and spiritual.

We are therefore delighted that, from now on, we at Europa Nostra shall be able to lean on the poetry and on the wisdom of Cardinal José Tolentino Mendonça, who is also the Archivist and Librarian of the Holy Roman Church, to guide us and to support us in our vital mission and action.

Dear Colleagues & Friends,

We believe that it is not by chance that we are honouring Tolentino Mendonça only two months before **Portugal will take over the Presidency of the European Union**. Europa Nostra together with our esteemed partners, **Centro Nacional de Cultura** and the **Gulbenkian Foundation**, wishes to seize this opportunity to ensure that the recovery of Europe will also mean a cultural and moral revival of our society. We owe it to **Helena Vaz da Silva** and to so many women and men from all over Europe who have been advocating, with so much passion and conviction, the need to **put culture where it belongs** – at the **very heart of the entire European project**.

It is also not by chance that Tolentino Mendonça is receiving our award in the year when we celebrate the 250th anniversary of another great European - **Ludwig van Beethoven**. With his immortal **Ode to Joy** that has also become the **Ode to Europe** – Beethoven urged humankind to “**change the tone**” and to cherish and spread **the joy of fraternity**. Therefore it can't be a mere coincidence that **Pope Francis has published this year his new encyclical entitled “Fratelli Tutti” – “Brothers All”**.

Before ending, let me congratulate the **Centro Nacional de Cultura** on the 75 anniversary of your remarkable work as a “**lighthouse of human spirit**” in Portugal, in Europe and beyond. As it happens your organisation was born in the same year as the **United Nations**. And it is probably not by mere chance that today the United Nations are led by another great European from Portugal – **Antonio Guterres**.

With Europa Nostra's renewed congratulations to **Cardinal Jose Tolentino Mendonça**, and with very special wishes on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations that the entire world will be celebrating tomorrow, it is my great honour - as Secretary General of Europa Nostra - to give the floor to the **Secretary General of the United Nations**.