

**Speech by H.E. Ambassador Josep M. Lloveras
Head of Delegation of the European Commission
to the Republic of Serbia**

at the International Seminar on **“Enhancement of the cultural and
natural heritage as a factor for sustainable development”**

European Policies and Sustainable Development

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Honourable guests,

It's a great pleasure for me to address this distinguished audience with a few words on a European Commission policy, which I do not often have the opportunity to refer to, namely: our policy towards cultural and natural heritage and their sustainable development.

Sustainable development stands for meeting the needs of present generations without jeopardizing the needs of future ones. Sustainable development offers a vision of progress that links immediate with longer-term needs, as well as local with global needs. Sustainable development covers a wide range of areas, starting with the obvious ones such as the economy and the environment, but including equally important social and cultural components. We in the European Union believe that there is a necessity to treat all these aspects as inseparable and interdependent.

The seminar today focuses on the enhancement of the cultural and natural heritage as a factor for sustainable development. The region of South East Europe boasts remarkable cultural treasures with a unique identity, of which 54 are listed as world heritage. The preservation of these historic monuments and sites as well as their sustainable management and promotion is of key importance if we want to bring our common European cultural heritage to the fore. Some people might fear that European integration could disregard if not even

conflict with the preservation of natural heritage and culture. Let me clearly state that the contrary is true, namely that this region needs to protect its rich cultural background so as to be able to better project it into the enlarged Europe.

The conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage of European significance feature among the objectives of the European Union in the field of culture. One example of the European Commission's engagement in this field is the Joint Action for Cultural Heritage, which was initiated in 2003 together with the Council of Europe in the framework of the Council of Europe's Regional Programme for Cultural and Natural Heritage in South East Europe. This Joint Action favours the protection and promotion of archaeological and architectural cultural heritage and complements other initiatives undertaken through the Community's Culture Programme.

As you know, the joint action for cultural heritage is implemented in the Balkan's region, in particular in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Montenegro and Serbia (including Kosovo).

Activities foreseen under the Joint Action comprise the assessment and analysis of the cultural heritage situation in each country, the drawing up of a prioritized intervention list and the elaboration of technical as well as complete feasibility studies for each cultural monument or site.

While the first two stages have already been completed, the technical studies and the feasibility studies are in progress and will continue for the next two years. The whole process is accompanied by complementary measures which contribute to the sustainable development of the monuments and sites and also of the surrounding local communities. Furthermore, there will be actions of professional training through local workshops with the participation of local and European experts.

Another goal of the Joint Action on Cultural Heritage is to build on valuable experience acquired so far and to promote these best practices through international and inter-regional co-operation measures, such as the "Cultural Corridor" approach. The Cultural Corridor approach has been first proposed in May 2005 during a Summit of Heads of State and Government of the region and has been adopted at the same level during a summit in June this year. We can describe Cultural Corridors as axes of age-old preserved cultural and economic links in the region which can be seen as a unique cultural phenomenon. Joint efforts will be needed in order to further conserve, promote and effectively use the potential of this cultural heritage as a factor of sustainable regional development.

I think it's only fair to say that the Joint Action I have described has so far produced excellent results in terms of exchange of experiences, know-how and best practices. This has been made possible through the close co-operation between national and regional authorities, experts of the countries concerned and international experts designated by the European Commission and the Council of Europe. Your presence here today proves the value of such a dialogue. An important goal has already been achieved, next to developing an international network, namely the awareness of a collective ownership of regional heritage. This has in turn contributed to an extremely beneficial intercultural dialogue.

Let me use this opportunity to announce the forthcoming visit of the European Commissioner for Education and Culture Jan Figel to Belgrade on 26-27 October as a further proof of the importance that the European Commission attaches to the cultural dimension as part of the European Integration Process.

I would like to finish by wishing you much success and inspiration during this three-day seminar in Belgrade. I'm confident that your gathering will be a source of new and fruitful ideas towards developing Europe's precious cultural and natural heritage in a sustainable way.

Thank You