

**Opening-speech of M. Guy Arendt,  
Secretary of State for Culture,  
for the EHHF-meeting in Luxembourg**

**17 May 2018**

Dear heads of heritage institutions, administrations and agencies

Dear Historian of the City of La Havana,

Dear ICCROM President and Director General,

Dear President of the European Archaeological Council,

Dear Vice-President of Europa Nostra,

Dear Director of RED,

Dear representatives of the European Commission and the Council of Europe,

Dear delegates and participants of the European Heritage Heads Forum,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, it is my turn to personally welcome you all to the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg, in the name of the country's government.

It gives me great pleasure to see Europe so well represented here in Luxembourg for this 13<sup>th</sup> European Heritage Heads Forum. And the fact that 2018 is the European Year of Cultural Heritage brings an added touch to the event, honouring my country.

Your forum is set to gain a further boost through the presence of Dr. Eusebio Leal Spengler, responsible for restoring Havana, the wonderful capital of Cuba. His presentation - which you will soon be hearing - will certainly give the forum a new dimension.

I would like to say a big thank you to Dr Leal Spengler and his partner for having made this long journey to meet us. I hope that you will enjoy your stay here in our country and its capital.

The architectural heritage of Luxembourg, whether as a country or as the city, is inextricable linked with the European nations and cultures that have left their stamp on the country. And it is not by chance that we have become one of the three capitals of the European Union, together with Brussels and Strasbourg. Going back to 1952, Luxembourg was the first seat of the first European institution, the European Coal and Steel Community. Today, the Grand-Duchy is home to such EU institutions as the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Investment Bank.

The history of Luxembourg - of which you got your first dose yesterday evening -, its calling and its future are European to the core. And, as part of Europe, Luxembourg has a global reach, able to speak to all countries of the world.

Luxembourg is a small country, whether in terms of its size or its population. During the day, the population swells, with employees commuting to their workplaces in Luxembourg from Belgium, France and Germany, all of them helping to boost our economy.

A little over 600,000 people live here in the Grand-Duchy, 48% have not the Luxembourgish nationality. Over the last 10 years, some 200,000 people have moved here, while about 100,000 have

moved away. Some 120,000 of us live in the City of Luxembourg, 30% of whom have Luxembourg nationality. The other 70% come from 164 different countries!

Like Europe, Luxembourg has its past and present. What we have experienced over time has shaped our identity, our collective memory. We want to share what we have been through, what we have learned, with our neighbours, with other countries in Europe and the rest of the world. But if we are just like the rest of the world, what is left for us to show that we are something special and that we might share? In his theory of civilisations, the French anthropologist Levi Strauss states the following: “But it is necessary that each of us puts up a certain resistance, as otherwise a civilisation will have nothing that it can call its own to exchange.”

Our trump card is our diversity - a diversity we want to live and share, in peace and mutual respect, yet all the while remaining inspired by the motto of the Luxembourg people: “*Mer wëlle bleiwe wat mer sin*” - we want to stay the way we are.

One part of our culture is our architectural heritage, shared with many countries in Europe. Ms Neven will soon be telling you about the *Grande Région*, a cross-border region uniting Luxembourg, Wallonia (the French-speaking part of Belgium), the German Rhineland-Palatinate and Saar, and the French Lorraine. Her presentation on the rural heritage of the region with its different territories highlights the fact that we all face the same challenges and that we have been finding some joint solutions for many years' now.

This quest for joint responses to the challenges facing our built heritage is what gave birth to the European Heritage Heads Forum. Over the last 13 years, it has been promoting European cooperation in this field through supporting the exchange of ideas via an international network of experts working day in, day out, on the minor and major issues surrounding the conservation and protection of our built heritage.

I personally am very much in favour of this European approach, and this is of course one of the main reasons why I am so happy to have you come here to Luxembourg for your annual meeting. The fact that his Highness, Grand-Duke Henri of Luxembourg, will be receiving you this afternoon testifies to the honour you are bestowing on our country.

“Ancient sites and new functions - Sharing our built heritage with the next generation” is the theme of your 2018 forum. You will be putting a particular focus on converting old industrial sites and their buildings. Here in Luxembourg, we also have a few examples of such sites, but obviously not all the solutions. This is the reason why it seems opportune to share our experience and solutions, especially at a time where countries like England, Scotland or Flanders in Belgium have already gained experience in this field.

Before Luxembourg became a banking centre, before it developed its service economy, before the heyday of investment funds, Luxembourg generated its wealth through mining and steelmaking. Tens of thousands of hard-working men, many from Italy and Portugal, laid the basis for our country’s prosperity. Although little now remains of this heavy industry, it is very important to remember these workers to whom we owe so much. This is one of the reasons, and perhaps the most important one, why we need to protect our industrial heritage. Obviously, these sites can now be used otherwise. I am very happy to find your conference addressing this subject, itself very much a European subject, as is the fourth industrial revolution we are now experiencing.

I very much hope that your stay here in Luxembourg will not be in vain. In fact, I am sure that it will be just the opposite. Indeed, the very fact that you are all assembled here today is in itself a success. On top of that you are going to be getting to know inspiring people and places is bound to be very motivating, supporting and encouraging you in your future work.

I am well aware that your work is anything but easy, especially as all those great ideas regarding the conservation and preservation of

our heritage are bound to meet with resistance and egoism. Pericles' aphorism – “Let us love beauty in its simplicity” – is hardly able to quench our thirst for materialism. Unfortunately, everything we do these days is guided by cost-benefit considerations, dictating what we do and shaping our cities and landscapes.

All of us gathered here today, we are fighting to preserve our cultural heritage. Resistance is a driving force of your forum. And, with all its gatherings and events promoting our built heritage, the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage is set to be a great incubator, boosting our fight against the dangers weighing down on our architectural heritage.

One of the first major gatherings of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage was the Conference of European Ministers of Culture held in Davos in Switzerland last January, at the invitation of the President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr Alain Berset. Attending the meeting, Luxembourg co-signed the Declaration of Davos, a declaration highlighting the major contribution of culture to our daily lives. The declaration clearly states that building is in itself a cultural act, creating a space for culture. Taking a holistic approach, it also emphasises the mutual responsibility of politicians and civil society towards our built environment. In doing so, it supports a European policy targeting a high-quality building culture.

Against this propitious background and convinced of the energy and ideas that your meeting will generate, I wish you a fruitful forum and a great stay here in the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg.