



**CULTURAL CORRIDORS OF SOUTH EAST EUROPE  
COMMON PAST AND SHARED HERITAGE -  
A KEY TO FUTURE PARTNERSHIP  
A REGIONAL FORUM**

Varna, May 20-21 2005

**ADDRESS BY MRS. NINA CHILOVA,  
MINISTER OF CULTURE AND TOURISM OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

*(Summarized, the original text is not available)*

- The Minister thanked President Georgi Parvanov and the heads of state of Southeastern Europe for conducting this important regional forum. She also thanked UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura and Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis for their consistent support for the preservation and development of the Bulgarian cultural and historical heritage. She expressed her conviction that the current meeting would usher in a new period of relations among the countries and peoples of this European region which is remarkable for its distinctive history and cultural assets.
- The Minister said that, standing at the meeting point of three continents, the region had welcomed various civilizations which, over the centuries, had left their mark on the present-day cultural heritage of Southeastern Europe. She added that, having retained to this day the variety of ethnic and religious components of their population, the countries in the region possessed unique cultural traditions.
- Stressed that cultural diversity was not only a national trait of each country in the region, but also an important element of the image of the entire region, where shared historical roots, mutual influences over the centuries, and cultural interference had gradually shaped a cultural entity typical of this part of the world, setting the people in the region apart from other Europeans.
- Noted that this closeness was founded on a network of cultural corridors which had been functioning from remote antiquity to the present day – they had been the circulatory system for fruitful cultural exchange and interaction ever since ancient times and they guarantee that unity was stronger than difference, and that the future was more important than the past.
- Expressed hope that the current discussions and the joint declaration on cultural corridors in Southeastern Europe would turn the potential of the region's cultural heritage into a primary factor for sustainable social and economic development.
- Underscored the special significance of the support provided by major international organizations, such as UNESCO and the Council of Europe. She stressed that the transnational coordination of their potential and initiatives, coupled with a political will and institutional support, could produce a much stronger effect on the region and on each individual country.

- The Minister said that, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Bulgaria, the first step in this direction could be a further expansion of the Regional Programme for Cultural and Natural Heritage in Southeastern Europe with an additional transnational component.
- Congratulated the authors of a multimedia exhibition entitled “The Heritage of Southeastern Europe”, which would be opened during the forum. She highly praised the exhibition for its content and for employing modern presentation technologies which are particularly appropriate for perception by children and young people. She said that the effort to raise public awareness of the cultural and historical heritage, especially among the younger generation, had a social effect and helped preserve and popularize that heritage. She said the Ministry of Culture and Tourism would make sure to arrange for the exhibition to tour other Bulgarian cities and perhaps also other countries in the region.
- In conclusion, she expressed her Ministry’s support for the Varna Declaration and said that, as a Bulgarian institution responsible for preserving and developing the cultural heritage in the country and in the region, her Ministry was willing to contribute actively to the implementation of the Declaration.