



**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 PROF. MICHAEL PETZET,
PRESIDENT OF ICOMOS**

(Summarized, the original text is not available)

- The President of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) thanked all who had taken part in the preparations for this important initiative, especially his counterpart Prof. Todor Krestev, Chairman of ICOMOS Bulgaria.
- The President said this was, indeed, a very important initiative, and expressed his satisfaction that two members of ICOMOS scientific committees – Maria Rosa Suarez-Inclan Ducassi of the Cultural Routes Committee and Graham Brooks of the Cultural Tourism Committee – were sharing in the initiative along with Catherine Kremezi, who was participating directly in the Expert Working Group.
- Said the Varna Declaration could be expected to be criticized, but after so much difficult work had been accomplished, there was not a lot to criticize. He said that if one tried, one could find fault with anything – in this case, one could argue about certain terms used in the Declaration: for example, what is a “corridor”, a “route”, a “road”, or a “path”? – but, after all, the purpose of the Declaration, he said, was to help develop and display the enormous cultural heritage of the Balkan region. He stressed that that was a really commendable purpose, and he did not see many problems with the Declaration – it could even serve as a model, a “pilot declaration” for many other regions of the world.
- The President said that tourism sometimes involved problems – for example, problems created by mass tourism, but the Varna Declaration is targeted at what is known as “soft tourism”. He said this was very important, because in some parts of the world, even after the adoption of cultural heritage declarations, there was total failure, as in Kathmandu, Nepal, where enormous problems exist.
- The President said that from the very beginning the spirit of the Declaration owed a lot to Prof. Todor Krestev, who knew very well what “preservation” implied, because this was not a matter of managing a single tourist site, but the very idea was about “preservation”, which was laid down in the Declaration as part of the overall concept.
- Recalled that, in the morning, speakers at the forum had discussed accessibility, saying that everything should be accessible to the public. He expressed the view that not everything should be accessible; some parts of nature should not be accessible at all – not every corner of nature should be accessible to tourists. He said Bulgaria furnished an excellent example of

an “inaccessible” site: the Thracian tomb at Kazanlak. He recalled that this well-known tomb had been rehabilitated and restored for tourist purposes, but it was not open to all visitors, which was a very wise decision. He said this showed that some sites should not be accessible to the general tourist, which was wonderful, knowing how many remarkable monuments in Egypt have been destroyed by the flow of tourists.

- Expressing his satisfaction with an initiative of the ICOMOS General Assembly, the President said that the issue of designating the surroundings of monuments, the settings which provide a backdrop for monuments and cultures, would be discussed in China later in the year. He said the cultural corridors discussed in Varna were part of the surroundings, the environment in which monuments existed, and there were considerable opportunities here to promote “soft tourism”.
- The President said he would not make any critical comments on the Declaration, but added that those who had worked on the document could expect further discussions on the meanings of such terms as “corridor” and “route”.
- The President recalled that, in the morning, speakers at the forum had mentioned “decay” and “beautiful destruction”, saying that things undergo “beautiful destruction,” referring to a quotation from a famous author, who said: “Let’s die beautifully.” The President said this famous saying could be modified as follows: “At the beginning of the twenty-first century, let us preserve things beautifully”, because this is the goal of ICOMOS, and this is the message contained in the guidelines of UNESCO, which strives to achieve precisely that.
- In conclusion, the President thanked for the wonderful lunch, which he described as an excellent example of “non-tangible heritage” in the meaning of the new UNESCO Convention.