



**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 MR. NEIL BUHNE,
RESIDENT COORDINATOR, RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE,
UNDP BULGARIA**

(Summarized, the original text is not available)

- The Resident Representative thanked UNESCO, the Council of Europe, ICOMOS and Bulgaria for organizing the Varna forum, which he described as a wonderful example of a type of cooperation considered extremely important for the future, as the UN Secretary General noted in a report which was to be delivered at the General Assembly in September of the current year.
- The Resident Representative said a link should be traced between culture and human development, a link which a UNDP report had discussed a year and a half earlier.
- The Resident Representative said that on his way to Varna he had passed through a few smaller cities, among them, Razgrad and Targovishte, where he saw further evidence of the amazing number of local initiatives implemented in Bulgaria in an effort to preserve monuments and living culture in order to support local development.
- The Resident Representative discussed specifically Razgrad, which was 120 km from Varna, and which two days earlier had hosted a European Commission-supported event dedicated to the development of cultural tourism. He said that the strength of this project demonstrated how such an activity could be even more useful for the region – on the one hand, the project involved protection of a site dating from the time of the Thracians, restoration of sites of the National Revival Period and reconstruction of a mosque, and on the other hand, links were being built with Bulgarian tour operators. He said such initiatives showed that either the Declaration or the Action Plan should give more prominence to the freedom of private enterprise for cultural cooperation. He referred again to Razgrad, where investments had been made not only to protect the cultural heritage, but also to promote the further development of the local community, which is particularly important, because such projects will attract, through the efforts of tour operators, more economic activity and more revenues, benefiting the municipality's economy.
- The Resident Representative said that the UNDP was implementing a number of projects in Bulgaria, among them, Beautiful Bulgaria, projects for community centres and initiatives to support small enterprises which could become committed to culture. He expressed hope that more would be done in the current year in the context of cultural corridors.
- The Resident Representative said similar projects were implemented in other countries as well – Beautiful Romania in Romania, Beautiful Macedonia in Macedonia – and they, too, could be targeted at activities related to cultural corridors for the well-being of the people.