

EUROPA NOSTRA'S PRESENCE AT THE EUROPEAN UN HABITAT III CONFERENCE 16-18 MARCH.

STATEMENT "HERITAGE COUNTS FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS" WAS PRESENTED ON BEHALF OF EUROPA NOSTRA, THE VOICE OF EUROPEAN HERITAGE, WITH THE SUPPORT OF UNESCO & THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF HOUSING AND PLANNING.

A major challenge for cultural heritage-related associations is to have their voice heard beyond their own circle and reach the world of urban and regional decision makers, whose decisions directly or indirectly affect the preservation and enhancement of that same cultural heritage.

The UN HABITAT conferences are a unique worldwide forum of the urban and regional decision makers. They meet every 20 years. UN HABITAT III will gather in QUITO, Ecuador in October 2016. The European Conference gathered the statements reflecting the European input to the forthcoming QUITO world conference. Europa Nostra presented the following statement in the first day plenary session, immediately after the country statements:

The cultural heritage is a tremendous asset for linking past, present and future generations. The Prague Charles IV Bridge is both part of its architectural heritage and the symbol of urban identity throughout history. Heritage is an asset for achieving living and liveable cities, urban diversity and creativity.

Cultural heritage's protection and promotion require the establishment of effective institutional coordination mechanisms at global, European, national and local levels, as opposed to "silo" institutional approaches to – among others - planning, taxation, energy or education. As examples, heritage authorities should have the right to impose the respect of heritage against threats from other authorities, as they are presently still able to do in Brussels. Value Added Tax reductions should encourage protection and promotion of architectural heritage. Heritage should be exempted from energy saving regulations that put it at risk. Awareness to heritage should be part of education programmes.

We recommend that a specific item be included in the Habitat III final Declaration, focusing on cultural heritage, urban diversity and creativity, including clear targets and indicators linking protection and promotion of cultural heritage to all dimensions of sustainable development *.

*blogs.encatc.org/culturalheritagecountsforeurope

{Edited statement presented by Dr Pierre Laconte, Council member of Europa Nostra & the International Federation of Housing and Planning, President of the Foundation for the Urban Environment, Belgium (fig. 1)}

As to the actual recognition of Cultural heritage's importance by the Habitat III Quito final declaration, many efforts will still be needed. Planning Prof. H. Verschure (Louvain University) with whom Pierre Laconte attended both Habitat I (1976) and Habitat II (1996), co-author of the UNESCO-triggered Issue paper (http://www.ffue.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Habitat-III-Issue-Paper-4_Urban-Culture-and-Heritage.pdf), is one of the convinced. But few feel reassured that the countries (the ministries in charge of planning and housing) will stress the importance of cultural heritage in their official Quito declaration, although planning heritage is also part of cultural heritage, for example the Prague early 20th c. mixed use buildings (fig. 2) . The Heritage Alliance members might join forces to request the recognition of cultural heritage in the final Quito Declaration. ICOMOS was also represented at the Prague Conference, by Claus-Peter Escher, SG of ICOMOS Historic cities and villages committee and Council member, Europa Nostra.

Meanwhile the "World Urban Campaign", representing stakeholders, has adopted on 16 March its own document « The city we need », which includes the somewhat ambiguous sentence « The City We Need looks at heritage not just nostalgically but in an evolutionary and innovative sense. It celebrates the rapidly evolving nature of most modern cities as it cherishes the value of indigenous knowledge, culture and perspectives ».



Presentation of the Europa Nostra Statement in the first plenary session (16 March 2016).



Prague early 20th c. planning heritage: mixed use buildings (shops, restaurants, offices, apartments, penthouse and terrace).
Photo: P. Laconte.

Other views of Prague Early 20th Century Planning Heritage

(Photos by Pierre Laconte)







