

Speech by the Mayor Mr Nicos Nicolaides at the seminar «European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st century», on Thursday, 6th April 2017 at 09.00 hours at Evagoras Lanitis Centre (Carob Mill), organised by the Council of Europe and the Ministry of Interior

Dear guests, it is with great honour that I welcome you in my city for the launch of the European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st century. It is also my personal pleasure as an ex member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and president of the Sub-Committee on Culture, Diversity and Heritage to take part in this milestone of heritage related policy.

The city of Limassol is not only a touristic destination nor just a business center. It has a booming cultural scene and it is proud for its cultural heritage.

From ancient settlements at its outskirts, medieval fortresses, churches and mosques to its historic neighbourhoods and its industrial facilities, the history and multi cultural tradition is evident in the built fabric that boosts with life. Intangible heritage is celebrated continuously mainly through the wine and carnival tradition.

The city looks into the future by honouring its past. The historic core has been revitalized and a great number of historic buildings have been restored and reused to house the premises of the Cyprus Technical University. This strategic decision as well as the Listed Buildings' Incentive Scheme of the Ministry of Interior has had a considerable effect in the regeneration of the city and the attraction of investments and businesses. The structural funds of the European Union are also being utilized for upgrading the historic environment and promoting better quality of life for the inhabitants and users.

Already these examples are the proof for the effectiveness of the recommendations included in the Strategy 21. The important role of the local authorities is rightfully highlighted in the text of the Strategy. It is indeed in great extent the right as well as the responsibility of local authorities to take care of their heritage. To identify and protect it, but also to restore, reuse and revitalize it for its heritage and historic value but also for its social and economic value. For the cities are not museums but vibrant, organically growing spaces of human activity.

The Strategy 21 stresses the need for the active involvement of local authorities in heritage related matters. Their actions can have a major influence on the historic environment as a whole, through the day-to-day management at local level of the historic environment. Moreover, as major owners of heritage places, they can demonstrate leadership in best practice management.

I believe that many mayors around Europe would agree that this is not an easy task. Human resources and funding seem never to be enough. Continuous effort to raise public awareness and shift harming to heritage perceptions is needed. Monitoring and immediate response to development trends and pressures is on everyday's agenda. However, this effort is well worth it. Not only for the heritage value of the historic environment but also for its community, economic and tourism benefit.

I wish to thank the Director of the Department of Town Planning and Housing for choosing Limassol for this event and I wish you enjoy your visit to Cyprus and Limassol and particular.

