

SUMMIT OF SOUTH EAST EUROPEAN STATES
COMMUNICATION OF HERITAGE: NEW VISION FOR SOUTH EAST EUROPE
Opatija, 1 June 2006

STATEMENT
By Mr. Georgi Parvanov
President of the Republic of Bulgaria

Colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like first to express my gratitude to my colleague and friend President Mesić for his commitment to be the host of today's forum as a follow-up of the forum on the cultural corridors of Southeast Europe held at my initiative in Varna a year ago in almost the same format.

I cannot but voice my gratitude also to all participants in this forum for the assistance and support we received thanks to which, implementing the Varna Declaration, we have succeeded in developing and adopting today the Strategy for identifying, preserving, sustainably using and promoting cultural corridors of South East Europe. I believe that, based on this Strategy, the Ministers of Culture of the countries in the region, with the support of UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Commission will soon develop and adopt the relevant Action Plan for the practical attainment of the ambitious objectives we have set to ourselves.

I also believe that this forum will identify a number of the tasks and specific actions to be covered by the Action Plan, especially with regard to the efficient use of the cultural heritage as a specific sustainable development resource, the wide use of research and new technologies in identifying and preserving the cultural heritage, the search for efficient ways to improve the knowledge of our citizens about the exceptional wealth and diversity of this heritage and, above all, the opportunities for joint actions of the countries in the region and international organisations in this sphere.

I think that a specific step in this direction is the permanent web-site “Virtual Cultural Corridors in South East Europe” launched today and demonstrated by Prof. Todor Krestev, which was developed with the support of the Governments of Luxembourg and Bulgaria and with the participation of experts from South East Europe and the assistance of UNSECO, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, for which I wish to express our gratitude. As well as a source of exceptionally rich and well structured information about the cultural and historical heritage of this region, the web-site can serve as an excellent platform for building regional networks of both experts and non-governmental organisations working in this sphere. Thus the joint efforts could gradually turn the web-site into a broad regional forum for exchange of knowledge, opinions and ideas, for establishment of a regional information system, and also for development of joint projects included in the future Action Plan for the Cultural Corridors in South East Europe.

As a matter of fact, there is another project developed by a Bulgarian team with the support of the British Council in Bulgaria and again with the participation of experts from South East Europe and the assistance of UNESCO, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, which fits perfectly into the topic of today’s forum. This is the multi-media product entitled *Discover the Treasure* – an excellent teaching aid for children in South East Europe, offering a sophisticated and yet entertaining way to inform our children about the rich cultural and historical heritage of South East Europe, as well as to educate them to be proud of this heritage and feel responsible for its protection.

This multi-media product is an excellent example of the practical implementation of our commitments set out in the Varna Declaration “to contribute to the promotion of cultural heritage and cultural corridors within the region using modern dissemination technologies” and “to promote intercultral education as a means of fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and awareness of the rich cultural diversity of the region, creating new opportunities for communication, exchange and networking and interaction”.

Last year, I launched the idea “To know and preserve the Bulgarian cultural heritage” among young people in Bulgaria. I believe that this idea of mine has been successfully interpreted in the multi-media product *Discover the Treasure*, where the national coverage has been extended to reach the boundaries of the whole region and the motto has become “To know and preserve the cultural heritage of South East Europe”. Let us, the participants in this forum, come together under this motto and work for its practical implementation.

Thank you!