



## **CO-ORGANIZERS**

**The Republic of Bulgaria** - Administration of the President  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Ministry of Culture and Tourism  
Ministry of Economy  
Ministry of Finance  
Ministry of Education and Science  
National Committee for UNESCO  
National ICOMOS Committee  
Bulgarian Association of Travel  
Agencies  
National Association of Municipalities  
in Bulgaria  
Varna Municipality

**UNESCO** - Administration of the Director General  
Regional Bureau in Venice

**Council of Europe** - Chief Directorate *Education, Culture and Heritage,  
Youth and Sport*

## **FINANCING**

**The Government of the Republic of Bulgaria**  
**UNESCO**  
**Council of Europe**  
**The European Commission**  
**Sponsors**

## **HONORARY COMMITTEE**

### **Co-chairmen:**

**GEORGI PARVANOV** - President of the Republic of Bulgaria

**KOICHIRO MATSUURA** - Director General of UNESCO

**TERRY DAVIS** - Secretary General of the Council of Europe

### **Secretaries:**

**NIKOLAS KARADIMOV** - Foreign Policy Secretary to the President

**PETKO DRAGANOV** - Chairman of the UNESCO National Committee

**TODOR KRESTEV** - Chairman of the National ICOMOS Committee

### **Members:**

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**MILEN VELTCHEV** - Minister of Finance

**NINA CHILOVA** - Minister of Culture and Tourism

**IGOR DAMIANOV** - Minister of Education and Science

**STEFAN DANAILOV** - Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Culture

**KIRIL JORDANOV** - Mayor of Varna Municipality

**KATERINA STENOVA** - Director of the Division of Cultural Policies and  
Intercultural Dialogue, UNESCO

**MARIE-PAULE ROUDIL** - UNESCO - Regional Bureau in Venice

**GABRIELLA BATTAINI-DRAGONI** - Director General of Education,  
Culture and Heritage, Youth and  
Sport, Council of Europe

**CATHERINE ROTH** - Director, Culture, Cultural & Natural Heritage, Council  
of Europe

## Introduction

South East Europe has **a millennia-old history and culture**. Being *the crossroads of civilizations and religions throughout the centuries*, the region has been acting as a natural link between the East and the West. This accounts for the wealth of its cultural heritage. The region boasts remarkable cultural treasures with unique identity. 54 among them are *world heritage*. Its *cultural integrity* is unique, pointing back to common historical roots, intrinsic links and mutual influences. The cultural and historical heritage that has survived highlights distinct **cultural corridors**, dating back hundreds and thousands of years. These are the axes of age-old cultural and economic links in the region that have been preserved until this day. They include both the tangible and intangible cultural and historical heritage of the countries and peoples living in this part of Europe. Today, **they are among the strongest bonds between our nations as well as being the living memory of the local civilizations**.

These **cultural corridors** recognize no borders. They start from *the Adriatic*, run through several countries and end up at *the Black Sea*. Or, they start from *the Mediterranean* and reach *the Carpathians*. Others run parallel to *the Danube River*. The corridors date back to various ages and have been created by various civilizations. Whatever their origin, **they are here in our lands, they are our most precious heritage and we can and must use them to present ourselves to the world as one of the cradles of world civilization**.

In recent years the **cultural corridors** started to be regarded as a unique cultural phenomenon, affording new **political, economic and social opportunities** for the development of countries in the region. On the one hand, they represent a system of cultural values and historical links born of the cultural exchange and dialogue among countries in the region. On the other hand, they could be packaged as **a complete cultural and tourist product**, combining the cultural values with the tourist, transport and information infrastructure.

However, the present state of the cultural heritage in the region is **disturbing** because of its *fragmentation within the closed national and local systems*, rather than being seen in the existing *trans-national cultural corridors*. In most cases this unique cultural heritage linked together in clearly visible cultural corridors *is vaguely known in Europe, in the world and even in the region itself*. There has been a deficit of effective **regional cooperation for a coordinated protection and use of the existing cultural resource**.

Considering this, the countries of the region are becoming increasingly aware of the need for **joint efforts to reveal, conserve, use sustainably and promote the rich cultural heritage of South East Europe**, as well as to build a *modern regional system for cultural tourism*, integrated in the European system. *This is a way to use the potential of the cultural heritage for the purposes of a sustainable regional development*. This can only be done through **concerted actions by all stake-holders: politicians, experts, business people and the broad public**.

### **The main objectives of the Varna Forum will be, as follows:**

- *To map out concrete steps for protecting and promoting the specific and unique nature of the cultural heritage of South East Europe as a crossroads of civilizations and religions and a bridge for the opening up and integrating the region in the common European space;*
- *To bring to the knowledge of Europe and the world the remarkably rich cultural heritage of South East Europe, so as to display the little known image of the region as a cradle of the European and world civilization;*
- *To identify the ways toward a sustainable use of the cultural heritage of South East Europe as a specific resource for economic and social development and integration of the countries in the region;*
- *To promote the indivisible and integral nature of the cultural heritage of South East Europe as a basis for overcoming national, ethnic and religious divisions, boosting the sense of regional identity and responsibility for the promotion of regional self-confidence and pride.*

### **What will be the concrete result of the Forum?**

The concrete result will be the *Declaration on the Guidelines for revealing, conserving, using sustainably and promoting the cultural corridors in South East Europe* that is to be discussed and adopted by the heads of state of the countries in the region. By this Declaration the politicians are to give the experts of the region a mandate to draft a **Plan of Action** that could be approved at a regional forum of experts to be organized in the autumn of 2005 or in early 2006.

### **It will be a joint political and expert forum that will proceed as a direct dialogue of politicians and experts at a common round table:**

- The **political format** of the Forum will include: the heads of state/government of *Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, FYROM, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia and Montenegro, Turkey and Croatia* (in format 1+1+3), *the Director General of UNESCO* (in format 1+3), *the Secretary General of the Council of Europe* (in format 1+3), *the President of the European Commission* (in format 1+2) and *the commissioners for enlargement and culture* (in format 1+1), *the Prime Minister of Luxembourg as the EC President in office* (in format 1+2), *the ICOMOS President* (in format 1+1), *the members of the Honorary Committee* (in format 1+1) and *the ministers of culture of neighbouring countries in the region* (in format 1+1);
- The **expert group** will include *two experts each (one on cultural and historical heritage and one of cultural tourism) from the host country, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the European Commission and ICOMOS*. The ten experts are to form an Expert Working Group that is to be coordinated by the host country. Its task will be to draft the Declaration in the months remaining before the Forum. The preliminary Draft Declaration should be

ready **by 31 March 2005**, in order to be presented immediately afterwards for consultations and approval by the heads of states' political offices. Taking into account the feedback from the countries of the region received **by 30 April 2005** the Expert Working Group should draft the final version of the document that is to be submitted for discussion and adoption during the forum.

### **Parallel Events:**

- ***A Regional Expert Network on the cultural corridors in South East Europe*** is to be constituted in the end of the first day of the Forum;
- ***A Multimedia Exhibition of the World Heritage of South East Europe*** is to be staged during the Forum. It will present the integral image of the region by the *54 world heritage sites* and the *160 valuable attractions supervised under the Regional Program of the Council of Europe and the European Union*, as well as the *monuments selected by the ICOMOS Program Heritage & Risk*;
- ***A concert*** presenting the *intangible cultural heritage of the countries of the region* is also to take place during the Forum.

**The Forum will be held on 20-21 May 2005 in the Riviera resort at Golden Sands, Varna, with the following preliminary agenda:**

#### **19 May 2005 - Thursday :**

**Afternoon:** Arrival of the participants in the Forum

#### **20 May 2005 - Friday:**

- 10.30 – 11.00** Official opening
- 11.00 – 12.00** Multimedia presentation of the *cultural corridors in South East Europe and some pilot projects for cultural tourism on the territory of Bulgaria (Appendixes 7 through 18)*
- 12.00 – 12.30** Presentation of the *Draft Declaration on the Guidelines*
- 13.00 – 14.30** Lunch hosted by the *UNESCO Director General Mr. Koichiro Matsuura* for the Forum participants
- 15.00 - 17.00** Discussing the *Draft Declaration on the Guidelines*
- 17.00 – 17.30** Formal launch of the *Regional Expert Network on the cultural corridors in South East Europe*
- 19.00 – 20.30** *A concert* presenting the *intangible cultural heritage of the region*
- 21.00 – 23.00** Official dinner hosted by the *Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov* for the Forum participants

**21 May 2005 - Saturday:**

- 10.00 – 10.30** Reporting on and adoption of the *Declaration*
- 10.30 – 11.00** General Press Conference
- 12.00 – 12.30** Opening the multimedia exhibition of the *World Heritage of South East Europe*
- 13.00 – 14.30** Lunch hosted by the *Mayor of Varna Municipality* for all participants
- 15.00 – 17.00** Visit to cultural and historical heritage sites in Varna
- After 17.00** Departure of participants in the Forum

**English will be the working language of the Forum but the heads of state/government can speak their national language**

**The heads of state/government may be accompanied by their spouses. The cost of the stay in Bulgaria of all officially invited participants together with their accompanying persons according to the above formats will be covered by the Forum Organizers**

**Each country of the region may send to the Forum up to 10 national media representatives who pay themselves for their stay in Bulgaria**

**Follow-up to the Varna Forum:**

- *A regional forum of experts on cultural corridors in South East Europe to be held in late 2005 or early 2006. On the grounds of the Declaration adopted by the Varna Forum it is to discuss and endorse a Plan of Action for revealing, using sustainably and promoting the cultural corridors in SEE;*
- *To create a regional Resource Centre for cultural itineraries in Bulgaria to serve as Headquarters of the Regional Expert Network.;*
- *To create and maintain a data base on the cultural heritage in the region and electronic maps on the cultural corridors in SEE;*
- *To compile a tourist guidebook entitled Cultural Itineraries in SEE ;*
- *To create an Internet page on Virtual cultural itineraries of SEE;*
- *To design promotion multimedia products Virtual cultural itineraries of SEE.*