

In a few years, Forum UNESCO has carried out an unquestionable activity in favour of World Heritage. The well-documented, didactic exhibition being introduced here is a token of such a valuable, support-worthy task.

The documents and information contained in this exhibition show how heritage awareness has been progressively taking shape and consolidating in a society with a growing interest in art and culture. The topics include the techniques related to the conservation and cataloguing of artistic and historical goods, but, far from lingering in the concerns and appreciations of the specialists, this exhibition contributes to satisfy the citizens' aspiration.

Our ancestors and our history have left us a valuable heritage; the description and assessment of their contribution lead us inevitably to assume this legacy as part of our identity, an identity shared by other cultures.

We can only be ready to face the future when we know the meaning of our past.

Eduardo Zaplana  
President of the Generalitat Valenciana

One of UNESCO's principal tasks is defined in its Constitution as being to '*maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge by assuring the conservation and protection of the world's inheritance of books, works of art and monuments of history and science*'

The gap between the scope of that objective and the limited means available for conservation of world heritage is huge. International efforts to involve the universities in voluntary work for the benefit of the cultural heritage, under the guidance and supervision of professionals, play an important part in bridging that gap.

The participating universities in the international *Forum UNESCO - University and Heritage* in Valencia in 1996, Quebec in 1997, Melbourne in 1998 and Fez in 1999 illustrated through concrete actions their commitment towards Cultural Heritage, both tangible and intangible, at the national and international levels. The universities confirmed their solidarity based upon the sharing of knowledge and know-how.

By joining forces to co-operate on joint projects for the protection of heritage, both tangible and intangible, universities, professors and students, can play a central role, giving impetus to sustainable development which is one of the major objectives of the network. Action by young people in favour of their cultural heritage helps them to build a new code of ethics as regards management of the environment. The contact they have with specialists and practitioners in the relevant disciplines is also highly beneficial. Their involvement in heritage projects nurtures a stronger feeling of unity: they can see the Earth in its cultural diversity, as a single heritage, to preserve and pass on together.

This fifth international seminar of *Forum UNESCO - University and Heritage* in Byblos, city of the World Heritage, will certainly confirm and reinforce the ethics, the commitment and the dynamism of this network.

**Mounir Bouchenaki**  
**Assistant Director-General of UNESCO for Culture**

The organization of the Fifth International Seminar of *Forum UNESCO - University and Heritage* in Lebanon has more than one point of strength. Lebanon is centrally located between East and West and therefore convenient to participants from all over the world. Also due to this central geographical location, Lebanon has developed throughout history as a depository of many civilizations and their great heritage. In addition, hosting this conference at the *Lebanese American University* in its continuing expansion and development of international relations brings for us additional reasons to welcome you in our two campuses in Beirut and Byblos.

Being at the crossroads of civilizations, cultures and religions, Lebanon continues to play a role as a focal point of historic, political, economic and social developments. As a result, this small country has become famous as a place of cultural exchange and tolerance, and as a museum of various pieces of world heritage. After the Fourth International Seminar at the Al Akhawayn University of Ifrane, Morocco, which worked to develop the North-South exchange, this meeting will complement it by also developing the East-West exchange. The *Lebanese American University* shall do its best to strengthen the international links that were created in the previous forums, from the particularly well suited historic cities of Beirut and Byblos. We hope that such links will improve human relations through the appreciation and acceptance of the differences in others and thus contribute greatly to global understanding and the preservation of the different heritages and cultures.

On behalf of the *Lebanese American University*, I would like to welcome all participants and hope that the lessons we learn from history will help us in developing a better future.

**Riyad F. Nassar**  
**President Lebanese American University**