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## COUNCIL OF EUROPE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

### 11th COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONFERENCE ON THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

*Conference organised under the auspices of the Presidency of Hungary  
of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe*

Council of Europe  
Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg  
26-27 May 2021  
*Online meeting [Room 9]*

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#### Opening speech

*Mr Bjørn BERGE,  
Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe*

Minister,  
Ambassador,  
Madam Deputy Mayor,  
Madam Chair,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

For over 20 years now the European Landscape Convention has been a tool with which states parties have been able to ensure the quality and diversity of their living environment.

This innovative treaty recognises that whether a landscape is urban or rural, natural or man-made, it reflects our culture, values and identity;

And that where there is the will, there is the capacity to preserve it too.

The challenges addressed by this treaty are long-standing but also fast-evolving:

Let me mention a few of them:

From city expansion to rural depopulation, and from intensive farming to the disharmony of territories and the lack of understanding of the impact that all of this has.

The environmental aspect is also becoming ever more important.

Urban and agricultural degradation; air, water and soil pollution; and, of course, the ever-greater threat of climate change, all pose real risks to our landscapes.

So, it is right and proper that these are reflected in the Lausanne Declaration that you adopted last year.

The text reaffirms the relationship between landscape and ecological, environmental and social policies;

It reasserts the public interest in getting this right;

And, importantly, highlights the economic benefits that come from good planning, protection, and management.

Certainly, there is strong evidence that international co-operation is working, with relevant and meaningful landscape-related policies implemented by states parties.

This is something we clearly see from the national and regional reports submitted to this Conference, showing legislative and operational change, underpinned by financial resources.

It also evident from the range of nominees for the 6th Session of the Landscape Award.

These include the restoration of the watercourse of the River Aire by the Republic and Canton of Geneva;

The “Let’s do it” community activities day of action to clean up the environment, organised in Estonia;

The establishment of a National Urban Park in the City of Kotka in Finland;

And the reconquering of the river Seine’s quays through the development of a large river promenade in the City and Metropolis of Rouen, in France.

It is reassuring to see the new ways in which citizens and authorities alike are organising to improve the quality of their living environment and to preserve and enhance their landscapes for the benefit of current and future generations.

There is of course much more to do, but the European Landscape Convention remains a reference text for public policies.

So, I hope that more member States will ratify it.

Equally, I am also pleased that from July this treaty will be open to non-European states too.

And if our multilateral approach can make a positive difference in the wider world, that can only be applauded.

The European Landscape Convention already contributes towards the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

And the more countries that join it, the greater that contribution will be.

So, my thanks go to the Hungarian authorities for prioritising these issues, for including this event in the framework of its Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, and for the fine exhibition of photographs of the Hungarian landscape, which

I hope you will all have the opportunity to view.

I wish you a successful Conference.

Thank you for your attention.

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