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EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION
EIGHTEENTH COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEETING
OF THE WORKSHOPS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

National policies for the implementation of
The European Landscape Convention:
Challenges and opportunities

Yerevan, Armenia
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Closing speech

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Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe*

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of all the participants, I wish to thank once again the government and representatives of Armenia for their warm hospitality. It was an immense pleasure to admire the magnificent natural landscapes of Armenia, imbued with the culture, spirituality and soul of their inhabitants. To quote Martiros Saryan: “The earth is like a living being, it has its own soul. Without close contact to the mother country, one cannot identify oneself, and know one’s own soul. I am convinced that unless an artist is attached to his homeland, he is not a true artist. The earth’s heart beats in the heart of man. All things are born of this heart”¹.

I would like to say a very special thank you to Ms Ruzan Alaverdyan, chief advisor to the Minister of Urban Development, to Ms Naira Sarkisian, chief specialist of Urban Policy and Spatial Planning, and to their colleagues with whom the Secretariat of the Council of Europe worked in the preparation of this meeting.

¹ Chahen Khatchatourian, *Peintres arméniens du XIX^e et du XX^e siècles*, National Gallery of Armenia USA, New York, 1993 (ISBN 2-00-003701-1), epigraph, p. 2.

I thank the Chairs of the workshops, the speakers for their excellent presentations and the participants for their interventions and contributions to the debates.

These discussions have shown us that national landscape policies are making progress in many States: national strategies and landscape action plans are being adopted, new legislation, tools and financial instruments are being set up, and new ways of horizontal and vertical co-operation are appearing. These advances are extremely relevant for the effective implementation of the European Landscape Convention. The landscape audit and the Landscape Day which have been established in Poland are also very helpful contributions towards greater public awareness of the landscape.

The holistic approach and long-term perspective inherent in these measures are instrumental in promoting sustainable and harmonious territorial development. They are an integral part of an approach to embrace this “common destiny” of man, society and the environment, as referred to by Julien Transy.

Human rights and democracy are the key values of the Council of Europe, and in its consideration of the landscape, as proposed in the Landscape Convention, the organisation pays as much attention to form as to substance. With its focus on human rights and democracy, the Convention makes an effective and operative link between aesthetics and ethics. The preamble refers to other key international legal texts on the protection and management of our natural and cultural heritage, regional/spatial planning, local self-government and cross-border co-operation.

The States Parties to the Convention have considered that landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas. They have accordingly acknowledged that the quality and diversity of landscapes constitute a shared resource to whose protection, management and planning it is vital to contribute. In addition, they have indicated their wish to establish a new instrument dedicated exclusively to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes.

Landscape has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields and constitutes a resource that can promote economic activity and whose protection, management and planning can contribute to job creation. It can help establish local cultures and is a fundamental component of the natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and the consolidation of identities.

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