

Ministers
Distinguished Hosts
Dear colleagues and participants
Ladies and gentlemen

As chair of the Council of Europe Conference on the European Landscape Convention I will warmly thank the Ministry of Urban Development of Armenia and the Council of Europe – Directorate of Democratic Governance, Secretariat of the European Landscape Convention for organising this 18th workshop.

This workshop will be on the challenges and opportunities in establishing a national policy for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention. With 'Landscape policy' the convention means "an expression by the competent public authorities of general principles, strategies and guidelines that permit the taking of specific measures aimed at the protection, management and planning of landscapes". It is a broad definition that gives each country the opportunity to choose the approach that best suits their division of powers, in conformity with their constitutional principles and administrative arrangements. While they at the same time should respect the principle of subsidiarity.

At the beginning of this workshop I will recall what is stated in the Explanatory Report for the Convention in article 25 to 28:

25. The general purpose of the Convention is to encourage public authorities to adopt policies and measures at local, regional, national and international level for protecting, managing and planning landscapes throughout Europe so as to maintain and improve landscape quality and bring the public, institutions and local and regional authorities to recognise the value and importance of landscape and to take part in related public decisions.

26. The above-mentioned policies and measures cover all the forms of landscape which countries possess. The Convention applies to all parts of Europe, including natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It is not confined to either the cultural, man-made or natural components of landscape: it is concerned with all of these and how they interconnect.

27. Extending the scope of local authorities' official landscape action to cover the whole of national territory does not imply that the same measures and policies must be applied to all landscapes; these measures and policies should be adaptable to particular types of landscape, which, depending on their specific characteristics, will need various forms of treatment at local level, ranging from the strictest conservation via protection, management and planning to actual creation. These various treatments may allow an important socioeconomic development of the areas concerned.

28. The Convention demands a forward-looking attitude on the part of all those whose decisions affect the protection, management or planning of landscapes. It has implications for many areas of official policy and official or private action, from the local to the European level.

I hope that we can have this in mind when we have our discussions and exchanges on Strategies and policy documents in favour of the landscape, Landscape policies and legal and financial instruments, and on Horizontal and vertical co-ordination.

In the workshop we will give special attention to the landscape experiences of our host country Armenia. And some weeks ago my leader Mr. Bjørn Casper HORGÉN who also participated in this workshop showed me the exhibition booklet for the Pavilion of Armenia at the 15th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice. Which he had visited earlier this summer. The title is "Independent Landscape" and it gave me great expectations to experience and learn more about Armenia's landscape and the work you do. I also want to congratulate the Republic of Armenia on its 25th anniversary the 21st of September.

I am sure that the discussions and exchanges that will take place during this workshop will further reinforce the role the European Landscape Convention holds as a key tool for successful 'living together', ensuring access to democratic participation for all people and help improving the quality of life for everyone.

I wish this Workshop great success.
Thank you for your attention.