

21ST AGA AND CONFERENCE

CLOSING PLENARY

SPEAKING NOTES, DR. RUI VILAR

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the Closing Plenary of what has been a truly amazing week. Even though this unprecedented event must at times have seemed quite daunting to the organisers, I think we can all agree that it came off very well – a major success showcasing just how much foundations do, and what a significant role they play in European society.

I'll share more of my thoughts on Foundation Week later in the Plenary, but now I would like to give the floor to Norine Macdonald Q.C. of the Network of European Foundations' Mercator Fund to award this year's Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy in Europe.

And now to the 2010 EFC Photo Competition, whose theme this year is the fruitful collaboration between foundations and other actors. You have all seen the striking images of the ten finalist photos and have had a chance to vote on your favourite. These powerful stories conveyed through the

medium of photography give us yet another way of understanding and sharing the impact of our work.

Indeed, partnership is a cornerstone of all that the EFC does. Two organisations with which the Centre has developed stronger relationships are the European Venture Philanthropy Association and the Arab Foundations Forum. To ensure the continued growth of these partnerships, the EFC will now sign Memoranda of Understanding with these two organisations. I would like to first invite the Arab Foundations Forum to the stage, which is a network which emerged from a number of Arab foundations and was established out of the need for a networking structure for foundations in the Arab region to strengthen the capacity and infrastructure of strategic philanthropy. From its start, the Forum has strived to encourage more synergy, accountability and responsiveness from foundations in the region, and as such the EFC is pleased to further strengthen this important relationship.

(Signing of Memorandum of Understanding with Arab Foundations Forum)

Next, I am pleased to present to you the European Venture Philanthropy Association, a network of venture philanthropy

funds and others committed to promoting high-engagement philanthropy in Europe. The EFC and EVPA are already profiting from sharing a workspace, as EVPA moved into the new EFC offices in January, and this memorandum will serve to further strengthen ties between the organisations.

(Signing of Memorandum of Understanding with European Venture Philanthropy Association)

I am sure you have all seen the Dialogue Audition exhibit at the Interactive Fair. Throughout Foundation Week, Artist Filip Berte, in partnership with the European Cultural Foundation, has been filming interviews with EU representatives, policy-makers, citizens and other participants of the event, maybe even including you. His aim is to help bridge the communications gap between the EU institutions and citizens. I would like to welcome Katherine Watson of the European Cultural Foundation to tell you more and to present a short film that Filip has put together with highlights from these interviews.

It is now my pleasure to introduce our keynote speaker, Francis Charhon, Chief Executive Officer of Fondation de France. Francis studied medicine, and after a career as a doctor, he joined Médecins Sans Frontières in 1980 as

President and was appointed as Managing Director 2 years later. In 1992, Francis joined Fondation de France. In addition, he is also Vice President of France Générosités (Union of the charity organizations). Since 2002, he has also been President of the French Foundations Center. Francis has played a key role at the European Foundation Centre for almost two decades. He has been on the Management Committee of the EFC since 1992, including a two-year term as Chair of the Centre. He has also been heavily involved in the EFC's advocacy work around EU policy and legislation through his involvement in the former EFC EU Committee and the current Advocacy Task Force. Welcome Francis.

(Francis Charhon)

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I hope you have found the first-ever Foundation Week useful, interesting, enjoyable and, above all, inspiring. The sheer scale and scope of the Week – from policy debates to artistic exhibitions to wheelchair basketball – have given us all a feel for the wide range of areas that foundations impact, and a taste for the variety of ways in which they do their work. The Week also gave us as foundations a chance to listen to and be heard by our stakeholders and partners –

all the way from ordinary EU citizens to the pinnacle of the EU's leadership. And I am sure that those who participated in the "Next Generation Initiative" at the Week will have a lot to take home with them.

From my foundation's perspective, we were particularly excited about being able to contribute to Foundation Week with our exhibition on Darwin's Evolution at the Interactive Fair. Part of Darwin's reflections revolved around the concept of "altruism". He mentions that groups that contain altruistic or helpful individuals do better as a whole than those groups that do not contain these individuals. I believe this observation can and must continue to be applied today. When we empower the disadvantaged, when we focus our attention on the well-being of others, we lift ourselves up – both as individuals and as a community. The challenging times in which we as Europeans now find ourselves require pulling together and doing what is best for our community so that we not only survive, but also thrive.

And if we look beyond the borders of Europe, these ideas apply to the entire globe, with its societies and communities that are now so interlinked and dependent on one another. When searching for the theme for next year's AGA and

Conference, to be held in Cascais, Portugal, we looked for something that could illustrate this interconnectedness. Considering the location of the 2011 AGA and Conference, on the beautiful coast of my home country, a light bulb went on in our minds. What illustrates these connections better than “The Oceans – World Resources and Sustainability»? These entities that connect us to one another; that in many ways mould our cultures by their proximity or their distance; that teem with life; that provide a source of food and employment for so many; and that are composed of the very essence of life – water. Our oceans also act as bellwethers for the grave environmental problems we face, with the ongoing oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, just the latest incident in a long list of challenges to our environment. So I hope you will join us next year in Portugal for what promises to be a unique look at foundations and their work through the prism of “The Oceans”. The Host Committee is composed by

- Portuguese Foundation Centre
- Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian
- Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento
- Fundação Oriente
- Fundação Eng. António de Almeida
- Fundação Bissaya Barreto
- Fundação Eugénio de Almeida

Finally, I would like to extend a very sincere “thank you” to the host of Foundation Week, the King Baudouin Foundation, for putting on such an excellent event.

Thank you all again for coming to Brussels, and I hope to see you in Portugal next year.