

43<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE  
4 July 2019, Baku, Azerbaijan



## STATEMENT BY EUROPA NOSTRA ON THE STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT WITH REGARD TO VENICE AND ITS LAGOON

Thank you Madam Chair.

On behalf of our large movement of heritage NGOs across Europe including Italy, Europa Nostra deeply regrets that the World Heritage Committee has decided to adopt its decision with regard to Venice and its Lagoon without even opening the discussion. As you all know, threats to Venice and its Lagoon are numerous. They are not decreasing but increasing with an ever-growing pressure of tourism and the effects of climate change. However, given the limited speaking time, Europa Nostra wishes to concentrate on the serious threats caused by cruisers.

Only one month ago, we witnessed an alarming accident caused by the persistent traffic of the giant cruisers in the San Marco Basin and the Guidecca Canal!

Miraculously, only 5 people were wounded and nobody died. But this accident has once again brought to the fore the considerable threat, and even a security risk, which cruise ships pose to Venice, its inhabitants and visitors.

Apart from the threat to the cultural heritage of Venice, the cruise ships bring huge environmental threats to the fragile ecosystem and the morphology of the Lagoon. This includes the cruisers' considerable contribution to air and water pollution which causes serious health risks to people while also having a negative impact on historical monuments. Last but not least, nobody can deny that they cause an unacceptable visual pollution.

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For all these reasons, we deplore that the Committee's decision does not refer to this accident and its implications. We also deplore that this Committee has decided to change its decision adopted in 2016 to prohibit the largest ships and tankers to enter the Lagoon. Regrettably, the Committee has today endorsed a route that will keep the cruisers within the Lagoon. This route is promoted by the City of Venice with the support of the cruise industry. I am sure you will all agree that the role of UNESCO is to preserve World Heritage and not to give its support to the cruise industry. The Committee should also not give its blessing for a plan for which the State Party has not prepared the requested environmental and heritage impact assessments, and at the time when the various alternatives, including the proposal of re-routing the cruisers outside of the Lagoon, are still under discussion by the government of the State Party. Europa Nostra believes that there must be a way that this World Heritage Committee avoids making such a grave mistake by modifying the related paragraph of its decision.

*For all these and many other reasons,* let me re-iterate the firm position of Europa Nostra that the time has come for Venice and its Lagoon to be inscribed on the World Heritage List in Danger. If this was already done in Europe for world heritage cities like Liverpool or Vienna, there is even more justification to do it for Venice. This is not to punish the State Party, but rather to help and support it to take the right measures to preserve Venice and its Lagoon for present and future generations. We are fully confident that with the combined efforts of the State Party, UNESCO and all relevant stakeholders, as well as with the possible support of the European Union, this can be achieved.

Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović  
Secretary General

Baku, 4 July 2019