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PRESS RELEASE

Arts festivals commit to build bridges between cultures European Year of Intercultural Dialogue continued

On 17 November 2008 in Paris, the European Festivals Association (EFA) presents the outcomes of its Arts Festivals' Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue. Jointly, 20 major festival directors from all over Europe and European Commissioner Ján Figel' launch a statement of festivals' future commitment to intercultural dialogue. In the framework of the conference "New Perspectives of Intercultural Dialogue in Europe" that officially concludes the EU's 2008 thematic year festivals once again underline the strength of arts and culture and in particular festivals to enhance dialogue between cultures.

A festival is a unique "occasion for meeting different people and different cultures. Together with artists who are real masters of communication through art, a festival is a strong builder of bridges between different cultures - and even between civilizations!" according to Mr Figel'.

Festivals from Avignon, Berlin, Brno, Edinburgh, Emilia Romagna, l'Epau, Estoril, France Festivals, Granada, Ljubljana, Prague, Reykjavik, Rheingau, Rome, Santander, Sarajevo, Festivals in Transition, Trondheim, Vilnius and Flanders confirm - on behalf of hundreds of signatory colleague festivals - to "act as powerful messengers for a peaceful and free exchange among people and the respect for cultural diversity also beyond 2008" (abstract from the Epilogue to the Declaration).

The Arts Festivals' Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue started its journey on 8 January 2008 in Ljubljana under the Slovene EU Presidency. It traveled to four continents and was endorsed by hundreds and hundreds of arts festivals from all corners of the world - all displayed in an impressive Signing Book available on the EFA website. "This success would have been impossible without the support of all festivals who signed the Declaration, of the European Commission, Mr Figel' and each European citizen who visited our festivals this year to celebrate intercultural dialogue with us," stresses EFA President Darko Brlek. "Our common objectives truly unite us in our diversity."

The Declaration is the main initiative of EFA in the framework of the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. A special website dedicated to the Declaration featuring best practices and activities throughout 2008 is available at www.efa-aef.eu.

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