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## Interpretation

What kind of planet will our children inherit?  
Will they have room to roam?  
Will they have air to breath and food to eat?  
Will they ever see an eagle flying free or enjoy the solitude of  
a pristine mountain lake?  
Will they be able to admire all the man-made beauty, and  
will they be enabled to experience a common future, based on a  
perception of a common past pointing back to the cradle of man  
in the Great Rift Valley on the African Continent?

It is beyond any doubt that the answers to these questions depend  
on the action that we take or do not take today and in the years  
to come.

I am therefore greatly honoured and filled with gratitude to have  
the privilege to adress this important assembly.

Coming from all realms of the world we convene in Barcelona to  
enjoy the Catalan hospitality that has been prepared for us. A  
special thank to all of you that have been working for years to  
make this global congress come true at an important historical  
spot on the Catalan coastline of the Mediterranean.

What are the carachteristics of the people coming to a congress  
dealing with heritage interpretation?

I think we have in common the fact that we feel the pain of concern  
for the future of this planet. We have, I hope, conceived that  
man is not dedicated to conquer Nature, but is part of Nature,  
and can prosper only when we understand that we must act within  
the ecological frames that a fragile balance determines.

Together we are part of the great adventure of Existence itself.  
At our 3rd congress in Honolulu, Patric McCusker from Ireland  
pointed out to us that there should be no room for discussion on  
the "usefulness" or the beauty of any creature. All are family,  
all are beautiful.

It is from this position that conservation and management must  
flow in every country. Economic and industrial arguments most often  
points out an opposite direction based on short-sighted  
profit considerations.

Such arguments would not protect the deep roar of most of creation.  
Better that we see it as a beautiful and very ancient song. When  
each of us can hear that song, the

'cost of things' and the so called freedom still given to industry  
and commerce will be judged in a new light.

When that happens politicians will add this new thinking to their  
scales and adjust policies to the new needs.

And it is indeed urgently needed to adjust a number of policies

throughout the world.

The knowledge of specialists within the disciplines of natural science and culture is of little use, unless their comprehension is passed over to all decision-makers and included in everyone's everyday thinking.

The key in this process is INTERPRETATION.

As a matter of fact, it was my own experience as governmental politician as well as experience from medical science and public opinion that brought me to the First Congress on Heritage Interpretation and Presentation in Banff in Canada ten years ago. For the first time I discovered an association that managed to combine the interests of the natural as well as the cultural heritage. This combination is at present considered to be vital in Scandinavian legislation that emphasizes the demand for dealing with complete environs in local and national environmental management.

In this combination I saw a power that I had failed to find before.

HII is regrettably not the most powerful organization to influence the management of the world's resources. But our mission is to develop interpretative techniques that may lead to awareness raising and better decisions locally, nationally and globally.

Therefore, in Banff, we believed that heritage presentation and interpretation are indispensable elements in conservation and management of the world's natural and cultural resources. We affirmed, and we still affirm that protected areas, sites and objects serve the physical, cultural and spiritual needs of humanity, and provide a link from the past to the present and to our future.

We believe that expanded awareness and the creation of opportunities to understand, appreciate and enjoy these resources are essential to the creation and long term protection, conservation and wise use of this heritage.

Increasingly intensive exploitation of natural resources and landscape is probably the main threat to biological diversity, more so even than environmental pollution. The 'library of the world' is at fire! It concerns no less than the very basis of our existence. It is therefore of great importance to implement sustainable development on a global basis. A sincere concern on the poverty crisis must be a major part of these efforts.

It is claimed that the world has enough for our needs, but not for our greeds. I believe that this is true.

It is too early to make final analysis of the importance of the World Summit for Social Development, a conference that was ended 3 days ago in Copenhagen. I agree with those who emphasizes the fact that the world leaders have never had a better chance in decades for learning their lessons on the danger of wide-spread

poverty. They got the opportunity to think through their own actions and the mechanisms that creates the poverty crisis. The importance of this agenda must not be underestimated.

Also in our time the natural heritage, the cultural heritage and human dignity are afflicted by a number of regional conflicts.

The everlasting competition for controlling resources and the tragic fact of racism in various forms lead to destruction and war.

It is my hope that our concern for the natural and cultural heritage also can enhance the protection of human dignity.

By hearing the ancient song of all creation - man included - we may hopefully also contribute to peace maintenance.

To me this is a driving force in our common effort to improve the stewardship of this planet's assets and give people a feeling of a high and wide sky over their everyday life.

Tree years ago Dr. Konai Helu-Thaman from Fiji talked about the erosion of indiginous cultures and the threat to their value systems in a way that lead to spontaneous applause at one of the last plenary sessions.

Fist of all, she said, we need to recognise our own enslavement to the dominant cultures of colonial masters. We must also learn to understand what happened and is happening to us as a consequence of mainly western cultural imperialism, a process many of us actively play a part. We need most of all to be reborn, not in the evangelical style of American television, but one in which we are able to free ourselves from the straight jacket of viewing the world only from a particular perspective - where lands and peoples are seen as separate objects and are to be exploited for profit; where the massive machinery of inequality demands that some humans should continue to treat other humans like pawns on the developmental chessboard of the environment.

Not until the commercial imperative and the profit motive are deemphasised will most of our people have a hope of realising the benefits of ecotourism and other eco concepts.

In the paper that I presented, I claimed that the attitudes of prior generations are important for us to conceive, in order to solve the multitude of ecological problems on our planet. It is indeed necessary to seek the wisdom of our predecessors.

On one hand we see that the civilizations that based their existence on diversity, equality, cooperation with nature and solidarity survived through the ecological balance that they created.

On the other hand, those civilizations that based their existance on overexploitation of nature and man, on concentration and decadance vanished, leaving behind ecological disasters, many of which are still affecting our planet.

In prehistoric times those civilizations generated deserts, and in our time those so-called civilizations still generate deserts, pollution and are responsible for a dramatic depletion of out genetic resources.

The interesting question is wether or not the study of our natural and indeed cultural heritage may revive knowledge and traditional

techniques that implements sustainable development.

In Norway the Norwegian Building Research Institute in cooperation with the Directorate for Cultural Heritage carried out a comparative study of energy consumption and environmental impact of traditional and modern wooden buildings.

Four weeks ago the Norwegian Government hosted 'The Oslo Roundtable Conference on Sustainable Production and Consumption'. At this conference the study was presented in a paper titled The Lost Knowledge of Sustainable Consumption.

As a consequence of growing pollution and the global warming problems, the building sector is engaged in finding more sustainable approaches for future construction and management of the building stock. The experience of generations as it is tangibly represented today in our cultural heritage, is a potential resource base in this work.

Energy saving alone is not enough, and a comprehensive life cycle analysis gives a better understanding of the environmental consequences of a building project.

Life cycle analysis is a way of assessing the influence on health, environment and resources throughout the whole life of a product. In all the phasis of construction, use and demolition and disposal energy is consumed and emissions to water, air and soil take place. Wood have for centuries been the principal building material in Norway. Horizontal log construction has sheltered people for a millenium. Still many of us live in log houses, but 98% of Norwegian low rise housing is today constructed in mineral wool insulated timber frame with high termal efficiency, air tightness etc. The conclusion of this comparative study showed that the log house contributed to smaller environmental impacts than the timber frame house. This conclusion is surprising to most people, because we have always been made to think that the new is the best.

This is an important lesson to learn for the ordinary consumers as well as for the decision-makers. Heritage interpretation can be an important tool to generate humility and respect for lost knowledge, for other cultures, values and races.

We can reason correspondingly when we are to explore and develop the sense of identity and place.

It was, as a matter of fact, the successfull presentation of Gabe Cherem of Eastern Michigan University that initiated the sense of identity and place as a major issue of the present Global Congress. His papers and articles on community interpretation as key to appropriate tourism are path-breaking.

The Honolulu Charter transmited to UNESCO and UNEP therefore underlined the indispensable role of heritage interpretation in the provision of quality tourism.