

Andreja Rihter

President EMA

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor to be here and celebrate contemporary European history and its scientific, industrial and social heritage. Just two days ago we celebrated International Museum Day, which was dedicated to the importance of museums integration into broader society through inviting visitors to participate in activities, educational programs, and entertainment.

And tonight we pay tribute to the winners of the Luigi Micheletti and the DASA Award and we learn just from the most innovative opportunities in the museological concept!

Their work in the field of addressing crucial issues of contemporary museums activities is truly remarkable and gives us an inspiration to pursue our joint work for culture. Let us extend our wholehearted thanks to the winners and wish them continued success with their careers. These outstanding women and men impersonate the excellence, the commitment, and the passion. But most of all, they teach us about love.

I truly believe, ladies and gentlemen, that nowadays we have to put love in the center of our thoughts and deeds. And the beautiful island of Lesbos teaches us about the unconditional love not only from the past (which we can actually feel through sensitive poems of Sappho), it rouses us also with the openness of the Greek hearts in the refugee crisis.

Their effort to help people who endured so much suffering in their search for a life without war and bombs, shows great generosity. I express my solidarity with people in Lesbos – refugees as well as habitants - and I wish that soon it will be possible to meet

the current refugee challenge in a better and more sustainable way with respect for human dignity.

The current political situation in the area is not improving as fast as we all would wish, and the whole area is suffering on so many levels; there are countless tragic personal stories and there are deliberate serious threats to the culture heritage of humankind. But let me remind us of the words of director - general of UNESCO, Irina Bokova: "Violence knows no borders and we must respond together."

Ladies and gentlemen, heritage is priceless. This rich tangible and intangible heritage we share is a vital part of our identity. It builds bridges between the past and the present, and it outlines our future!

Let us all join our efforts to ensure that our cultural heritage - this mosaic of faiths, identities and aspirations – keeps nourishing our common European story of human values and hope for the future!