

Speech of Mr. Luc Tayart de Borms
Managing Director of the King Baudouin Foundation, Belgium

Mr. Chairman of the Board of the Foundation, Ladies, Gentlemen, Dear friends,

It gives me great pleasure to participate for a second time in a meeting organized by the Dimitra project with its partners from Africa and the Near East and I am delighted to see that the number of participants and invitees increases each time. I am always pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm and the vitality of the project and by the unique way it has of doing so much with little means. The Foundation is proud to host within its walls, a project which has been able to start up a dynamic network around a subject which is of fundamental interest to human progress and development: the promotion of equality between women and men.

Firstly, a few words to help define the place of the Foundation. The Foundation has celebrated its 25th birthday and for a quarter of a century, it has been proposing forums for the organization of debates and launching initiatives to help improve the quality of life in Belgium and elsewhere.

The King Baudouin Foundation intends to play a pioneering role and seeks out answers to questions which are of concern to citizens. It regularly revises and redefines its domains of activity but all the while retains the improvement of the living conditions of the population as its main objective. The fight against poverty and social injustice constitutes a red line which cuts across all its activities.

The King Baudouin Foundation is working in the general interest and independently decides how to use the means at its dispositions to reach this objective. As it entered the 21st century, the Foundation undertook a process of reflection which led to the drafting of a new strategic plan around four main axes:

- Social Justice
- Civil Society
- Governance
- Funds and Contemporary Philanthropy

In the international area, the King Baudouin Foundation supports the following activities :

1. In the Balkans

- In South-East Europe, the Foundation supports students with the capability to participate in the process of civil society emancipation in the Balkans ;
- It encourages the practice of debating;
- It supports local associations which provide assistance to vulnerable children;
- It encourages the development of inter-ethnic relations between minorities .

2. Strengthening the foundations sector in Europe and in the United States

- The Foundation wants to strengthen institutional and operational cooperation between foundations in Europe and in the United States. The King Baudouin Foundation, United States, was set up to help increase understanding between the United States and Europe

by enabling talented people from both sides of the Atlantic to learn from their respective experiences and approaches through study trips or exchange visits.

- Furthermore, the Foundation wishes to facilitate trans-Atlantic philanthropy by taking care of administrative procedures for individuals based in the United States who wish to support projects in Europe.

3. The King Baudouin International Prize for Development

The aim of the Prize is to raise awareness of projects that have made an important contribution to the development of countries in the South or to solidarity between industrialised countries and those in development.

4. Finally, the Foundation is taking a totally new direction and is going to contribute to the campaign against AIDS in Africa. The Foundation is going to invest one million euros over two budgetary years in response to an appeal from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Koffi Annan.

The Foundation will carry out this work together with other European foundations, so as to make a more significant European impact and to help locate projects in Central Africa. It may also cooperate with the Institute for Tropical Medicine in Antwerp and will aim to complement the actions of the Belgian Government.

In this context, it is clear that the networking and exchange of knowledge and experiences within the Dimitra project are important elements that the Foundation can use to enhance its own knowledge. Exchange of knowledge and sharing of experiences and of names of resource people are key elements for the future activities of the Foundation and of the Dimitra Project, which is also going to extend its activities to the Great Lakes Region.

To conclude, I am very happy that the Foundation is hosting a structure such as the Dimitra Project which is implemented by the FAO and financed by the Belgian Cooperation, and the continuation and sustainability of which seem assured for some time to come.

Good luck to the Project and to all of its partners!