**3rd International Conference TMM-CH**

**Transdisciplinary Multispectral Modelling and Cooperation**

**for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage**

 **Recapturing the World in Crisis through Culture**

**20-22 March 2023, Eugenides Foundation Athens, Greece**

**welcoming speech of President of ETEK**

**Cyprus Scientific and Technical Chamber**

**mr contantinos constanti**

**20.03.23|09:00-10:30 Auditorium**

**Honourable Vice President of the Greek Government, Mr Panagiotis Pikrammenos**

**Dear President of the International Steering Committee of the Conference, Professor Moropoulou Antonia,**

**Dear Rector of the National Technical University of Athens, Professor Andreas Boudouvis,**

**Dear President of the Technical Chamber of Greece, Giorgos Stasinos,**

**Esteemed experts in the field of cultural heritage,**

**Distinguished guests,**

**Dear friends and colleagues,**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am truly honored to be here today to welcome you in the Conference on behalf of the Scientific and Technical Chamber of Cyprus and be part of an extremely interesting discussion on the technical and cultural setting we need to create in order to reclaim and protect our cultural heritage.

During the last decades, the interest in investigating the role of culture in sustainable development has been increasingly grown. The link between culture and sustainable development has been frequently debated by European authorities and academics. Culture is treated as a tool for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals and considered as the fourth pillar of sustainable development. Culture can be a powerful driver for development, with community-wide social, economic and environmental impacts.

Culture-led economic development should take into account the protection of cultural assets that are often fragile and constitute a unique and non-renewable capital. The Council of the European Union emphasizes the role of cultural heritage "…in creating and enhancing social capital…" and recognizes "…important economic impact, including as an integral part of the cultural and creative sectors…

Furthermore, local and indigenous knowledge systems and environmental management practices found in heritage, provide valuable insight and tools for tackling ecological challenges, preventing biodiversity loss, reducing land degradation, and mitigating the effects of climate change.

It is true that heritage has long been absent from the mainstream sustainable development debate, but nowadays is starting to be recognized for its potential in contributing to social, economic and environmental sustainability goals. In particular, heritage plays a “critical role as a non-renewable resource that is a vital part of cities, integral to their identity and economic development”. Its economic and social benefits have also been underlined with attention especially for its intangible aspects and community involvement.

The role of heritage in sustainable development is becoming unquestionable. Despite that, cultural heritage assets - both tangible and intangible, protected and unprotected - are continuously under threat from a variety of economic, political, sociological, and environmental pressures.

An alternative approach to cultural heritage governance is needed in order to preserve cultural heritage in new and different ways – in a more inclusive and sustainable manner. The link between cultural heritage and sustainability is inextricable and constitutes an open field in which we must invest as a society.

Technology remains a key asset for achieving this goal. Modern technology can be a main factor in conservation and preservation of fragile, sensible heritage assets, ensuring their sustainability and durability. Also the value of utilizing technology in order to educate communities about their heritage, enhance the experience of the visitors and boost audience development cannot be stressed enough. Overall, new technologies can give a completely new, sustainable life to cultural heritage, allowing us to document, preserve, evaluate and popularize cultural heritage. In that scope, this conference provides valuable insight into this emerging transdisciplinary scientific field, raises awareness on the subject and offers a platform for the exchange of ideas between distinguished speakers.

In Cyprus, we have a long way to gο in order to efficiently protect cultural heritage. The Chamber’s efforts have been focusing on raising public awareness on the issue, on the one hand, and on the implementation of effective public policies in the cultural heritage sector on the other hand. At the same time, we aim to educate our members and engage them in the process, ensuring that cultural heritage restoration and management policies will be aligned with broader sustainable development goals. Furthermore we are currently working on the development and promotion of a national architectural policy program, which is now missing from Cyprus and this impacts negatively on the ecological, social, economic and cultural sustainability of the built environment. The sustainable development of cultural heritage will be an integral part of this policy program.

We need to encourage research devoted to the sustainable development of cultural heritage and to the positive contribution of cultural heritage management towards a sustainable environment. This is an emerging field in Cyprus and we aim at helping the State create the tools - legal, scientific, technical - which will help us implement a strong policy on the subject and develop good practices in the field of cultural heritage and sustainable development. In that context, I am really happy to be here and be part of the knowledge sharing, experiences and recommendations about sustainable cultural heritage approaches and practices. I am sure that this opportunity will offer us great ideas and new tools to achieve our goals. The Technical Chamber, as the technical advisor of the State in Cyprus, is ready to offer its technical expertise and experience in order to support the development of such policies.

In conclusion, I would like to warmly congratulate the organizers of the conference in this challenging thematic field, and wish them every success. I would also like to seize the opportunity to extend special thanks on behalf of the Chamber to Professor Moropoulou for her long-lasting contribution to the mission of the Technical Chamber of Cyprus.