



## **The Bibliotheca Alexandrina launches the closing conference of the Support to Cultural Diversity and Creativity in Egypt program**

**Alexandrina, 14 November** – The Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) launched the closing conference of the Support to Cultural Diversity and Creativity in Egypt program this morning at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Conference Center. The program, which started two years earlier in November 2013, is a joint project between the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) and European Union (EU). Held under the title of “Suggestions for a Framework of a National Cultural Policy in Egypt”, the conference extends over a period of three days; from 14 to 16 November.

The conference started with an opening session presented by, Dr. Ismail Serageldin; Director of the BA, Dr. Haytham El Haj; on the behalf of Helmy El Namnam; Minister of Culture, and Gusiepe Vasques; on the behalf of Ambassador James Moran; Head of European Union Delegation to Egypt. A large and diversified number of public figures, artists, ministry officials, and intellectuals, as well as representatives from national and international cultural bodies also participated in the event including; Badr el Din al Alayly; assistant Secretary General of the Arab League, and Amira Medhat Reyad; on the behalf of Sahar Nasr; Minister of International Cooperation.

Through his opening speech, Dr. Serageldin pointed out that the world needs more effort and work to emphasize the concepts that are embodied in this project, as diversity and creativity are important means of helping to defuse extremism, violence and terrorism. He also condemned the tragic incident that took place yesterday in Paris, confirming that we stand wholeheartedly with all countries of the world in the face of extremism.

Dr. Serageldin also emphasized that there is a number of main objectives that formed the cognitive background of the project, which are in line with the BA objectives of promoting creativity and cultural diversity, and are reflected in its initiatives, projects and publications



undertaken by the BA. He pointed out that, first, cultural diversity has been a human feature, throughout time, and is a source of richness and development for human societies. He upheld diversity as integral part of identity, as the latter evolves repeatedly, and hence, diversity becomes a part of its development; where memory provides the experiences gained from the past, openness allows exposure, interaction creates innovation, and finally creativity leads to the development of society.

Second, Dr. Serageldin added that the human society progresses through creativity, and that the diversity of views, ideas and ways of thinking reflect the huge potential for creativity in society; which he upheld as crucial to social development. Third, he noted that creativity is associated with what he referred to as "knowledge accumulation". Advanced human societies, Dr. Serageldin said, are always eager to embrace memories of creativity in their depths, build on what has been achieved, and aspire to a better future. He further upheld systematic change, which is based on critical thinking, as the fourth message embodied by the project.

Emphasizing the vitality and diversity that the Egyptian culture has, Dr. Serageldin also pointed out to the category of various projects and initiatives undertaken by BA, which aims to strengthen and protect cultural diversity; among which the project is included. "This project," Dr. Serageldin explained "inspired us, as did our continuing cultural projects, to look forward to the future of the following pillars: first, reaching out to talented and creative youth; second, expanding the 'Memory of Modern Egypt' project, to cover the period between 1981 to 2014; and third, promoting initiatives targeting cultural diversity and creativity, and expanding in republishing books on Arabic and Islamic heritage".

On his part, Dr. Haytham El Haj applauded the project, which he described as a step towards building and developing the future. He further stressed that diversity is what distinguishes the unique identity of Egypt. He proceeded to emphasize the crucial role that cultural diversity plays against the negative forces in the world, while also pointing out that this topic will be further explored at the upcoming round of Cairo International Book Fair, which will address the vital role culture can play in confronting extremism and negativity in general.



In his speech, Giuseppe Vasques pointed out the Support to Cultural Diversity and Creativity in Egypt program, offered a great opportunity for cultural entities and institutions to discuss the challenges they face and the opportunities they can use. Referring to the rich and unique heritage that Egypt possesses, he emphasized the pivotal role that Egypt plays in the cultural field, on both the regional and international levels. Vasques also spoke about the role of the EU in supporting culture in Egypt, noting that the EU funds many cultural projects in Egypt with around 20 million euros, with the aim of protecting cultural diversity, supporting national dialogue, and more importantly, providing access for knowledge and culture to everyone.

On the whole, the “Suggestions for a Framework of a National Cultural Policy in Egypt” conference serves as the main public event of the program, showcasing the efforts and results of all its activities. It aims to highlight and disseminate the work of the think-tank, including the policy papers and the produced documents, and to provide exposure to the newly discovered talents throughout Egypt. The conference is also accompanied by an exhibition that features the main six activities of the program and captures the work of the participants.