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Note on the resignation of Mgr. Martina Lehmannová as director of the Lidice Memorial

Dear Minister,

As you certainly know, ICOM Europe is the Regional Alliance of the International Council of Museums, federating all National Committees in the widest possible sense of “European Group”, the one adopted by UNESCO: about fifty countries, from Atlantic to Urals, and beyond (including the entire Caucasian region) and from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean north shore, and beyond again (including for instance Israel).

We noticed recently that one worrying news is circulating among our Alliance, up to a point where several of our National Committees asked for our attention and possible statement, and this news is the resignation of Mgr. Martina Lehmannová as director of the Lidice Memorial.

I’m not in conditions to state on the exact hierarchical motivations lying behind this resignation. But, knowing as we all know and having in high appreciation the professional and scientific standards of Mgr. Lehmannová, we can’t avoid expressing our profound concern on a decision apparently taken as consequence of defending what we consider to be the basic fundamentals of museums, and professionalism in museum.

ICOM has since ever strongly defended the conception of museums as institutions with particular responsibilities towards the scientific understanding of the past. All around the world museums are considered the most trustworthy source of information – an evaluation dependent on the application of the highest ethical standards by professionals, being the first and most obvious one the strictly conformity with “truth”, as scientifically documented.

A lot of documents – codes, charts, statements, declarations... – could be invoked in order to demonstrate the attachment of ICOM to these principles, and the obligation of our members to act in accordance. But let me just refer three of them: our “Code of Ethics”, a sort of *magna carta*, where professionals are called to preserve their autonomy, responsibility and scientific freedom; the 2015 UNESCO “Recommendation concerning the protection and

promotion of museums and collections, their diversity and their role in society”, where emphasis is putted on the responsibility of museums and museums professionals in raising public awareness of the value of cultural and natural heritage, principles which were later developed in the “ICOM Statement on the independence of museums” (2018), where it has been clearly expressed that “museums should maintain control of the content and integrity of their programs, exhibitions and activities”; and, last but not least, the joint Statement of ICOM Europe and ICOM Germany on “Preserving the autonomy of museums on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War”, resulting from our 2018 European Conference, where we state the following: “Museums collect, preserve, research and communicate. They represent nature and art, culture, technology and society in different contexts, put the focus on the light and shadow sides and thus enable all visitors to gain their own insights. They do not avoid uncomfortable subjects but involve them in research and engagement. In order to meet these social expectations, museums need maximum autonomy and museum professionals require high professionalism.”

Esteemed Dr. Zaorálek,

As I said earlier, we are not completely aware of what is happening relating the resignation of Mgr. Lehmannová, but if the occurrence is related with the incapacity to face difficult past, now historical facts, as it has been reported to us, I kindly and humbly want to call your attention to the ethical and scientific dimensions involved here, supporting our colleague professional conduct, the only one compatible with her duties and her responsibilities towards not only our community, but, most of all, towards citizenship.

I genuinely hope, in consequence, that the situation can be reviewed, if possible reversed, and full tranquilizing news can come to us in the near future.

Yours sincerely,



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