## Prof. Andrey E. Busygin

### Deputy Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation

Dear Presidium and participants of the seminar,

On behalf of Russian Minister of Culture Mr. Aleksandr Avdeyev, allow me to welcome you on this first winter morning in Moscow. The international seminar starts its work in the heart of Moscow, by the walls of the Kremlin, on Red Square, in one of the largest museums of the Russian Federation. I am confident that the seminar’s venue will not only set on a solemn mood but will also create a productive working climate.

Participants of the seminar will be discussing various questions, and we hope that its work will serve to further strengthening of cooperation and dialogue between the European Union and Russia. I would like to emphasize that cooperation develops in the form of dialogue. Bilateral relations with European countries are developing well, but interaction with the European Union as a whole is another matter, as the European Union accumulates knowledge and experience from 27 countries. Russia is also part of Europe.

When we were about to start working and were taking our seats in the presidium, we could see that the chairs of all members of the presidium are joined to each other. To get to my seat, I have to disturb Mr Shvydkoy. The whole of Europe is connected with Russia in the same way as these chairs: it is impossible to separate one from another. At the seminar, a wide range of questions on cultural cooperation will be discussed. It is possible to say that culture is a basic sphere of interaction for our countries because cultural cooperation and dialogue in the sphere of culture allows us to understand each other better. For example, if you now go to Paris, London, Belgrade or Moscow, you will see motor vehicles of the same makes and you will see people in similar clothes, at least in the society you are mixed with. You will see the same McDonalds and KFC. But as for cultural variety and cultural dialogue, this is what allows people of all nations to identify themselves and therefore better understand each other.

We at the Ministry of Culture are very satisfied that though we have begun to actively communicate with our colleagues from the European Union much later than other Russian ministries, but have more advance in our dialogue and in our cooperation than many others. I can even say that we have even slightly overtaken a sphere of education, which is close to us. This brings a feeling of special pride.

Participants of the seminar will discuss problems of interaction in the sphere of culture and, I believe, will pay special attention to cultural diversity. I should also say that the cultural diversity inside Russia is no less than in Europe. This makes us take specific consideration to this topic in the framework of which we are entering dialogue with the European Union.

Moreover, we will discuss the problems of financing. It is topical, as there are many projects being carried out, and partner relations in this sphere are extremely important.

We are happy that our cooperation with the European Union has received an especially large stimulus during Finland’s presidency of the European Union. Probably for this reason our relations within the framework of the Northern Dimension have moved forward at faster rates than in other directions. We are assured that the south of Europe can also count on quite serious cooperation and we rest our hopes on the Forum of Slavic Cultures.

Whichever sphere of cultural cooperation we take, each of them is quite rich. The name of our seminar is “Signs on the Road Map of Cultural Cooperation”. What should these signs be? If we are talking about an analogy to road signs, they can be prohibiting, prescriptive and many others. We think that the signs should allow us all to move in one direction: the direction of expanding cooperation and strengthening it. I hope that our seminar today will give it new impetus.

Thank you for your attention.