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On 19-20 April 2007, La Palma -island of landscape and stars-hosted a magnificent international conference on the 'Quality of the night sky and the Right to observe stars'.

I would like to pay tribute to the extraordinary and visionary work carried out by Cipriano Marín, a genuine Jules Verne and 'Little Prince' of our day, on the last frontiers of our planet.

This historic initiative, Starlight, opens our eyes to the world which surpasses us and is beyond us. It offers new horizons, helps us discover the canopy of heaven and the infinite dimension of our universe.

In bringing together under one roof world-famous astrophysicist, naturalists, artists, engineers, legal experts, technical experts and other specialists at international level, Starlight illustrates the extremely rich heritage human beings possess, one which is neglected, concealed and obscured all too often, to the point of forgetting it exists.

The Starlight initiative and the final Declaration adopted at the end of the Conference represent a call to common sense and reason, for an alliance of intelligence; why not be more reasonable and sparing as regards our lighting, not to darken the world but quite the opposite: to light up the thousand and one candles of our night sky.

Rediscovering and recognising the richness of this common heritage which has inspired poets, painters and musicians down the ages; offering young people and future generations the ability to gaze in wonderment at the firmament, a truly celestial night landscape; allowing scientists to pursue scientific research that is essential for the future of humanity: these are some of the major objectives that should guide the actions of the international community.

This would certainly be in the general interest, from the perspective of human health, the health of animal and plant species and our ecosystems; from the emotional, visual and artistic point of view; for our knowledge and understanding, and in terms of energy also. Does our abuse and overuse of lighting not add to global warming? Capturing the stars in our minds, admiring the light of the sky, unravelling its meaning and value: such are the challenges that lie ahead. Humankind will certainly be elevated if it raises its eyes skywards.