

Peter Stone text for on-line video. 1 Feb 2022.

I think people will look back at 2021 as a really important year for the Blue Shield Movement.

Not only did we celebrate our 25th anniversary with a series of events, some of which I'll mention briefly in a moment, but we also put in more sound foundations for the future.

A year to remember and to be proud of as we start 2022 with renewed vigour and commitment.

And, *before I forget*, a year that would not have happened without an enormous amount of work by many people. Special thanks must go to Emma Cunliffe, without whom the Blue Shield would not exist in its current form, and to Jessica Barry, Michael Delacruz, and Marcela Szalanska for particular contributions. But also, to all of those from national committees who participated in so many ways and to the Blue Shield Board. Thank you all.

The 25th anniversary celebrations were, for me, a major boost and an acknowledgement of how far we have come as a Movement in the last 25 years. But they also emphasised how our predecessors, as far back as 1954/55 and then again in 1996, set out enormous aspirations and challenges for the Blue Shield – aspirations that we are slowly beginning to deliver on and that we, and our successors, will build on over the **next** 25 years.

The celebrations started, of course, with the fascinating and thought-provoking panel discussion, chaired by my predecessor as President, Karl Habsburg, of the representatives of the Founding Four organisations whose signatures gave birth to the Blue Shield. Their enthusiasm still shone through 25 years after they created the Blue Shield – and I think they were happy with our progress. If you didn't manage to see the discussion, please take the time to watch it on-line.

Then came a series of presentations spread throughout the year by numerous national committees outlining their work, their successes, and some of the obstacles they face. Some national committees have also recorded short videos talking about their work. I have found these presentations and videos absolutely fascinating, eye-opening, and a real insight into just how much activity is taking place across the world. **Thank you** to all who have made

presentations and videos so far and to those who are scheduled to continue speaking over the next months. I know other national committees have already taken ideas from those presentations and videos, to put into practice in their own countries. As with the Panel discussion, all of these are available on-line.

Our conference and General Assembly in December were both highly enjoyable and successful events. The conference was, *for me*, a real testimony to how far we have come over the last few years with numerous partners joining us, not only to congratulate us on the first 25 years, but also to present the work of their own organisations, and to suggest ways in which they want to build on and deepen relations with us.

Finally, we delivered the first block of training for national committees. The response to the training has been overwhelmingly positive, while some critical feedback has been extremely useful and has already been built into modifications for Block 2 that is being prepared at the moment. Watch this space. If you haven't had the chance to watch the training presentations, I urge you to do so. They are on-line as well.

We have asked a lot of national committees over the last year and will continue to do so as we look to the future. Not least with the planning and reporting cycle that we realise is time-consuming, but we think is going to be a critical factor in obtaining future funding.

The protection of cultural property in armed conflict and following natural or human-made disaster, is far too important to be ignored. I look forward to working together in the years to come to fulfil the aspirations of those who drafted the 1954 Hague Convention and those who created the Blue Shield in 1996. I wish you all the very best for 2022 as we continue to build the Blue Shield Movement.