

**Rede zur Eröffnung der Tagung
„Bridging Cultures through Exhibitions“
Oldenburg**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,**

With the broad historical theme, that the exhibition „Saladin and the Crusaders“ embraces, the relationship between Europe and the Arabian World is being focussed in a new way. For our common future, a future in partnership, we must overcome a perception of the Arabian world, that is dominated by war and terror. In order to contribute in making our world safer and more peaceful, I believe it is of great importance to invest in the arts and culture. Only culture enables us to approach each other on equal grounds, definitely more than on the field of political or economic power. “Bridging Cultures” therefore means to show respect for one another’s cultural heritage and foster the necessary dialogue in order to overcome prejudice and wrong information. It also means to acknowledge the contributions, that each culture has made for the other.

When Richard Lionheart, the great counterpart of Saladin, became ill, so it is written, Saladin sent his personal doctor and ordered snow to be brought down from the mountains in order to cool drinks for his well-being. This gracious gesture of respect

corresponds with the convictions of the great Arabian philosopher Ibn Ruschd, who was later called Averroes. He regarded those to be of high morality, who were capable of giving to the enemy.

Averroes was active at the court of the enlightened calif Abu Yaqub al-Mansur in Cordoba on the Iberian Peninsula when Saladin conquered Jerusalem in 1187. Not only his studies in medicine, but especially his translations of Aristotle were the key of the reception of Greek culture in the Renaissance. The ideas of this great philosopher influenced Christian Latin Europe between the 12th and the 16th century to a very large extent. He underlined the importance of the arts in searching for truth and was convinced, that the world keeps on developing, that it would change its form on the basis of the previous. This almost evolutionary idea determined the character of his ideas and there was much strong opposition from the Christian and Muslim orthodoxy. I think the exhibition "Saladin and the Crusaders, that we will be discussing is a good occasion to remind us of Ibn Ruschd as the great lawyer of intellectual freedom.

It is my pleasure to welcome those of you who did not participate in Berlin. Thanks to our host Prof. Fansa and his team, whose efforts I would like to underline, we are looking forward to interesting discussions and a fruitful exchange. On behalf of Alessandra Cummins, the president of ICOM, who sends her best regards, Prof. Rosemary Beier, member of the board of ICOM-Germany and treasurer of ICMAH will read out some words of welcome.

Udo Gößwald

Präsident ICOM-Europe