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Good morning,

Welcome to the Congress of PEN International at the beginning of its second century that is also the centennial of Swedish PEN.

Now, we are in a time where, like everything else, names are corrupted and misused.

Let's call things by their names. A poet cannot be called crazy just because she has gone beyond your reality. She is a free spirit, like Anne Sexton. A novelist cannot be declared a demon just because he wrote things that don't fit your opinion. He is a respected writer, like Salman Rushdie. A journalist cannot be called a foreign agent because he's revealing the facts. He is an independent journalist, like Dmitry Muratov. Just because someone with a different sexual orientation is not like you, they cannot be described as a deviant. They are an honorable person, like Oscar Wilde.

Truth begins with names and words.

For 100 + 1 year we have been promoting this as defending freedom of expression for everyone and everywhere.

We have been saving lives, thanks to your effort, your solidarity and your sublime spirit.

Only last year we undertook the biggest relocation operation of our history and brought to safety many writers and their families from Afghanistan, Belarus, Nicaragua, Uganda and beyond.

Now we are more organised, and more effective with 150 PEN centres in more than a hundred countries. We help hundreds of authors every year, we take on their cases, and establish a global network of solidarity with our committees and PEN centres on different continents.

While we had the power to rescue many people like Arthur Koestler or Wole Soyinka, there have been cases that our power was not enough as we couldn't come to the help of Lorca in Spain in 1936.

Federico Garcia Lorca was a poet. He still speaks to us in his poems and tells us:

"If I die, I leave the balcony open. // The little boy is eating oranges. / (From my balcony I can see him.) // The farmer is harvesting the wheat. / (From my balcony I can hear him.) // If I die, I leave the balcony open!"

I wish Lorca knew that our balcony is open. We have been leaving it open for a long time. From the balcony we see Ukraine, Chiapas, Cuba, Armenia, Palestine, Yemen, Eritrea, India, Myanmar, and we see people of colour, indigenous women, and children living in poverty. From the balcony we see imprisoned writers and journalists.

History is said to be the best teacher, but people don't seem to be the best students.

In the twenty-first century, nationalism is rising again, erecting new walls between societies and bigotry is becoming the favourite tool in responding to the problems of our time. Populist ideas are gaining ground in every continent, especially Europe.

When we look at today's social media networks and the amount of information for propaganda, we see how the truth can be blurred and replaced by the invasion of fake news. Many people and institutions become a voluntary part of this process, spreading lies and conspiracy theories, and almost greedily destroying what we call truth.

Today we need information democracy.

We have always emphasised that freedom of expression does not mean insulting others but showing that other opinions are possible. If you don't agree with this, simply bring another opinion forward -no need to resort to hate speech or violence.

When PEN International was founded in 1921, the ideals of its founders were simple. They wanted to establish cultural relationships in a world where hatred was dividing nations. Since then we have been defending the mutual respect and dialogue of people.

That is why, the third paragraph of PEN International's Charter stated that "*Members of PEN should at all times use what influence they have in favour of good understanding and mutual respect between nations and people; they pledge themselves to do their utmost to dispel all hatreds and to champion the ideal of one humanity living in peace and equality in one world.*"

This is our ultimate dream: *one humanity living in peace and equality.*

This seemingly simple dream looks like a utopia in the strange world we live in.

Let's remember Lorca's open balcony from where we could see not only worrying incidents but also beautiful and happy things.

From the open balcony, we can see people dancing, lovers kissing, and workers returning home happy. We can see a world at peace; a world where everyone sings a song in their neighbour's language and all writers are free.

With the hope of making this view of the open balcony real, we work tirelessly.

At a time when bad news is spreading all over the world and we are blinded by pessimistic views, I believe that our job is to raise hope. Literature is hope, and PEN International is the house of hope.

We have completed our first century with honor and pride. I wish you a magnificent second century and

Thanks to all of you for promoting and supporting this historic mission.

Thank you.