

For immediate publication

CINEMA SECTOR TO CONTINUE TO GROW AND BRING AUDIENCES TOGETHER ALL OVER THE WORLD, SAYS UNIC CEO

CineEurope 2019, Barcelona: 17 June 2019 – Laura Houlgatte, CEO of the International Union of Cinemas (UNIC), the European cinema trade grouping, today used her keynote address at CineEurope 2019 to reflect on the diverse and resilient nature of the sector and the bright future she saw for European cinema-going.

Raising the curtain on yet another dynamic CineEurope programme, Houlgatte offered thanks to colleagues from across the industry for their ongoing efforts, pointing in particular to record-breaking performances in a number of markets in 2018.

More broadly, in reporting on cinema-going across UNIC territories in 2018, she championed the continuing success experienced by the sector overall, with figures for 2018 totalling over 1.25 billion admissions and € 8.1 billion at the box office for the fourth year in row.

Explaining this ongoing prosperity, she placed particular emphasis on the key role of cinemas as spaces where cultural diversity can truly flourish, arguing that:

“The significance of the cinema experience in terms of ensuring access to diverse and inclusive film content, via the highest-quality means possible, cannot be overstated.”

Drawing reference to the strong performance of recent titles, she underlined the Big Screen’s “unshakeable ability to resonate with audiences” – both in Europe and across the World.

Attention was also drawn to the sector’s “relentless appetite for innovation” and the consequent investment made by stakeholders across Europe, along with the industry’s determination to “strive towards its goals despite the challenges we face from potential disruptions to the long-standing and beneficial models on which our sector is built.”

Houlgatte also touched upon the impact that recent European elections - and the imminent institutional changes that would accompany them - would have on the way the European cinema sector operates and the “frontline role” to be played by UNIC in ensuring that the interests of the European cinema industry would continue to be “not only protected but celebrated”.

On a global scale, she also mentioned the continued efforts of the Global Cinema Federation in giving voice to the concerns of cinema operators the World over. She confirmed that the Federation – established in 2017 by UNIC and its sister organisation based in the US, NATO, alongside eleven of the largest cinema companies in the World – was currently thriving, now including members from 79 countries.

Special focus was also placed on industry efforts towards gender balance, as she revealed that the third edition of UNIC's flagship initiative, the Women's Cinema Leadership Programme, would be launched later in the week at CineEurope 2019.

In closing, Houlgatte re-iterated that the future remained bright for cinema-going and firmly stated that:

"...cinemas are not only here to stay – we're here to grow and to continue to bring audiences together all over the world to share in the unmatched Big Screen experience. The clearer we can shout that message the better."

Notes for editors

A copy of Laura Houlgatte's keynote speech is attached to this Press Notice [check against delivery].

CineEurope

CineEurope 2019 will take place from 17-20 June at the Centre Convencions Internacional Barcelona (CCIB) in Barcelona, Spain. CineEurope is the longest-running and most successful European convention and trade show for Major, Regional, and Independent cinema professionals. CineEurope will feature exclusive screenings and product presentations of upcoming films, sponsored events, timely and informative seminars and the CineEurope Trade Show. CineEurope is the Official Convention of the Union Internationale des Cinémas/International Union of Cinemas (UNIC).

The International Union of Cinemas (UNIC)

The Union Internationale des Cinémas/International Union of Cinemas (UNIC) represents the interests of cinema trade associations and cinema operators covering 38 countries in Europe and neighbouring regions.

The Film Expo Group

The Film Expo Group is the premier organizer of events in the motion picture industry. The Film Expo Group produces CineEurope, held in Barcelona; ShowEast, held in Miami; and CineAsia, held in Hong Kong. Additionally, the group publishes *Film Journal International*, a trade magazine and website covering the motion picture industry with a special emphasis on theatrical exhibition.

Further enquiries

lhoulgatte@unic-cinemas.org / +32 2 880 99 39 / +32 488 08 51 95 | @CineEurope | @UNIC_Cinemas

**LAURA HOULGATTE, CEO, INTERNATIONAL UNION OF CINEMAS
KEYNOTE ADDRESS – CINEEUROPE 2019 – MONDAY 17 JUNE
[CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY]**

On behalf of UNIC, the International Union of Cinemas, I am delighted to welcome you to CineEurope 2019. I know you're used to seeing UNIC President Phil Clapp on stage. But this year we felt we simply couldn't take the risk because of Brexit. We were seriously worried he might be refused entry at the Spanish border. But as you saw this morning, he made it through... at least this time.

Once again, this week promises a dynamic and diverse range of seminars, panels, slate presentations and screenings. As well of course as a cutting-edge trade show.

We started this morning with a session looking at emerging markets, putting the spotlight in this case on South Africa and Serbia.

We also heard from leading industry executives about the challenges and opportunities created by the "second digital revolution". And, with the European Commission, we explored how to better reach untapped audiences.

We are hugely grateful to all who make these sessions possible, through their participation and financial support. Particular thanks as ever to our headline sponsor, the Coca-Cola company.

The Coca-Cola sessions kick off at full-pace tomorrow, when we'll delve into the opportunities for digital retail, and sustainability in the sector will be the theme on Wednesday.

Through the week, our CineEurope focus sessions will zoom in on two key topics for cinema operators and their partners.

First, on Wednesday we'll take an in-depth look at the biggest threat we face – piracy. We'll then focus on how we can work together to ensure that everyone can enjoy the Big Screen experience in Thursday's session on accessibility.

During the rest of the week, panels and seminars organised by the I.C.T.A. will look at different facets of the ever-changing world of cinema technology.

And that's just the seminars and panels. I know this room will be packed for our upcoming slates and don't forget to visit the trade show floor.

Thank you to all of you, colleagues and partners, for your support – we could not do it without you.

A special thank you must go to our studio partners for year-on-year bringing us the best possible content to CineEurope. This year is certainly no different – starting with Studiocanal and Unifrance, we'll see no fewer than eight exclusive slate presentations and four great films.

That will include the first ever slate presentation for event cinema in this very auditorium on Wednesday morning. The slide behind me shows when each slate presentation will take place.

Every CineEurope provides us with an opportunity to look ahead to what's in store for the industry, in terms of both content and the innovative developments that will shape our sector for the years to come.

Despite a slight fall in admissions and box office - following a record-breaking year in 2017 - European cinema in 2018 totalled over 1.25 billion admissions and € 8.1 billion at the box office for the fourth year in row.

As you can see on the slide, a special mention must go to our friends in the UK, Poland and Turkey, whose record-breaking performance last year is testament to their success in making the cinema experience ever-more engaging and attractive for film lovers across their entire audience base.

Equally important were industry responses in territories where opportunities for growth remain, something that illustrates continuing passion for - and belief in - our sector. Thank you Lithuania, Hungary and Czech Republic – among others – for making this possible.

But let's keep our eyes on the prize.

We need only to look at the fantastic performance a few weeks ago of *Avengers: Endgame* – which stormed to over \$2 billion at the global box office in just 11 days - to witness the Big Screen's unshakeable ability to resonate with audiences across the region – and indeed the World.

And the rest of 2019 is looking incredibly promising with a diverse and exciting release schedule ahead!

The success of the cinema industry in Europe is down to a multitude of factors.

For one, it reflects the key role of cinemas as spaces where cultural diversity can truly flourish. The significance of the cinema experience in terms of ensuring access to diverse and inclusive film content, via the highest-quality means possible, cannot be overstated.

And this is now more important than ever.

We pride ourselves on the diversity of our content in Europe – as you'll see for yourselves later this afternoon with the film trailers supported by the European Commission and Unifrance.

It's no wonder that, whenever people in our industry meet, one of the key questions is "What's the share of local content in your country?" They know this makes a big difference at the end of the year.

By way of illustration, on the slide behind me is a selection of titles, each of which was in the top five films of the year in its home country.

Our sector's relentless appetite for innovation – and the significant levels of investment that accompany it – mean that we can remain confident in the future of the industry. From immersive screening rooms, to stunning screens and sound systems, complemented by premium levels of comfort, cinemas are leading the way.

Our industry continues to strive towards its goals despite the challenges we face from potential disruptions to the long-standing and beneficial models on which our sector is built.

To be clear, streaming platforms and cinemas can not only co-exist, they can complement each other. We welcome anyone who can bring quality film content to our screens. But we believe that that the interests of both the audience and the industry are best served by the existence of a clear and sustainable window.

Now, I won't quote Helen Mirren – I have to watch my language (excuse my French) – but I will say this: cinemas are the ultimate space to showcase quality films and create memories that will last long after the credits roll. Nothing else comes near.

UNIC has also been working hard to create new opportunities for women to overcome the gender inequalities that still persist in our industry. In 2017, we set up our women's leadership programme, providing mentoring for six young female executives making their way in our business.

I'm delighted to say that one of our pioneer mentees will be on stage to present the event cinema slate – Grainne Peat, now Managing Director at the Event Cinema Association and certainly one of our success stories. Last year we added another cohort of seven to the programme. I'm delighted that the programme has been such an amazing success - and that later this week we'll launch the third edition.

CineEurope 2017 also saw the launch of the Global Cinema Federation, established by UNIC with our sister organization based in the US, NATO, and eleven of the largest cinema companies in the World.

The aim of the Federation is to represent the interests of cinema operators of all shapes and sizes. I'm happy to report that the Federation is thriving and now gathers members from 95 countries around the World, all pulling together to achieve our shared goals.

Finally, I would like to say a word about our work in Brussels.

You will know that our principal purpose remains to represent the interests of European cinema exhibition with the EU institutions.

Europe has just elected a new Parliament and will soon have a new Commission President and Executive and they will look to have an impact on the way our sector operates.

Rest assured that UNIC will continue to play a frontline role in engaging with the European institutions to ensure that the interests of our industry are not only protected but celebrated.

And this brings me to my conclusion.

All you will see and hear this week will I am sure make crystal clear that cinemas are not only here to stay – we're here to grow and to continue to bring audiences together all over the world to share in the unmatched Big Screen experience. The clearer we can shout that message the better.

A big thank you to our partners at the Film Expo Group and to the fantastic & very talented UNIC team. It is quite telling that we can not only still talk to each other at the end of the show but actually still enjoy each other's company.

I would like to wish everyone a wonderful CineEurope. I'm honoured to introduce Lionsgate, a global content leader whose brand is synonymous with original, daring, ground-breaking movies for theatrical exhibitors and distributors around the world.

From blockbuster franchises like HUNGER GAMES, TWILIGHT and most recently JOHN WICK, Lionsgate has a proven track record of delivering a deep line-up of commercially exciting, bold and original movies unlike anything else in the marketplace.

Thank you.