

**LAURA HOULGATTE, CEO, INTERNATIONAL UNION OF CINEMAS  
KEYNOTE ADDRESS – CINEEUROPE 2021 – 4 OCTOBER 2021**

Good afternoon, everyone.

We are absolutely delighted to be back here on stage at the CCIB and even more delighted to see so many friends and colleagues once more at the show.

A huge thanks to you for coming here to Barcelona and I hope you are as excited as we are about the next few days.

And thanks now more than ever to Bob and Andrew and their team at our partners Film Expo Group for all of their hard work and commitment in bringing this show together.

It's no understatement to say that the times our industry has experienced over the last 18 months have been – like for so many other sectors – unprecedented.

Both personally and professionally, all of those working in, and associated with, the European cinema industry have been required to withstand challenges unlike any seen before.

Our thoughts are of course with all of those who lost loved ones as a result of the pandemic.

But as we now emerge from the shadow of Covid, we can also celebrate the resilience shown by our sector.

And the appetite audiences have shown in returning to the big screen experience. A desire that – after the isolation many have felt over the last 18 months – is perhaps now greater than ever.

People queuing from 7 am in France on the first day of reopening, planning to watch two or three films in a row.

The Netherlands already reaching the 'full recovery' stage and achieving amazing results – sometimes with screen capacities limited to only 30 people.

Russia - also in 'full recovery mode' - achieving box office and admissions at the same levels as 2019.

Like our audiences, over the next four days we will celebrate the big screen experience.

As you can see, panels this week will focus on content, the future of the industry, our audiences and how to build back better.

We are hugely grateful to all of those who have made these sessions possible.

And of course, we'll all enjoy the film slates and movies in this very auditorium throughout the week – and don't forget to visit the trade show floor.

During these testing times, we at UNIC did our best to support many of you, our members.

We monitored the impact of the pandemic, led research, shared information on a daily basis about closings, reopenings and financial measures.

We published statements and carried the voice of cinema operators to policymakers and politicians in Brussels, to ensure that the interests of our industry were protected and celebrated.

Not to mention our non Covid-related activities!

Huge thanks to the UNIC team and all UNIC members for their work and dedication.

It would be wrong not to acknowledge all of those others that supported our sector during the most challenging of times.

The many governments across Europe that provided vital financial support to cinemas.

And of course those studios and distributors who showed faith in the sector when others did not.

We acknowledged one of those key European titles – *Padre no hay mas que uno 2* – this morning, and will recognise others at the awards ceremony on Thursday.

But we also thank those responsible for bringing other major titles to the big screen.

The great studio content on show this week shows that their faith was not misplaced. Both in the appetite of audiences for the big screen and the primacy of the theatrical model

On that point, the numbers are in and the evidence is clear.

A 'cinema first' model works for exhibitors, for distributors and for audiences. And it acts to protect content from the scourge of piracy.

On that latter point, all we have seen over recent months tells us there is no surer way for everyone to lose money than to put a film straight into the home on release.

So whatever decisions may have been made over the last 18 months, we now join exhibitors around the world - but also increasing numbers of those working behind and in front of the camera - in urging distribution partners to recommit to a significant period of theatrical exclusivity.

To everyone's benefit.

One of the opportunities afforded by recent times has been to reflect once more on the magic of the shared communal film experience that only a cinema can provide.

This is something which has found its voice nowhere as much as in the wonderful 'back to cinema' campaigns we have seen over a wide range of European territories.

It may be wrong to pick just one from the many examples we have seen. But as we reflect again on the support the sector has experienced over the last 18 months, there is one which we think captures as well as any the unique sense of excitement and community that cinema provides.

This film - produced by colleagues at the Italian trade body ANEC, with support from their government's ministry of culture – features a wide range of leading Italian actors all with the same wish.

One we also share -that is to 'see you at the movies'.

Thank you for your time and have a great CineEurope!