SOLEMN DECLARATION OF RECTORS ON THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO 'RIBEIRA SACRA'

The Compostela Group of Universities in collaboration with the Consellería de Cultura y Turismo de la Xunta de Galicia and the representatives of 24 universities participating in the International Meeting of Rectors on the Camino de Santiago, held on 9-11 October 2019 in Galicia, gathered today in Chantada municipality, the cradle of the Ribeira Sacra, to all the citizens of the world,

We declare that:

Us, the Rectors, aware of the responsibilities assumed in the present and with the new generations, we wish to express publicly our sincere vow to support with our means and efforts the creation of favourable conditions for the adhesion of the University to the Sustainable Development Goals and to the European initiatives oriented towards modernity and educational and research excellence.

Us, the regional and local institutions of Galicia, we renew in this event our commitment to work to achieve the highest standards of quality in higher education and turn our universities into the beacon that illuminates an increasingly sustainable and inclusive society.

Us, the Compostela Group of Universities, aware of the significant cultural, social and educational role played by universities in the progress of society, we want to contribute to the culmination of these goals by taking the Camino de Santiago as the pillar of that united effort and will and work intensely in favour of such high ends.

Through this Declaration, the undersigned declare that:

I. We assert the value of the Camino de Santiago as a meeting point for people and peoples, a universal symbol of *fraternitas*, *caritas* and *hospitalitas*, and we recognize its driving force and capacity to promote harmony, intercultural dialogue and the enrichment of local communities.

II. We support the cultural landscape of the Ribeira Sacra in its declaration as a UNESCO world heritage site, for being an exceptional representation of the indissoluble union of heritage and nature, which forms a living cultural landscape whose beauty reflects and testifies to the good work of past and present civilizations.

III. We acknowledge the need to develop university initiatives that visualize and articulate the commitments of university education and management with the achievement of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, proposed by the United Nations to all social and governmental actors. We realize that this commitment must materialize in concrete actions within our respective Universities and we will work together for its implementation.

IV. We recognize the universal value of human knowledge and its impact on the development and fostering of the well-being of all beings. We accept

responsibly the role that society gives to Universities as the source and engine of superior knowledge and we are committed to improving the scientific and academic quality, supporting the talent and training of future leaders, through the construction of bridges that connect the synergies and potential of our Higher Education institutions.

V. Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the foundation of the Compostela Group of Universities, an international education network created under the shelter of the Camino de Santiago, the cornerstone of the birth of Europe, and affirmation of their values of justice, freedom, equality and solidarity, and we reinforce the bonds of union with this institution and the objectives that it pursues. In order to follow this path, the present International Meeting of Rectors on the Camino de Santiago is the foundation on which to forge alliances and build a better common future for all the Universities that form the Compostela Group of Universities.

Therefore, through this Declaration, we undertake a commitment to:

I. To work intensely in the establishment of university actions that incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals in education, research and university activity.

II. To work intensely in the establishment of common strategies that allow advancing in the creation of alliances in view of the growth of the new European University.

III. Communicate to the Compostela Group the actions that are carried out individually or jointly to disseminate them to the entire university community and promote good practices in these areas and society in general.

With the present act of signature, we seal the fulfilment of the contents of this Solemn Declaration and guarantee our commitment in its consecution.

In Chantada, on 11 October 2019.