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Press release

For immediate release

His Highness the Aga Khan conferred with the Keys of the City of Porto



Porto, Portugal 2 May 2019 – The Mayor of Porto Mr Rui Moreira today conferred His Highness the Aga Khan with the Keys to the City of Porto. The presentation occurred in the presence of His Highness’s brother Prince Aynn Aga Khan, the President of the Municipal Assembly of Porto, Mr Miguel Pereira Leite as well as a distinguished audience which included members of the diplomatic corps, government and parliament

representatives, cultural leaders and civil society representatives as well as representatives from the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).

Mayor of Porto Mr Rui Moreira expressed his gratitude to His Highness upon conferring the honour, saying, “Your Highness, for generations we have appreciated your contribution, not only to Portugal, but also to Europe, to the world, because you have believed in the construction of a better society.”

In his remarks, His Highness the Aga Khan commented on his role: “In my work I look at peoples from all environments — cities, rural urban areas, deserts, industrialised areas — and I look at how people live, and I ask myself, “How can we improve the living conditions of people in all these environments?”

He went on to laud Portugal for building a strong pluralistic society. “We learn all the time from all our contacts in all the cities we work with, and Portugal has set an example of a pluralist society, which is remarkable, which should be honoured, which should be recognised, which should be copied. So I want to take this occasion to congratulate you for creating a functioning, happy, pluralist society.”

Porto, after Lisbon, is the second largest city in Portugal, and in addition to being an important industrial centre, is renowned for its rich cultural heritage. The city was designated as the cultural capital of Europe in 2001. Its impressive “Casa da Música”, was designed by renowned Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas. The city’s museums including the Soares do Reis National Museum and the Serralves Museum as well as its opera house, fine-arts school, symphony orchestra, and its other cultural and scientific institutions characterise Porto as one of Europe’s leading cultural capitals.

Earlier in the day, His Highness the Aga Khan and Prince Aynn attended a ceremony at the Soares dos Reis National Museum in Porto marking the donation of a painting by Bento Coelho da Silveira’s (1617-1708) entitled “Presentation of the Virgin at the Temple.” The gift to the Museum, is the third in a series of paintings by Bento Coelho da Silveira, following the donation of both the “Rest in the Return of Egypt” and “Virgin with the Boy and the Vision

of the Cross” by the Ismaili Imam to the National Museum of Ancient Art in Lisbon earlier this year. All paintings were previously housed in the Palacete Henrique de Mendonça.

Conferring both His Highness and Prince Ayn with the Benefactor Member Diploma of the Soares de Reis National Museum in Porto, *Friends of the Museum* President Álvaro Sequeira Pinto noted, “In his 60 years as a leader of the Ismaili community, His Highness has been living a legacy of peace and tolerance.”

The ceremony was attended by Portugal’s Secretary of State for Culture, Ângela Ferreira, and the Director-General of Cultural Heritage Ms Paula Silva. The event also included a brief performance by selected musicians from the Casa da Música, Porto’s leading musical institution and home to the National Orchestra of Porto.

In his address, Prince Ayn remarked: “When these three pictures were discovered in the Palacete in Lisbon we decided that the quality was such that they really should be shared with the public, the people of Portugal in general, and hence the decision to donate two of these pictures to Lisbon, and to bring this one to Porto.”

In her remarks at the donation ceremony the Secretary of State for Culture, thanked the Ismaili Imam and the Aga Khan Development Network for “another demonstration of the strong commitment in the cultural collaboration with Portugal’s cultural institutions.”

The Soares dos Reis National Museum, founded in 1833, is Portugal’s first public art museum and is housed in Porto’s Palácio dos Carrancas. The Museum’s exhibitions and history are reflective of a profound commitment to the education of Portugal’s artistic tradition and heritage. The Museum’s own collection for example, represents a wide spectrum of Portuguese art including the work of Porto’s own sculptor António Soares dos Reis, from whom the Museum takes its name.

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About His Highness the Aga Khan and the Aga Khan Development Network

His Highness the Aga Khan is the 49th hereditary Imam (spiritual leader) of the Shia Ismaili Muslims. In the context of his hereditary responsibilities, His Highness has been deeply engaged with the development of countries around the world for more than 60 years through the work of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), which was founded by His Highness the Aga Khan, is a private, international, non-denominational development organisation. It employs over 80,000 people in over 30 countries. Its agencies address complex development issues, including the provision of quality healthcare and education services, cultural and economic revitalisation, micro-enterprise, entrepreneurship and economic development, the advancement of civil society and the protection of the environment.

About the Palacete Henrique Mendonça

The Palacete Henrique Mendonça located at Rua Marquês de Fronteira in Lisbon Portugal was designed by the Portuguese architect Miguel Ventura Terra (1866-1919). The building is a significant part of Lisbon’s architectural landscape having been awarded the Valmor Award for architecture in 1909. On 3 June 2015, the Ismaili Imam and the Republic of Portugal

signed a landmark agreement which enabled the establishment of a formal Seat of the Ismaili Imamate in Portugal. The agreement outlined a commitment to shared goals; the promotion and upholding of human dignity and pluralism, working to promote peace and stability, and improving the quality of life of the vulnerable, in Portugal and elsewhere. At a ceremony on 11 July 2018 His Highness officially designated the premises of the Palacete Henrique Mendonça as the Seat of the Ismaili Imamate.

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