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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## EDINBURGH TAKES THE LEAD ON THE IMPORTANCE OF WRITING IN THE WORLD TODAY

### EDINBURGH WORLD WRITERS' CONFERENCE 2012-2013

This August, in an ambitious programming partnership between the Edinburgh International Book Festival and the British Council, a series of discussions will take place in Scotland's capital city stimulating a debate which will reverberate around the world. The Edinburgh World Writers' Conference 2012-2013, inspired by the seminal 1962 Writers' Conference in Edinburgh, will bring fifty leading Scottish and international writers together over five afternoons to discuss how writing and the imagination are an essential component of society.

Each afternoon from 17 to 21 August, a keynote speech will be delivered by an author on a subject that mirrors the notorious event that took place in the city 50 years ago. Topics include **A National Literature?** delivered by Scotland's Irvine Welsh, **Censorship Today** will be explored by Patrick Ness and the conference will open with Ahdaf Soueif, the Egyptian novelist and commentator, who will ask **Should Literature be Political?** Every session will be chaired by an internationally renowned writer who will open the debate up to the fifty delegates and the audience – those sitting in the RBS Main Theatre in Charlotte Square Gardens and those around the world who are watching the debate live online. Audiences and participants alike will be encouraged to join, and indeed continue, the conversation online and via Twitter.

Starting at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference will travel over the next twelve months to events around the world. Across thirteen countries, from Egypt to Australia, via Russia, India and Canada, the ensuing global discussion will represent the greatest gathering of writers' voices ever staged. The event will return to the Edinburgh International Book Festival in August 2013, after which the highlights of the global discussion will be assembled in a landmark book about writing today edited by author and former Director of the Edinburgh Film Festival, Hannah McGill.

Nick Barley, Director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, said "We believe that writers have a role to play in stimulating our imaginative health and thereby engendering mutual respect amongst individuals and nations. The Conference represents an opportunity for all of us to rethink how writers, and their

writing, can play a part in understanding and improving our world. Together the Book Festival and the British Council will make this Conference a genuinely worldwide discussion, and we look forward to the debate which will start here, in Edinburgh, rolling around the globe over the next 12 months before returning to Charlotte Square Gardens next August.”

Susie Nicklin, British Council Director of Literature, said “Long before literary festivals were established as places for writers to meet each other and their readers, the Edinburgh Writers' Conference led the way in creating a forum for international literary dialogue and debate. These remain at the heart of the British Council's literature work worldwide and we are delighted to be part of the global network that is facilitating and encouraging the discussion around the role of the writer and of literature in our times.”

The Edinburgh World Writers' Conference is a major programming partnership between the Edinburgh International Book Festival and the British Council and is supported by The Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, Creative Scotland, the City of Edinburgh Council and Event Scotland. The Conference is part of the London 2012 Festival.

Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs said: “I am delighted to support the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference through the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund in 2012, our Year of Creative Scotland.

“Scotland is a creative nation and the Edinburgh International Book Festival is the world's largest celebration of the written word. By bringing together so many leading Scottish and international writers, this ambitious project will showcase the best of our contemporary creative talent and raise Scotland's cultural profile on the international stage.”

Andrew Dixon, Chief Executive, Creative Scotland, said “Writers sit at the heart of international conversations about identity, politics and censorship and, in this Year of Creative Scotland, the Edinburgh International Book Festival is the perfect forum to reflect on, and respond to, the incredible 50-year journey of books and reading since the first writers' conference in 1962. Technology now allows instant connections with writers around the world, bringing welcome new voices to debates with global relevance.”

Councillor Steve Cardownie, Festivals and Events Champion for the City of Edinburgh Council, said: "As the world's first UNESCO City of Literature, Scotland's capital city is a genuine global hub for all things book-related and the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference will reinforce the city's literary status and

significance still further. Edinburgh has an enviable international reputation as a festival city and supporting the cultural ambitions of the Festivals in this unique year makes perfect sense given the proven positive impact they have on the people and economy of the city. The Scottish Government should also be commended for initiating the Expo Fund around which the other partners have worked to supplement."

Paul Bush OBE, Chief Operating Officer for EventScotland said: "The Edinburgh International Book Festival is renowned worldwide, and the return of the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference will ensure the festival remains at the forefront of the literary sector. Scotland is the perfect stage for events, and the global nature of this conference will highlight Scotland's standing in the international cultural community as it travels to a number of countries around the world over the next 12 months. The 2012 Olympics presents a fantastic opportunity for Scotland, and through the London 2012 Festival the country is hosting a number of significant events, which will contribute to the UK-wide cultural celebrations."

The Edinburgh World Writers' Conference will take place at the Edinburgh International Book Festival in Charlotte Square Gardens from 3.00pm – 5.00pm each afternoon from 17 to 21 August 2012. A special event looking at the Legacy of the 1962 Conference will take place at 10.30am on Friday 17 August. John Calder and Jim Haynes, who organised the 1962 Conference, will discuss their memories of the event while Eleanor Bell and Angela Bartie, who head up a Strathclyde University research project on the Conference, explain their efforts to disentangle the myths from the realities fifty years on.

Full details of the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference can be found at [www.edinburghworldwritersconference.org](http://www.edinburghworldwritersconference.org). Tickets for all Edinburgh World Writers' Conference events at the Edinburgh International Book Festival cost £10 (£8) and are available from the Box Office on 0845 373 5888 or [www.edbookfest.co.uk](http://www.edbookfest.co.uk) from 8.30am on Friday 29 June 2012. On the opening day of sales, tickets can be purchased in person from the temporary Box Office at the Roxburghe Hotel, Charlotte Square, Edinburgh from 8.30am to 5.00pm. Maximum four tickets per event per booking on the first day of sales only.

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## Editors Notes:

The **Edinburgh World Writers' Conference** is a major programming partnership between the Edinburgh International Book Festival and the British Council and is supported by The Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, Creative Scotland, the City of Edinburgh Council and EventScotland.

The total budget for this year-long programme of worldwide activity is in the region of £565,000 including funding of £160,000 from the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, £60,000 from Creative Scotland, £20,000 from the City of Edinburgh Council, £20,000 from EventScotland and significant support in a mixture of cash and in-kind from the British Council in the UK and overseas.

### Edinburgh World Writers' Conference Delegates:

Scottish Delegates: Alan Bissett, Theresa Breslin, John Burnside, Sophie Cooke, Keith Gray, Kirsty Gunn, Kapka Kassabova, Jackie Kay, Aonghas MacNeacail, Denise Mina, Nicola Morgan, Ewan Morrison, Ian Rankin, James Robertson, Ali Smith, Irvine Welsh.

Other UK delegates: Melvin Burgess, Alan Gibbons, Hari Kunzru, Nick Laird, Patrick Ness, China Miéville, Ben Okri, Owen Sheers.

International Delegates: Aharon Appelfeld, Bernardo Atxaga, Junot Díaz, Nathan Englander, Carlos Gamerro, Xiaolu Guo, Manu Joseph, Margo Lanagan, Michel Le Bris, Yiyun Li, Garth Nix, Joyce Carol Oates, Elliot Perlman, Mattias Politycki, Preeta Samarasan, Elif Shafak, Kamila Shamsie, Kyung-Sook Shin, Dag Solstad, Ahdaf Soueif, Janne Teller, Kim Thuy, Ludmila Ulitskaya, Chika Unigwe, Binyavanga Wainaina, and Samar Yazbek.

### Conference Sessions:

17 August Should Literature Be Political?  
18 August Style vs Content  
19 August A National Literature?  
20 August Censorship Today  
21 August The Future of the Novel

Keynote Speech: Ahdaf Soueif  
Keynote Speech: Ali Smith  
Keynote Speech: Irvine Welsh  
Keynote Speech: Patrick Ness  
Keynote Speech: Aharon Appelfeld

### International Events:

The Edinburgh World Writers' Conference will travel to Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Malaysia, Russia, South Africa, Trinidad and Turkey.

### 1962 Writers' Conference

The format of the 2012-2013 Edinburgh World Writers' Conference mirrors the notorious event that took place 50 years ago in 1962. That year, the radical publisher John Calder worked with the impresario Jim Haynes to bring some 70 authors to Edinburgh. The guests included US authors Norman Mailer and Henry Miller alongside Scottish writers Hugh MacDiarmid and Muriel Spark, and several lesser-known authors, including William S. Burroughs, who would become famous as a result of the Conference. John Calder argued at the time that 'the novel enriches mankind by its ability to rouse the senses, to stimulate the intellect and to excite the imagination'. The 2012 Writers' Conference takes as its starting point the same five topics that were discussed in 1962.

**Edinburgh International Book Festival** is the world's largest public celebration of the written word. For 17 days every August, the Book Festival brings writers, poets, politicians, journalists, thinkers and decision makers from around the world to debate and discuss the things that shape our lives. With around 800 authors from over 40 countries, and a comprehensive programme of events for children from toddler to teenager, cafes, bars and independent Bookshops, the Book Festival welcomes over 200,000 visitors every year to the beautiful Charlotte Square Gardens in the heart of historic Edinburgh, the world's first UNESCO City of Literature.

**The British Council** creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. It is a Royal Charter charity, established as the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. 7000 staff in over 100 countries work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year through English, arts, education and society programmes.

The British Council earns over 75% of its annual turnover of nearly £700 million from services which customers pay for, education and development contracts and from partnerships. A UK Government grant provides the remaining 25%. Every £1 of core public funding is matched with over £3 earned in pursuit of its charitable purpose. For more information, please visit: [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org). You can also keep in touch with the British Council through <http://twitter.com/britishcouncil> and <http://blog.britishcouncil.org/>.

The British Council literature team promotes UK writers, poets and publishers to communities and audiences around the world, developing innovative, high-quality events and collaborations that link writers, publishers and cultural institutions. Recent projects include a Writers' Salon in Moscow; a global celebration of the bicentenary of Charles Dickens including a seminar in Berlin; the Erbil Literature Festival, the first international literature festival ever to be held in Iraq; a writers' tour of Turkey; and a global partnership with Hay Festivals.

**The Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund** is available to all 12 Edinburgh Festivals to support the costs of new productions, events or exhibitions which involve Scottish-based participants and are premiered at any of the Edinburgh Festivals. The fund can also be used to support touring of events or performances after their premiere at the festival and allow successful work to reach new audiences.

**The Year of Creative Scotland** began on January 1, 2012 and will spotlight and celebrate Scotland's cultural and creative strengths on a world stage. Through a dynamic and exciting year-long programme of activity celebrating our world-class events, festivals, culture and heritage, the year puts Scotland's culture and creativity in the international spotlight with a focus on cultural tourism and developing the events industry and creative sector in Scotland. More information about the programme can be found at: [www.visitscotland.com/creative](http://www.visitscotland.com/creative)

The Year of Creative Scotland is a Scottish Government initiative led in partnership by EventScotland, VisitScotland, Creative Scotland and VOCAL. More information and resources to help businesses and organisations engage with Year of Creative Scotland are available at [www.visitscotland.org/yearofcreativescotland-toolkit](http://www.visitscotland.org/yearofcreativescotland-toolkit)

**Creative Scotland** is the national development agency for the arts, screen and creative industries. Our vision is that Scotland will be recognised as one of the world's most creative nations – one that attracts, develops and retains talent, where the arts and the creative industries are supported and celebrated and their economic contribution fully captured; a nation where the arts and creativity play a central part in the lives, education and well-being of our population.

**EventScotland** is the national events agency. EventScotland is working to make Scotland one of the world's leading event destinations. By developing an exciting portfolio of sporting and cultural events EventScotland is helping to raise Scotland's international profile and boost the economy by attracting more visitors. For further information about EventScotland, its funding programmes and latest event news visit [www.EventScotland.org](http://www.EventScotland.org).

**The Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival:** The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad is the largest cultural celebration in the history of the modern Olympic and Paralympic Movements. The culmination of the Cultural Olympiad is the London 2012 Festival, the spectacular 12-week nationwide celebration running from Midsummer's Day on 21 June until the final day of the Paralympic Games on 9 September 2012. Principal funders of the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival are Arts Council England, Legacy Trust UK and the Olympic Lottery Distributor. BP and BT are Premier Partners of the Cultural Olympiad and the London 2012 Festival. For more details on the programme and to sign up for information visit [www.london2012.com/festival](http://www.london2012.com/festival)