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13th Annual International Symposium

Economic Benefits, Social Opportunities, and Challenges of Supporting Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Development

May 20-22, 2010, Washington, DC

More than 150 participants filled the 13th-floor conference room at the headquarters of The World Bank in Washington for the annual US/ICOMOS International Symposium. The symposium opened Thursday afternoon (May 20) with welcoming remarks by George Skarmas, newly elected Chair of the US/ICOMOS Board of Trustees, and Gustavo Araoz, President, ICOMOS. After introductory speakers by World Bank Executive Directors Giovanni Majnoni and Pulk Chatterji, the keynote speakers talked about World Heritage and sustainable tourism.

Francesco Bandarin, former director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, remarked that his keynote presentation at the US/ICOMOS Symposium marked his first official speech in his new position as Assistant Director-General for Culture at UNESCO. His presentation was followed by Denis Ricard's talk on World Heritage Cities and a co-presentation on Sustainable Tourism by Robin Tauck and Randy Durband. Mr. Ricard is Secretary General of the Organization of World Heritage Cities and Ms. Tauck and Mr. Durband are with Robin Tauck and Partners, LLC.

The keynote presentations were followed by speeches by World Bank officials— Otaviano Canuto, Vice President of Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network, and Inger Anderson, Director of Sustainable Development, Africa Region. As of July 1, Ms. Anderson will be the new Vice President of the World Bank's Sustainable Development Network.

An evening welcome reception was held in the atrium of the World Bank. Hosted by Abha Joshi Ghani, Manager of the World Bank's Urban Development and Local Government Unit, the reception opened with a performance by the IMF/World Bank Chorus.

For the next two days, numerous presenters discussed various aspects of heritage development, sustainable tourism, and the legal underpinnings of site protection. Presentations will be posted on the websites of both The World Bank and US/ICOMOS in the coming months.

The symposium closed with remarks by Gustavo Araoz, ICOMOS President, which are presented below.



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“As in years past, the US/ICOMOS Symposium has proven once again to be a major event on the annual US heritage calendar. On behalf of ICOMOS and myself, my congratulations to all in US/ICOMOS who took part in shaping it and to all our speakers for sharing so generously their knowledge and experience. Thanks to the Scientific Committee that shaped the initial program: Marta de la Torre, Neil Silberman, Doug Comer, Pamela Jerome and Donald Jones at US/ICOMOS, and to Sherry Hutt and David Tarler at the NPS. Particular special thanks also go to Don Jones and Guido Licciardi for taking that initial program and expanding it with the development component provided by the World Bank.

Over the last couple of days we have repeatedly been shown the lessons to be learned from the many experiences presented. I believe that a major one among those lessons is the need for the heritage community to step outside our isolation cocoon and mainstream ourselves in order to engage other fields in a permanent and meaningful dialogue. The partnership between US/CIOMOS, the NPS and the World Bank has just done that. It has moved us beyond our much repeated rhetorical intent and begun this dialogue with a new institutional partner community dedicated to economic development and poverty reduction.

The success of this national event proves the need to take this dialogue to the next higher level, and that is why, without any intent to hinder the existing bonds between US/ICOMOS and the World Bank, I am inviting the World Bank to partner with ICOMOS in our next General Assembly in 2011, which, in partnership also with UNESCO and ICOMOS France, will be held in Paris under the theme of Culture, Heritage and Development. I am also inviting the World Bank to work with us to go beyond that by exploring how the resources of ICOMOS and the bank can sustain each other in a permanent way.

The dialogue that was initiated here has confirmed the basic assumption that heritage and culture are integral and fundamental components in ensuring that socio-economic development is a sustainable endeavor. It has also confirmed that there are many questions that still need answering for the heritage and development communities to achieve our common goal of using our heritage resources intelligently to replace cultures of poverty and abuse with cultures of peace and decency in all human communities. Many new tools need to be created, as well as old ones refined, such as legislation, policies, theoretical foundations, work methodologies and the integration of disciplines and professions that have not previously worked together. In this sense, I remind you of the challenge that as President of ICOMOS I have issues to all our members to participate in the open Internet forum on these very issues that will go online within the next couple of weeks. In a capsule, our forum seeks a deeper



understanding of this newly emerging heritage paradigm, and the limits of change it can tolerate without losing its significance.

Among the most pressing questions that have risen over the past few days and that need answering we could highlight the following few:

From Francesco Bandarin and then again from many others, we heard how cultural heritage is only one component of the much broader and all-inclusive concept of culture itself, and how both the conservation and the development fields need to re-position our work into the complexities of the pluralistic cultures of the communities for whom we work. As a corollary to that, we also need to understand the complex relationship of inextricably mutual sustainability between intangible and tangible heritage as well as between natural and cultural.

We agreed that the value of heritage is much more than a simple economic one. In this sense, there continues to be an urgent need to develop appropriate methods to measure and quantify the value of heritage in non-economic terms. We saw a number of these attempts that parallel the efforts done within our own field at the Getty Conservation Institute a few years ago.

In terms of pure economics, we also confirmed that responsible tourism is a powerful tool in the protection and conservation of our heritage resources, in the creation of public awareness about its importance and in bringing benefits to local and stakeholder communities. We saw, however, that many tools and much work are still needed to prevent the economic ambitions of tourism from eroding the authenticity and significance of heritage places, and thus killing the goose of the golden eggs.

We also re-affirmed that while tourism may be the most obvious tool, it is not the only one - and perhaps not even the best - to allow communities to derive economic benefits from cultural heritage. In this sense, we say how much research is still needed to identify, and perhaps quantify, how the quality of life in heritage places – especially in heritage cities – can be a nurturing economic incubator and an engine for growth. Within this, it will be important to work towards a clearer characterization of how culture and cultural heritage contribute to stable and cohesive societies where the reduction of crime, poverty, uncertainty and instability may also be quantified as direct economic benefits that could exceed those of tourism and perhaps be even more desirable.

The issues raised here over the past two days have established a draft agenda to guide the work of this renewed partnership between the international heritage and development fields. Thanks to US/ICOMOS, to the National Park Service and to the World Bank for pointing the way to move forward.”