

EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

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Warsaw Recommendation on the Recovery and Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage

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The destruction of world heritage has become, especially in recent years, an urgent problem for the international community. Armed conflicts or natural disasters occurring in different regions of the world bring with them havoc and destruction to properties of outstanding significance for all humankind. In response to these challenges Poland, as a State Party of the World Heritage Convention in cooperation with the World Heritage Centre, organized a meeting of experts entitled *The Challenges of World Heritage Recovery – International Conference on Reconstruction*, which was held from 6 to 8 May 2018 in Warsaw. This initiative was part of a larger UNESCO campaign called #Unite4Heritage, dedicated to raising awareness of the problems associated with the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage. The meeting concerned the implementation of declarations contained in the decisions of the World Heritage Committee no. 40 COM 7 of 2016 and 41 COM 7 of 2017, adopted during its sessions in Istanbul and Kraków. The purpose of the international conference was to summarize the previous discussions and to develop universal guidelines for world heritage properties that have been damaged as a result of armed conflicts and natural disasters.

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For the first time in history representatives met from UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICCROM, UNISRD, the World Bank, and the Global Alliance for Urban Crises – in total more than 200 experts from different parts of the world (Syria, Iraq, Italy, Estonia, Lithuania, Germany, France, Canada, Ecuador, USA, Uganda, Mali, Egypt, Greece, Great Britain, Denmark, the United Arab Emirates, Japan, India, Haiti, Nepal, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia). Particularly pressing issues included the reconstruction of Mosul and Aleppo. These and much more were discussed in a symbolic place, the historical heart of Warsaw inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1980.

The main outcome of the international conference was *The Warsaw Recommendation on the Reconstruction and Recovery of Cultural Heritage* (“the 2018 Warsaw Recommendation”). In this document it has been agreed that valid expert guidance and universal principles are necessary; most importantly in Iraq or Syria, where cultural heritage preservation is fundamental for the societies to restore trust and ensure peace. The 2018 Warsaw Recommendation defines the proper terminology. Reconstruction is not limited to the technical activity of rebuilding; most importantly it is about living communities and intangible values. Recovery is a comprehensive and inclusive process, crafted for the needs of local communities and taking into account the specificity of given historical contexts.

The universal principles presented in the 2018 Warsaw Recommendation are as follows: In both reconstruction and recovery it is essential to include the values of heritage consolidated with intangible assets and conservation doctrine. The decisions on recovery and reconstruction should be made on the basis of a people-oriented approach. The main theme is “building back better” – for the purposes of sustainable development, resilience, and reconciliation. Proper documentation and inventories, including documentation of building methods, is key to a successful reconstruction. It is also essential to invest in long term capacity-building in disaster risk management and conservation techniques, notably for craftspeople, in order to provide for a sustainable future of the rebuilt heritage sites. All of this should be accompanied by proper education and awareness-raising.

All the above-mentioned principles were recommended to the World Heritage Committee to develop guidance for reconstruction and recovery at World Heritage sites, including Resource Manuals; further development of case studies; and examples of best practices so States Parties to the World Heritage Convention can use the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) and integrated management to achieve a holistic approach to reconstruction for post-disaster recovery. It was also suggested to the Advisory Bodies to consider clarification of conservation doctrine as it applies to reconstruction by reviewing the substantial body of charters, declarations, and recommendations, and to continue further development of case studies as well as provide specific advice to States Parties, as necessary. The message was also sent to UNESCO, the World Bank, and other UN and international bodies to reaffirm that cultural and natural heritage, including World Heritage, is an essential

and integral part of recovery and the growth of sustainable communities in terms of achieving the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, and to accordingly ensure the necessary international coordination mechanisms.

Thanks to the attendance of representatives from the UNESCO regional groups, the 2018 Warsaw Recommendation was presented to the World Heritage Committee at its 42nd Session in Manama (Bahrain). In its decision the Committee requested the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to continue their reflections and report back at the next meeting, and encouraged the ongoing cooperation with the World Bank and UN agencies in addressing the challenges of World Heritage recovery and reconstruction.

The aim of the 2018 Warsaw Recommendation was to inspire other tragically-destroyed cities and to bring hope to their people; to show the communities that the recovery of their cities is possible and to remind the international community that its assistance in this long and hard process is both inevitable and essential.