



Organisation des villes du patrimoine mondial
Organization of World Heritage Cities
Organización de las Ciudades del Patrimonio Mundial
Organização das Cidades do Património Mundial
منظمة مدن التراث العالمي

PRESS RELEASE

The new armed conflict in the Middle East:

In addition to the human tragedy, a cultural disaster

Appeal for the protection of cultural property in Israel and Lebanon

10 August 2006 – Public opinion worldwide has expressed its consternation at the extent of the human tragedy inflicted on civil populations in the new armed conflict in the Middle East. It is also alarmed by the level of material destruction of the human settlements and infrastructure in the entire area affected by the conflict.

Moreover, we, the signatory organisations of this appeal, whose “raison d’être” is to protect the cultural heritage of mankind, find it of the utmost importance to draw the attention of the public and all political and military bodies concerned, to the **scope** and **gravity** of the current danger to the survival of cultural heritage of major significance, recognised for the most part as “World Heritage” by UNESCO. We therefore support earlier statements by the *International Committee of the Blue Shield* (21 July 2006) and the *World Archaeological Congress* (31 July 2006) concerning the cultural heritage at risk in the conflict in the Middle East.

In addition to the suffering of the populations and the intensity of material destruction, it is the memory of mankind - through its architectural, archaeological and museological wealth - which is being irreversibly mutilated. The cultural identities throughout the region are also severely threatened.

We would like to draw particular attention to the fact that numerous World Heritage Sites are situated within the confrontation zone. Amongst those in Lebanon, the site of Byblos, one of the most ancient Phoenician cities, has been affected by an oil slick following the destruction of fuel reservoirs. However, the sites of Baalbek and Tyre, whose immediate surroundings have been targeted by bombs, are most at risk. In Baalbek, bombs have fallen only 300 metres from the site renowned for its six Roman columns which are the tallest in the world. The city of Tyre, where World Heritage-listed Phoenician and Roman ruins and collections of artefacts are located, has suffered multiple air strikes. Furthermore, the bombs have damaged the natural heritage in the protected Forest of the Cedars in the Al Shouf Biosphere Reserve.

World Heritage Sites in rocket-struck northern Israel are the important archaeological sites of the tells of Megiddo and Hazor, and their museums, and the ancient Phoenician city of Acre, which also preserves important remains from Crusader times beneath the fortified Ottoman town.

In addition to these World Heritage Sites (and the currently proposed World Heritage Sites such as those in Haïfa), the area affected by the conflict comprises a number of archaeological sites, monuments and artefacts dating back to the dawn of mankind and retracing the succession of numerous civilisations (Phoenician, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic,...). Many of these sites have already been inscribed by Israel and Lebanon on their tentative lists in compliance with the World Heritage Convention. Finally, a number of sites bear witness to this region being the cradle of the three great monotheistic religions.

The signatory organisations of this appeal remind the parties at war of the provisions of *The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and its two Protocols*, according to which the contracting parties “undertake to respect cultural property situated within their own territory as well as within the territory of other High Contracting Parties by refraining from any use of the property and its immediate surroundings or of the appliances in use for its protection for purposes which are likely to expose it to destruction or damage in the event of armed conflict; and by refraining from any act of hostility, directed against such property” (art. 4.1).

Moreover, the States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention (1972)* commit themselves “not to take any deliberate measures which might damage directly or indirectly the cultural and natural heritage situated on the territory of other States Parties to this Convention” (art. 6.3).

Whilst recalling that Israel and Lebanon are contracting parties to both Conventions, the signatory organisations of this appeal urge all parties involved in the conflict to respect the spirit and the text of these Conventions, whether or not they are contracting parties to these Conventions. In addition to this, they urgently request all institutions of the international community to work rapidly to ensure that diplomatic negotiations bring the hostilities to an end as soon as possible. They also demand immediate measures of protection and restoration of the concerned monuments, sites, museums (and their collections), by providing, amongst others, national and international experts secure access to the sites.

The signatory organisations:

- **EUROPA NOSTRA**, Pan-European Federation for Cultural Heritage
Contact: Mrs Sneska Quaedvlieg Mihailovic, Secretary General, tel. +31 70 302 40 51, imo@europanostra.org, www.europanostra.org
- **ICA**, International Council on Archives
Contact: Mr David Leitch, Senior Programme Manager tel. +33 1 40 27 61 37, leitch@ica.org, www.ica.org
- **ICCROM**, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
Contact: Office of the Director General, tel. +39 06 58 553 1, iccrom@iccrom.org, www.iccrom.org
- **ICOM**, International Council of Museums
Contact: Mr John Zvereff, Secretary General, tel. +33 1 47 34 91 61, secretariat@icom.museum, www.icom.org
- **ICOMOS**, International Council on Monuments and Sites
Contact: Mrs Gaia Jungeblodt, Director, tel. +33 1 45 67 67 70, secretariat@icomos.org, www.international.icomos.org
- **OWHC**, Organisation of World Heritage Cities
Contact: Mr Denis Ricard, Secretary General, tel. +418 692 0000, secretariat@ovpm.org, www.ovpm.org

About the signatory organisations:

Europa Nostra, the pan-European Federation for Heritage

Europa Nostra, the pan-European Federation for Heritage, is the representative platform of over 200 heritage NGOs active throughout Europe. It is the voice of this vast movement of European civil society active in the field of heritage towards international bodies concerned, in particular the European Union Institutions, the Council of Europe and UNESCO.

Europa Nostra is dedicated to putting heritage and its benefits in the mainstream of public consciousness and to making heritage a priority for public policies both at European and national levels. Its specific objectives are to promote, at a European level, high standards of quality in the fields of heritage conservation, architecture, urban and rural planning and to advocate a balanced and sustainable development of urban and rural, built and natural environment.

Europa Nostra supports national and international campaigns for the preservation and rescue of Europe's heritage at risk. It encourages exemplary initiatives in favour of the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage by recognising outstanding heritage achievements, in particular through the running of the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards. In early 2006, Europa Nostra was selected as the new Liaison Office for the co-ordination of the "European Heritage Days", a joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Commission.

Through its various activities, Europa Nostra seeks to highlight the importance of cultural heritage as a building block of European identity and as a contribution to the strengthening of the sense of European citizenship.

www.europanostra.org

ICA, International Council on Archives

Archives constitute the memory of nations and societies; they support their identity and are a key element of the information society. By testifying to actions and decisions taken, they simultaneously ensure the continuity of organisations and the justification of their rights, as well as those of the individuals and States.

The ICA is a non-governmental organisation the purpose of which is to promote the management and use of archives, as well as the preservation of the archival heritage of humanity throughout the world, by international co-operation.

The ICA brings together the national archive institutions, the professional archivists associations, the regional and local archives and the archives of other public and private organisations.

The ICA comprises a world network of almost 1800 institutional and individual members in 185 countries.

www.ica.org

ICCROM, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

ICCROM is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to the conservation of cultural heritage. Its members are individual states which have declared their adhesion to it. It exists to serve the international community as represented by its Member States, which currently number more than 110. It is the only institution of its kind with a worldwide mandate to promote the conservation of all types of cultural heritage, both movable and immovable. The decision to found the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property was made at the 9th UNESCO General Conference in New Delhi in 1956, at a time of mounting interest in the protection and preservation of cultural heritage. It was subsequently established in Rome in 1959 at the invitation of the Government of Italy.

ICCROM aims at improving the quality of conservation practice as well as raising awareness about the importance of preserving cultural heritage. ICCROM contributes to preserving cultural heritage in the world today and for the future through five main areas of activity: Training, Information, Research, Cooperation and Advocacy.

www.iccrom.org

ICOM, International Council of Museums

ICOM is the international organisation of museums and museum professionals committed to the conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible.

With more than 2.1,000 members in more than 145 countries, ICOM is an international network for museum professionals from all disciplines and specialisations.

ICOM was founded in 1946. It is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation which maintains formal relations of association with UNESCO and consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

<http://icom.museum>

ICOMOS, International Council on Monuments and Sites

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) was founded in 1965 at Warsaw (Poland), one year after the signature of the International Charter on the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, known as the “Venice Charter”. ICOMOS is an association of almost 9000 cultural heritage professionals present in over 120 countries throughout the world, working for the conservation and protection of monuments and sites – the only global non-government organisation of its kind. It benefits from the cross-disciplinary exchange of its members – architects, archaeologists, art historians, engineers, historians, planners, who foster improved heritage conservation standards and techniques for all forms of cultural properties: buildings, historic towns, cultural landscapes, archaeological sites, etc. ICOMOS is officially recognized as an advisory body to UNESCO, actively contributing to the World Heritage Committee and taking part in the implementation of the Convention. It also runs 28 specialised International Scientific Committees on a variety of subjects.

www.international.icomos.org

OWHC, Organization of World Heritage Cities

An international non-profit non-governmental organization, the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) was created to assist member cities adapt and improve their management methods in relation to the specific requirements of having a site inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In accordance with its General by Laws, the OWHC has the following goals:

- Contribute to implementation of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the International Charter for the Protection of Historic Cities;
- Encourage, on both regional and international levels, cooperation and the exchange of information and expertise among historic cities throughout the world in close collaboration with other organizations pursuing similar goals while emphasizing action likely to support the efforts of cities located in developing countries;
- In cooperation with specialized organizations, ensure better links between research undertaken by specialists or experts and the needs of local management;
- Sensitize the populations to patrimonial values and their protection

www.ovpm.org