

President's Annual Report to the Annual General Assembly and Advisory Committee

Fukuoka, Japan, October 2015

On this our 50th anniversary year, I would like once more to recognize the wonderful celebrations organized in Warsaw by ICOMOS Poland last June where the ICOMOS family reassembled to recognize the achievements of those who built our organization into the global authority that we are today. Special thanks to ICOMOS Poland President Bogusław Szmygin for all his efforts in putting together this memorable event. In Warsaw we renewed our commitment to honour those who came before us and to continue to build for the future generations who are destined to carry ICOMOS into the 21st century.

It has been a busy year since we met last at the General Assembly in Florence. I am happy to report that the Board that you elected there came together at once and has been working tirelessly in a collegial spirit for our continued growth and betterment.

With the clarification that the Board and I personally would be happy to entertain any questions from you on any issue, today I will limit my reporting to the following two items that have dominated our work over the course of this year:

- The role and work of ICOMOS in the World Heritage Convention
- The response by ICOMOS to the heritage crisis in Syria and Iraq

After doing that, I will also add some comments on issues that will be reported separately and more extensively as follows:

- Improvements at the International Secretariat, to be reported by Secretary General Kirsti Kovanen
- National and International Scientific Committees, to be reported by Vice President Gideon Koren

Changes in the ICOMOS World Heritage Procedures

It is no secret that over the past few years there was a growing animosity towards ICOMOS on the part of many States Parties as well as members of the World Heritage Committee. It would serve no purpose here to analyse the reasons that gave rise to this situation. Suffice it to say that they stemmed mainly from an institutional policy and culture of secrecy that was once required of ICOMOS and from our failure to transition out of it into a new policy of openness, transparency and direct cooperation with States Parties that would properly align with the new priorities of the Committee. This situation reached a climax at the 2014 World Heritage Committee meeting in Doha, where an Ad Hoc Working Group was appointed to completely re-assess the role and duties of the Advisory Bodies, with a particularly critical eye on ICOMOS.

Given the potential for an impending crisis and the diminishment of the role of ICOMOS as an Advisory Body, it became imperative to implement major changes in the way that ICOMOS assesses new nominations and how it determines the state of conservation of properties inscribed in the List. Fortunately, the need for such changes had been under intense study and discussion by the current and former members of the Executive Committee/Board for several years, but it had not been possible to implement them until then for a variety of reasons. Adopted in January 2015, the changes in procedures were presented to States Parties delegates at a special session at the ICOMOS International Secretariat in Charenton.

A few of these changes were put in place for the 2015 ICOMOS World Heritage Panel and further developed over the course of 2015, with the result that at the World Heritage Committee meeting in Bonn, ICOMOS was no longer the object of criticism. Instead, ICOMOS was repeatedly and lavishly congratulated for our new openness and willingness to cooperate. In this, I have to recognize the extraordinary and relentless commitment of Vice Presidents Alfredo Conti and Toshiyuki Kono who worked ceaselessly in front of and behind the scenes to open new channels of communication with the Committee President and its members to bring all these changes to a happy fruition.

I also want to recognize the work of Jörg Haspel, President of ICOMOS Germany, and of Board Member Christoph Machat in organizing our activities during the meeting of the 39th World Heritage Committee in Bonn.

All of the changes itemized below share the goal of establishing greater transparency in our work as well as a more direct and interactive collaboration with States Parties in overcoming obstacles to successful nominations, as well as in finding solutions for problematic states of conservation.

- The composition of the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel no longer consists of all willing members of the Board. Following the recommendations coming from many sources, the Panel is now composed of members of the Bureau to provide coherence and stability, and experts that reflect the nature of the nominations under consideration for each year.
- Furthermore, in the past all members of the Panel were responsible to cover all their travel and lodging expenses, thereby limiting the composition of the Panel to those who could afford to serve. In cooperation with the World Heritage Committee, funding has been provided to partially cover the costs of many, although still not all invited experts.
- Instead of waiting weeks or months to notify States Parties of the recommendations of the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel, a direct communication will be established with each nominating State Party while the Panel is still in session to inform and discuss with them the recommendations of ICOMOS, and when possible, to begin working together at once to find solutions to any obstacles that may exist preventing an immediate recommendation for inscription.
- The desk review process for determining the Outstanding Universal Value of nominated properties has been expanded to include any and all qualified and willing members of the National and International Scientific Committees of ICOMOS.
- ICOMOS and IUCN have agreed to work on the creation of a joint World Heritage Upstream Assistance Unit that will help States Parties who request it in the development of tentative lists, the preparation of nominations, the development of management plans, etc. Strong firewalls between those who provide assistance and those evaluating the final product will have to be built to avoid conflict of interest and the evaluation by individuals of their own work.
- Since ICOMOS does not have the funding to render these Upstream and Midstream services, they will be provided mostly on a fee basis, although it is hoped that a fund from voluntary State Parties donations will allow ICOMOS and IUCN to provide these services free of charge to countries lacking the monetary resources and in need of assistance.
- ICOMOS, IUCN and ICCROM will develop and enhance our joint effort in building capacity for the broad implementation of the objectives of the World Heritage Convention.
- As part of our initiative to provide capacity-building opportunities for our young professional members, World Heritage evaluation and monitoring missions will, whenever possible, allow for a young professional to accompany senior mission experts as observers. The programme was tested this year by inviting recommendation for participants from five universities that have graduate degrees or certificate programmes in World Heritage Studies.
- To better meet these needs for advice and firewalls, we have changed the organization of our World Heritage activities at the International Secretariat, with now 2 units, one dedicated to advisory and monitoring services and the other one to the evaluation of nominations.

Heritage Crisis in Syria and Iraq

ICOMOS and the world have been watching in horror the crescendo in unleashed savagery and brutality against individuals, communities and heritage sites and objects of historic past cultures condemned by the perpetrators in the Middle East. Realizing that these crimes against humanity are in part committed with the intent to get global media coverage, ICOMOS has hesitated to embrace the chorus of public deploration lest we unintentionally abet the objective of these deranged criminals.

Aware of our impotence to stop these acts, ICOMOS nevertheless has taken steps to mitigate the effects of this wanton destruction by paving the way to the recovery once peace returns to the region.

To this end, a Syria-Iraq Working Group was appointed under the chairmanship of Samir Abdulac and Bijan Rouhani as Vice-Chair. Their mandate has been to represent ICOMOS in all meetings convened on this topic and to tap into all the ICOMOS networks in order to gather information about the local heritage communities, all existing documentation on heritage sites throughout the region and identify collaboration with other concerned institutions. Of course, key elements in this effort are our International Scientific Committees on Archaeological Heritage Management and Risk Preparedness, respectively under the leadership of Douglas Comer and Rohit Jigyasu. I must recognize the great commitment of Samir, Bijan and many other network

members all over the world - too numerous to identify individually - in tenaciously and passionately pursuing these tasks.

A second step in addressing this crisis as approved by the ICOMOS Board was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the CyArk Foundation of California, USA, to implement Project Anqa (Anqa is the Arabic word for phoenix), whose aim is to undertake emergency 3-D detailed documentation on all sites under threat that may still be accessible. The MOU identifies the importance of our International Scientific Committee on Documentation (CIPA) as an adviser on technical and other related matters. In this respect, I must recognize ICOMOS Board Member Mario Santana-Quintero for his valuable participation in developing Project Anqa and refining its approaches.

There are many other improvements and initiatives that have been pursued over the past year that because of their importance I want to simply mention because others will report on them separately over the course of these days.

Working closely with Secretary General Kirsti Kovanen, Treasurer General Laura Robinson and Vice President Toshiyuki Kono, our Director General Marie-Laure Lavenir has implemented vast improvements in the management of the International Secretariat and in improving the morale of the staff. Among her achievements has been the welcome clarity she has brought to our financial situation. Marie-Laure has also established excellent relations with the staff in UNESCO, the World Heritage Centre and with many of the diplomatic delegations to UNESCO. I also have to acknowledge the work of Vice President Grellan Rourke in developing a long overdue governance policy to guide the relationships between the Board and the International Secretariat.

Charged with the portfolio for National and International Scientific Committees, Vice President Gideon Koren has developed, in collaboration with Vice President Peter Phillips, the new National Committee Model Statutes that are in compliance with the new ICOMOS Statutes approved in Florence last year. Accordingly, Gideon has implemented the policy approved by the Board to closely examine and if necessary take corrective actions on National Committees reported to be restrictive in their membership acceptance policies, that seem to be perpetually in the hands of a small clique, or whose presidents exceed the allowable term limits. I can assure you that the ICOMOS Board is intent on ensuring the growth and diversification of our membership in all National Committees, especially those that seem inactive or whose growth is stagnant. Working with Scientific Council Officers James Reap and Sofia Avgerinou-Kolonias, Gideon has also been researching proper actions to correct any membership and agenda restrictions that may be occurring in any of our International Scientific Committees. Given the importance of the health of all our Committees, the Bureau has agreed that while these responsibilities should rest in the Advisory Committee, that if no action is taken at that level, then the Board will assume these charges.

Having said that, however, I have to recognize the indomitable energy and important activities of many National and International Scientific Committees. I have had the privilege over the last year to take part in some of their meetings, such as the Symposium on Reconstruction in the United Arab Emirates, the meeting of ICOFort in Mexico, and the CIPA Symposium in Taipei, as well as the dazzling national symposia of restoration experts in Poland and in Russia.

Regarding the development of policies to attract the next generation of ICOMOS members, Vice Presidents Gideon Koren and Toshiyuki Kono have been working with Board Member Rohit Jigyasu, Daniel Young of Panama and others in advancing this objective. The energy and dedication of our members throughout the world is what guarantees the greatness of ICOMOS and our meaningful presence on the world stage.

I am also happy to report that work is underway to effectively reorganize our National Committee in the Russian Federation after its recognition was withdrawn by the Board last year. Another set of happy news comes from the Eastern Caribbean, where local groups in Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia and Saint Kitts and Nevis have begun work in organizing six new National Committees.

Finally, I want to thank ICOMOS Turkey and ICOMOS Macedonia for generously inviting ICOMOS to meet in their countries next year. After a careful and difficult consideration, the Board decided to accept the invitation from ICOMOS Turkey to meet in Istanbul next year.