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**Information Document: Conclusions of Mr. Henrik Lilius, Vice-President of  
the World Heritage Committee and ICOMOS Representative during the High  
Level Mission to Kathmandu Valley, 24-29 September 2000**

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## Conclusions

Our visit showed that the monumental buildings in the Kathmandu Valley – the castles, palaces and temples – are relatively well cared for and that the restoration methods used mainly conform to standard practice. However, there are some problems with the domestic architecture close to the monumental buildings and in areas listed under ‘urban fabric’. The problem here is that there has been, and continues to be, unrestrained new construction, often without a building permit, buildings are too high, new storeys are added to old buildings, and modern building materials are used. The repair and restoration work on the housing leaves much to be desired, unlike the case with the monumental buildings. The situation is particularly difficult in Bauddhanath, where only 15 of what were originally 88 buildings round the *stupa* remain, and an area originally planned as a protective zone has been completely built over. Another problem in Bauddhanath is the extremely low standard of the new architecture, a pervasive feature in all the housing areas. In Bhaktapur, too, the long street linking Durbar Square and Dattatreya Square had suffered major deterioration; admittedly, some of the buildings along the street were already ‘new’ when the Valley was entered on the list in 1979. On the other hand, measurements had been made of all the city’s building elevations, together with floor plan measurements, and various types of analysis had been made of the urban structure, all computer-based. From the viewpoint of the authorities in charge of antiquities, a great deal of groundwork has therefore been done in the city thanks to which the future situation can be brought under control as long as the political will can be found. There was also damage to the housing areas in Patan. On the other hand, Changu Narayan and the Swayambhunath stupa have been well cared for in my view.

In my opinion it is not possible to express an absolute black-and-white ‘Yes/No’ on whether the Kathmandu Valley should be put on the WhiD list. The fundamental problem derives from the way the Valley was originally entered the World Heritage list, as a single property, though it in fact comprises seven separate areas. This makes differentiated, area-specific handling difficult if the view is strictly maintained that the Valley is a single whole. Another problem is that there were originally, and even today continue to be, no protected areas. Thirdly, it is quite clear that the WHC did not have enough experience in 1979 to ensure that the management plan was sufficiently comprehensive, and that the country had the required legislation and building control mechanisms. At that point, around 1980, Nepal also did not have enough people with the necessary training. It is therefore my view that the WHC should in the present situation also consider its own actions and the ‘negligence’ it may have been guilty of in relation to the present state of the Kathmandu Valley. It was the early ‘90s before the WHC became aware of the deterioration in the situation which had undeniably taken place in some cases.

All in all, I consider that the Kathmandu Valley should not be put on the WhiD list as a single entity. This would deal a death blow to the local enthusiasm and commitment that we found evidenced many times during our journey, especially in Bhatnapuhr, Pashupatinath, Changu Narayan and Swayambhunath. The chairman of the mission also expressed many words of praise on the spot concerning the results achieved in several places, so entry of the whole Valley in the WhiD list would conflict greatly with the way the mission reacted during its

visit, and would certainly be a great disappointment to the local people, who are doing their best in the present situation in Nepal.

Throughout the 1990s the view expressed by the people of Nepal was that the Kathmandu Valley should not be put on the WhiD list. This position also came out very strongly during our journey. It is the wish of the local authorities, especially the mayor of Hanuma, the Director General of the Department of Archaeology in Nepal and his colleagues, and the Minister of Culture, and also was the subject of an appeal by the Prime Minister, who assured us that the situation in the Kathmandu Valley will be brought under control. At worst – if the Valley is put on the WhiD list – the Prime Minister may have to resign. Though this is of course Nepal's own internal affair, and though in all probability the World Heritage site is used primarily only as a means to achieve other political goals, careful consideration should be given to whether the WHC wishes to be involved in bringing such a situation about.

I therefore propose that the WHC should cease viewing the Kathmandu Valley as a single entity on a 'Yes/No' basis, and should declare that the property consists of several different areas in various conditions. With the exception of Bodhnath and the long street in Bhaktapur, all the Durbar Squares with the monumental buildings that were found to be well managed, and Pashupatinath, where the situation is being brought under control, should be excluded from any WhiD list, which should concentrate on distinctly marked-out housing areas that have already suffered damage. Correspondingly, Nepal should be asked for detailed proposals for action to eliminate damage that has already occurred and prevent new deterioration, and should report to the WHC on progress made in detail and at annual intervals. Because the mission was unable to convince the Nepalese that the WhiD list can be a positive aid, they would experience entry to be a punishment and consequently feel disappointed and downcast. I therefore consider it wiser to motivate them with a solution that would recognise work well done and distinctly point out the problems and targets for improvements.