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CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

BUREAU OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Twenty-third session
Paris, UNESCO Headquarters, Room X
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Information Document: Updated progress report on the implementation of measures to safeguard the integrity of the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site, Nepal.

Background: At its twenty-second session, the World Heritage Committee examined the findings and results of the Joint UNESCO-ICOMOS-HMG of Nepal Mission, and the 55 recommendations and Time-Bound Action Plan adopted by HMG of Nepal. The Committee decided to defer consideration of the inscription of the Kathmandu Valley site on the List of World Heritage in Danger until its twenty-third session. However, the Committee requested HMG of Nepal to continue implementing the 55 recommendations of the Joint Mission and to respect the deadlines of the Time-Bound Action Plan adopted by HMG of Nepal. Moreover, the Committee requested HMG of Nepal to submit a report on the progress made in implementing the 55 recommendations before 15 April 1999 for examination by the twenty-third session of the Bureau in July 1999.

Purpose of this Information Document: This Information Document is an updated progress report on the implementation of measures to safeguard the integrity of the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage site submitted by HMG of Nepal on 28 June 1999. This report supplements the state of conservation report presented in Document WHC-99/CONF.204/5 and an earlier report submitted by HMG of Nepal on 13 April 1999, which has been integrated in its entirety into Information Document WHC-99/CONF.204/INF.6 (available in English and French).

**Updated progress report
on the implementation of measures to safeguard the integrity of the
Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site**

Submitted by the
Department of Archaeology, Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, HMG of Nepal
30 June 1999

In the Report of the UNESCO-ICOMOS-His Majesty's Government of Nepal Joint Evaluation Mission of March - April 1998 it is noted that:

“ICOMOS concludes that the single overriding issue in protecting the integrity of the KVVHS is the control of damaging and illegal development. With few exceptions, the principal religious and public monuments are secure and require only normal maintenance. However, the traditional houses and commercial buildings which form the essential setting of KVVHS Monument Zones are at great risk and are subject to extreme development pressure. If re-development continues, the authenticity of KVVHS will be so severely damaged as to compromise its outstanding universal value.”

Immediately after the conclusion of the Mission, His Majesty's Government took swift action to provide strong new initiatives to address this problem, although it should be recognised that in a rapidly developing country such as Nepal, pressures will inevitably be greater than in a developed country where such rapid change occurred in the past and where unchallenged conservation strategies are more easily secured.

Institutional development

On 6 June 1998 the Cabinet resolved to create an 18-person-strong Heritage Conservation Unit in the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, to provide an effective means of monitoring the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site and sufficient staff to maintain close contact with property owners and other stakeholders. Normal Civil Service procedures had to be followed for the creation of these permanent new posts - a sign of the considerable commitment of a small country like Nepal. Early in 1999, it was possible to advertise the posts, short-list applicants who were then interviewed and took written examinations. However, the Election Commission froze any new government appointments in advance of the General Election of May-June 1999, but it is now possible to make appointments to the remaining 12 posts, 6 having been filled by secondment from other Ministries and these officials have already started regular monitoring of the heritage sites.

Control of development within the World Heritage Site is being carried out in collaboration with the municipal authorities.

Lalitpur

Lalitpur Sub-Metropolitan City, the planning authority for Patan Darbar Square Monument Zone, has created a strong Heritage Unit which includes a Senior Conservation Architect trained by UNESCO [World Heritage Fund] and which will also include a Senior Planner. A project proposal has been submitted [with the co-operation of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the UNESCO International Technical Advisor] to the European Commission, for support under the Asia-Urbs Programme for an extensive programme of training and capacity-building over a 2-year period by the Lalitpur sub-Metropolitan [City].

Bhaktapur

Bhaktapur Municipality is completing an extensive documentation programme with Technical Co-operation support from the World Heritage Fund and will also shortly be creating a Heritage Unit.

Kathmandu Metropolitan

On 7 June 1999, Kathmandu Metropolitan City, which is responsible for 4 of the 7 Monument Zones which constitute the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site, launched the *Greater Kathmandu Valley Mapping Project*, which is an extensive urban planning programme to take place over four years with the support of the European Commission. To ensure enhanced management of the two Monument Zones which have presented particular problems, a survey, inventory and proposals for environmental enhancement is being prepared for Bauddhanath Monument Zone.

Legal protection

Over the past year, as a result of intensive collaboration between the Department of Archaeology and the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Ancient Monument Preservation Rules have been refined and revised and are now ready for approval by the Cabinet. This process was delayed due to the General election in May-June [1999] but is expected to complete in the next one month.

Recent experience has shown that overlaps in jurisdiction between the Department of Archaeology, the Municipalities and the Kathmandu Valley Town Development Committee are hampering effective enforcement of the Ancient Monument Preservation Act, the statutory instrument designed to protect the cultural World Heritage of Nepal. A thorough review of current legislation will shortly take place for drafting further Sixth, Amendment to the Ancient Monument Preservation Act.

Public awareness

As identified by ICOMOS and endorsed by the Joint Mission as a whole, the principal threat to the integrity of the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site has been the demolition of historic houses and their replacement by concrete structures. An innovative and diverse programme of measures has been devised in co-operation with UNESCO in order to enhance the value of their traditional houses in the minds of the inhabitants.

For creating public awareness on the value of cultural Heritage DOA has recently made a special appeal through different media i.e. T.V. ,Radio and News Paper on the importance of the World Heritage sites and the facilities which His Majesty's Government has decided to provide to those house owners who repair, or construct their houses as per the prevailing Guidelines.

Pilot projects for adapting traditional houses to modern life

At the moment, very few examples exist to show how traditional houses can be successfully adapted to modern living and serve the needs of business operating in the World Heritage Site. The World Heritage Centre mobilized funds from the National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan (NFUAJ), which is supporting two pilot projects in Patan for converting traditional houses into quality tourist accommodation, and from a Swedish tourism group donor, which is supporting a third rehabilitation project in Bhaktapur. To extend the programme of pilot projects, the World Heritage Centre is supporting the preparation of five further project proposals, in collaboration with the concerned local authorities and NGOs [with funding from NFUAJ]. The purpose of these pilot projects is to show how nice traditional houses can be made to live in and how they can have a commercial value to their owners.

Informing owners of the support available from the Government

A leaflet is being distributed to every householder in the World Heritage Site detailing the support now available as a result of the Cabinet decision of June 1998 to provide royalty-free timber and tax and other concessions to those who comply with the by-laws protecting the integrity of the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site, as well as the penalties for infringement. Achieving compliance with planning regulations As a result of the benefits which can now be offered, the Department of Archaeology has achieved considerable success in ensuring compliance with approved designs - previously the principal weakness in planning control - combined with a greatly enhanced programme of monitoring. The use of traditional materials is also being successfully promoted, including the use of high-quality traditional *daci apa* and moulded bricks.

Promoting the preservation of the built heritage

Permits for the demolition of traditional houses are only granted in cases where the reviewing committee agrees that they are in too poor a condition to be repaired. ICOMOS has prepared a draft criteria for classification of historic buildings and ancient monuments, in accordance with the Ancient Monument Preservation Act. Public information on World Heritage A high-profile publicity meeting on World Heritage values and the World Heritage Convention will shortly be held, with the support of the World Heritage Fund [promotional assistance budget]. Furthermore, a meeting of the Campaign Review Committee of the International Safeguarding Campaign for the Kathmandu Valley will be held in mid-July, organised jointly by His Majesty's Government and UNESCO, to highlight the importance of the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site in an international context.

Information leaflets in English and Nepali have already been published on each of the seven Monument Zones. To provide physical evidence of their extent, the programme of fixing stone boundary markers in the form of traditional stelae (which display the World Heritage logo and the words 'World Heritage' in Nepali and English) is being rapidly completed, combined with fixing bronze plaques explaining their World Heritage significance in the centre of each Monument Zone. At present, Bhaktapur Municipality has completed fixing stone boundary markers delimiting Bhaktapur Darbar Square Monument Zone as part of the documentation programme supported by the World Heritage Fund. Stone stelae marking the boundaries of Hanuman Dhoka Darbar Square and Swayambhu Monument Zones are also completed by the Department of Archaeology.

Summary

Nepal is not a rich country and, like most developing countries, is affected by rapid social and economic change, which puts pressure on traditional environments and lifestyles, especially since most of the World Heritage Site forms part of living cities. Nevertheless His Majesty's Government is co-operating with the other stakeholders to implement an extensive and diverse programme of enhanced management and protection for the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site, in close co-operation with UNESCO. These combined measures will ensure the protection of the integrity of the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage Site for future generations of humankind.