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КОМИССИЯ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ ПО ДЕЛАМ ЮНЕСКО
COMMISSION DE LA FÉDÉRATION DE RUSSIE POUR L'UNESCO
COMMISSION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION FOR UNESCO



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№ 3586 /юн

Moscow, "23" December, 2016

Dear Ms Rössler,

In compliance with the Decision 40 COM 7B.56 of the World Heritage Committee the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO has the honour to present hereby the report on progress made regarding the construction of the Museum Complex within the World Heritage property "Cultural and Historic Ensemble of the Solovetsky Islands".

Please accept, dear Ms Rössler, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely, 

Grigory Ordzhonikidze
Secretary-General

MS MECHTILD RÖSSLER
DIRECTOR OF THE WORLD
HERITAGE CENTRE UNESCO
Paris
cc. Permanent Delegation of the
Russian Federation to UNESCO

On October 25, 1990, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church decided to open the Solovetsky Monastery (the Solovetsky Zosima-Savvatiy Stauropegic Men Monastery).

In order to revive the monastic life and the observance of religious regulations, there is a need in the liberation of the ensemble of the Solovetsky Monastery area from museum objects, but at the same time, it is necessary to create favorable conditions for museum collections storage.

In 2012-2013, the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation developed the project documentation of the exposition and administrative building construction of the Federal State Cultural Institution Solovetsky State Historical and Architectural Museum-Reserve.

The placement of a new museum exposition and administrative building was due to the need to withdraw the services and exposition area of the museum from the territory of the Solovetsky Monastery, so that the Monastery could carry out its direct activities freely. The international cultural heritage protection practice uses this method of protection, as the formation of tourism management strategies.

In 2015, due to the complexity of this project, Russia being a Member State of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) invited the ICOMOS advisory mission to the Solovetsky archipelago.

On July 22-28, 2015, the ICOMOS advisory mission, chaired by an expert T.Krestev, was held.

The mission has endorsed the idea not to impose the museum functions at the Monastery in the future, so that it could preserve the purity of its religious significance. At the same time, the mission has considered that the location and characteristics of the museum complex will have a negative impact on the site outstanding universal value, and this impact will then be very difficult to be reduced by modifying the project design.

Based on the mission conclusion, the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation has stopped the construction works and revised the museum concept.

In June 2016, the relevant materials were submitted to the World Heritage Centre.

In accordance with decision No. 40 COM 7B.56 taken at its 40th session, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee “recalled its previous concerns regarding the inappropriate location of the Museum Complex and urged the State Party to immediately halt its construction, remove the parts already constructed, and consider a more appropriate design and location for the Museum”.

In late October 2016, a letter from the ICOMOS was received, containing the expert commentary to the previously presented (in June 2016) Heritage Impact Assessment of this construction project to the World Heritage Site. The ICOMOS experts’ report contained findings, similar to those presented in the ICOMOS 2015 advisory mission report and the decision of the 40th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

In connection with this decision, the project has been revised and has undergone significant changes.

The main objective laid down in the adjustment of the museum construction project has been the reduction of the effect of the new building on the existing protected historic landscape under condition of preservation and use of the already erected structures.

To solve the problem, it is proposed to fix the height of the building at the level of already erected two floors.

In order to make the building less noticeable in the existing pool of visual communications, its silhouette should be formed focusing more on the natural landscape rather than on the architectural landscape. Additionally, if the main dominant feature of historical and cultural landmarks located on the island is a vertical contrasted with a horizontal of the surrounding landscape, the silhouette of the museum building, logically, shall be horizontal in order to dissolve against the sky and the land border. For the purpose of greater dissolution in the landscape, it is proposed to crown the building with an operated landscaped roof, which can be used for the individual artifacts exhibiting, not afraid of the open air.

Based on the awareness of the fact that the main appearance of the island is the authenticity of the architectural and artistic image of the Monastery monuments, it has been proposed to perform the new building facades as much as possible stylistically neutral in order to avoid any even the slightest suspicion of an attempt of the historic buildings imitation and substitution.

In this connection, the Russian party has organized a working meeting on this issue with representatives of the World Heritage Centre and the ICOMOS, which was held on November 30, 2016.

Based on the meeting results, the work on the museum building project is currently under way, after the completion of which the Russian party would continue consultations with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies of