

First Aid Support Meeting: Follow-up to the World Heritage Committee Decisions on the Ancient City of Damascus

14-15 November 2016
UNESCO Office, Beirut, Lebanon

Recommendations of the Meeting

General Recommendations

- Ensure that the World Heritage Convention's requirements as per its Operational Guidelines paragraph 172, are followed, and maintain regular communication with the World Heritage Centre, which will consult ICOMOS for advice and approval on any development in the World Heritage property, including post-disaster emergency measures, emergency safety measures, consolidation, restoration, etc.
- Reinforce coordination between the entities in charge of the Ancient City of Damascus, notably with regards to emergency situations; ensure a swift exchange of information
- Create a joint Committee (DGAM, Directorate of the Ancient City of Damascus) to examine and take decisions on specific issues such as the Ottoman Bank restoration project.
- Establish a special unit for Disaster Risk Management and Prevention gathering all concerned stakeholders (DGAM, Directorate of the Old City of Damascus, fire brigade, concerned ministries and public service entities, civil society representatives, representatives of inhabitants and shop owners/ tenants, etc.) as deemed appropriate.
- Develop a Site Management Plan for the Ancient City of Damascus through an integrated and participative process.

Proposals follow-up for the implementation of the main recommendations

Site Management Plan

- Submit an International Assistance Request through the World Heritage Fund, as a start – 30 000 USD.

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Capacity building

- UNESCO Beirut to provide training in Disaster Risk Management for to-be-established special unit for Disaster Risk Management and Prevention.

Documentation

- Create a Data Bank of documentation for the Ancient City of Damascus: Ensure the exchange and centralization of the documentation by all national and international entities and individuals (research centres, universities, ministries, municipalities, researchers, etc.) who have worked on the World Heritage Property, its buffer zone and its historical suburbs. UNESCO Beirut could support with the organization of a meeting dedicated to the documentation of the World Heritage Property and its larger context.

Conservation:

- Ensure the strict use of traditional materials for the restoration of the World Heritage property, even in the case of emergency post-disaster reconstruction, to avoid the deterioration of the urban fabric and the gradual loss of its authenticity.
- Apply emergency measures for the safeguarding of the Ottoman Bank as a priority, in particular the consolidation of its remaining structure and its protection from rain and other weathering effects; use the Ottoman Bank Restoration Project as a best-practice pilot case for other emergency restoration projects in Damascus and elsewhere in Syria.
- Distinguish between emergency measures and non-emergency measures, and refrain from undertaking restoration and/ reconstruction measures hastily if the situation allows to undertake a project that abides by international conservation standards; consider that loss of authenticity is a critical matter by the World Heritage Convention's standards.

Legal framework:

- Apply the existing protective legal frameworks related to cultural heritage protection, to be applied under the guidance of the DGAM.
- Review the cultural heritage code (51) to avoid the gradual loss of authenticity in the World Heritage property.
- Ensure that violations within the urban fabric are stopped and controlled.

Awareness raising:

- Undertake preventive awareness-raising actions amongst local communities and the private sector in the World Heritage Property.
- Develop a handy and operational manual to mitigate the risks of disasters with a focus on fire.