

Yerevan Recommendation of the  
Regional Thematic Expert Consultation meeting on sustainable management of World  
Heritage properties of Religious Interest focused on Eastern Europe

Yerevan, Armenia

20 April 2018

The Regional Thematic Expert Consultation meeting on sustainable management of World Heritage properties of Religious Interest focused on Eastern Europe, meeting in Yerevan from 18-22 April 2018,

Recalling the principles set forth in World Heritage Convention, its Operational Guidelines and other relevant documents, including Kyiv Statement on the protection of religious properties within the framework of the World Heritage Convention, adopted during different sessions and meetings, including those organized within framework of the UNESCO initiative of religious interest,

Thanking the Armenian government for their generous hospitality in hosting and excellent organization of the meeting as well as for the proposal by the Minister of Culture, H.E. Armen Amiryan, to establish an internet portal to exchange information on World Heritage properties of religious interest in Eastern Europe,

Noting with appreciation the full support of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Holy See and the Russian Orthodox Church for the initiative,

We, the participants. representing 9 States Parties (Armenia, Finland, FYR of Macedonia, Georgia, Greece, Holy See - State of Vatican City, Poland, Russian Federation, Ukraine), World Heritage Centre, Advisory Bodies (ICOMOS, IUCN) to the World Heritage Committee, and religious communities of Armenian Apostolic Holy Church, Russian Orthodox Church;

Adopt the following recommendations:

### **General Recommendations**

1. the protection of World Heritage properties of religious interest, taking fully into account problems arising in connection with management, governance and in conformity with the provisions of the adopted documents, should be jointly ensured by all relevant authorities, religious communities, and other concerned rightholders and stakeholders;
2. Joint decision-making mechanisms for each property should ensure that value based management will be developed appropriate to the particular circumstances of the property, at all stages of the process definition, planning and implementation,
3. Acknowledging that properties of religious interests may also have environmental, social, political and economic functions, decisions envisaged to prioritize these functions must be compatible with protection of the Outstanding Universal Value and involved communities' religious interest.
4. Protection, governance and management of properties of religious interest should involve all concerned bodies and communities;
5. While noting the local and specific connotations of every property of religious interest, international and interreligious cooperation and exchange should be encouraged as a means of sharing experiences and improving mutual understanding.
6. The Advisory Bodies consider undertaking thematic and other studies on properties of religious interest, considering the recognition of associated religious values in the World Heritage system;

### **Specific Recommendations on the content of the Guidance Document:**

7. The Guidance document requested by the World Heritage Committee in its decision (Decision 35 COM 5A, UNESCO, 2011) should be drafted to ensure that it:

a) uses in a format, terminology and language appropriate to and accessible for its different target audiences, including, if needed, by means of separate sections for different audiences;

b) encourages participatory management involving all rightholders and stakeholders, including heritage authorities, local and religious communities and others affected by the property of religious interest;

c) encourages local and religious communities to seek further involvement and greater understanding of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, and other relevant UNESCO initiatives;

d) encourages professionals, officials and others involved in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention at properties of religious interest to seek deeper understanding of the values, needs and requirements of the local and religious communities;

e) incorporates, where appropriate, relevant World Heritage Committee policies (such as sustainable development, risk management, climate change and others), relevant decisions of the World Heritage Committee as well as relevant guidance documents produced by the Advisory Bodies;

f) addresses the key challenges to properties of religious interest, such as reconstruction and restoration; visitation, including pilgrimage, religious events and tourism; transformation, modernization and development as well as differing perceptions of value;

g) recognizes the multi-dimensional aspects of properties of religious interest which need to be accommodated in protection, governance and management of each individual property, its buffer zone and wider setting;

h) explores practical methods of reconciliation and finding ways to resolve different expectations in view of achieving consensus policies towards the protection, governance and management of properties of religious interest.

## **Recommendations on dissemination**

8. This Yerevan Recommendation shall be included in the report presented to the World Heritage Committee.
9. Request that the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies disseminate these recommendations to the States Parties and their professional networks, and requests the national Focal Points for World Heritage to adapt these recommendations to the most appropriate terminology and circumstances, when sharing them with colleagues, religious communities and other involved in the properties of religious interest.
10. Welcome the proposal by Ukraine to host an International Seminar on “Living Religious Heritage of the World Significance: Participatory Management and Sustainable Use” in autumn 2018 and encourages this meeting to disseminate further this Yerevan Recommendation;
11. Also welcomes the proposal of the Russian Federation to host a meeting in late 2018 within the framework of the Properties of religious interest initiative;
12. Further welcomes the initiative of the Georgian government and the Georgian patriarchate to hold jointly a scientific conference on the urban New Jerusalem concept in late 2019.