

12-14 MAY 2019
MTSKHETA-TBILISI, GEORGIA



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

In cooperation with



World
Heritage
Centre



CONCEPT NOTE

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT MEETING

**CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE
WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY HISTORICAL
MONUMENTS OF MTSKHETA AND IT'S SETTING /
LIVING RELIGIOUS AND SACRED WORLD HERITAGE
IN A HISTORIC URBAN CONTEXT**



საქართველოს საკატორიარჟო
ხუროთმოქღვრების, ხალოვნებისა
და რესტავრაციის ცენტრი

საქართველოს კუდტუჩუნი
მეგავინდრომის დაცვის
ეროვნული სააგენტო



NATIONAL AGENCY FOR
CULTURAL HERITAGE
PRESERVATION OF GEORGIA



საქართველოს განათლების,
მეცნიერების, კულტურისა
და სპორტის სამინისტრო

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

**CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF THE WORLD
HERITAGE PROPERTY HISTORICAL MONUMENTS OF MTSKHETA
AND IT'S SETTING**

Living Religious and Sacred World Heritage in a Historic Urban Context

International Expert Meeting

12-14 May, 2019

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

International Expert Meeting

Conservation and sustainable use of the World Heritage property Historical Monuments of Mtskheta and its setting

Living Religious and Sacred World Heritage in a Historic Urban Context

Introduction

The World Heritage property Historical Monuments of Mtskheta, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1994, was also inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger from 2009 to 2016. While it is now off the List of World Heritage in Danger, there are still many issues to be resolved regarding both the conservation of the property itself and the management of development in its buffer zone to protect its relationship to the cultural landscape of which it is part. The final report of the Cultural Heritage Advisory Service by UNESCO to Georgia (2015-2017) and the recommendations of the joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS/ICCROM reactive monitoring mission in 2018 make a number of recommendations, endorsed by the World Heritage Committee (Decision 42 COM 7B.24), which are still being followed up.

The Government of Georgia and the Patriarchate of Georgia are holding an international expert meeting to examine further these issues and identify ways of strengthening sustainable management and protection of the World Heritage property and its buffer zone. This will discuss linkages between the World Heritage Convention and the heritage of religious interest, definition of associated spiritual values, assessment of all religious activities and practices within the City of Mtskheta, research in the field of religious tourism and pilgrimage, and the role of the religious community in the management of the World Heritage property. The expert meeting should increase awareness and reinforce involvement of religious communities in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, *inter alia*, through the application of the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape. The meeting is organised within the framework of the UNESCO Initiative on Heritage of Religious Interest.

Topics to be covered in the meeting are:

1. Mtskheta and the concept of the New Jerusalem ;
2. Other designed sacred landscapes, whether urban or rural;
3. The role of religious communities in the management of living sacred places ;
4. Issues of management and protection ;
5. Tools and methodologies available, particularly the Historic Urban Landscapes (HUL) approach and Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) ;

Aims

1. To consider future steps for the sustainable management, protection and use of the Historic Monuments of Mtskheta and its surrounding cultural landscape;
2. To discuss the advantages of World Heritage integrative management requirements and their implications at site levels including monitoring and state of conservation reporting when required;
3. To understand existing governance and management systems within World Heritage properties of religious interest and to review the status of development of a joint management system allowing for multi-functional uses;

4. To identify the main obstacles to protection, conservation and integrated management of the Living Religious and Sacred World Heritage in a Historic Urban Context;
5. To discuss the development of appropriate strategies for acquiring an in-depth knowledge of national specificities in the protection and management of cultural and natural heritage of religious interest including associative values;
6. To consolidate knowledge on the study, development and practical application of national policies in this domain and relevant international normative and guidance instruments;
7. To discuss the development and implementation of appropriate national legal measures and rules for conservation, restoration, management and use of Living Religious and Sacred World Heritage in a Historic Urban Context;
8. To discuss the role that religious communities together with their intangible heritage, should play in the management and governance of World Heritage properties and heritage preservation;
9. To discuss measures and instruments necessary for the protection, conservation, presentation, interpretation, rehabilitation and management of the Living Religious and Sacred World Heritage in a Historic Urban Context, to ensure that their Outstanding Universal Value, including the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity at the time of inscription, is sustained or enhanced over time, including:
 - a. protective legislation at the national, provincial or municipal level;
 - b. plans related to the municipality and region in which the WH property is located (regional or local plan planning instruments, planning control mechanisms, conservation plan, tourism development plan);
 - c. legislative and administrative provisions for the conservation of the property and symbiotic uses in the city;
 - d. policies and programmes related to the conservation of the property;
 - e. management systems and annual work plans for the management and maintenance of the property;
10. To discuss the establishment of a network connecting similar properties worldwide based on thematic commonalities and diversities, to share experiences and foster positive synergies.

As well as addressing the specific issues of Mtshketa, the meeting seeks to strengthen the knowledge, abilities and skills of the representatives of the religious communities living in a Historic Urban Context through direct involvement in integrative urban heritage management and compatible use. Establishment of a constructive dialogue with all relevant stakeholders is essential to develop general guidance on management of heritage of religious interest based on a deeper understanding of associated sacred and spiritual values of World Heritage properties and their link with Outstanding Universal Value. The interaction of international experts and religious communities in such a conference may also provide crucial inputs to the most appropriate approaches to tackle the challenging problems of heritage protection and generating understanding and mutual respect.

Methodology

The meeting comprises lectures by resource persons and experts who coordinate with Georgian Patriarchate on identified themes, and interactive case-study sessions between the participants and resources persons to discuss key issues. Each session will be managed by a moderator.

Expected Outputs

This cross-thematic case study approach aims to define the main principles for understanding the needs, challenges and best practices for the recognition and management of properties with associative sacred or spiritual values, including sites with living religious practices.

The results of this conference will provide further advice and support for the Historic Monuments of Mtskheta and contribute to the development of guidance for recognition and management of the associative values, in line with the recommendations of the International World Heritage Expert Meeting on criterion (vi)¹, as well as the draft general guidance on the management of cultural and natural heritage of religious interest.

This may lead to the establishment of a network connecting similar properties worldwide.

Background

General

World Heritage properties such as living religious and sacred sites, are one of the largest thematic categories on the World Heritage List, and require specific policies for protection and management that take into account their distinct associated sacred or spiritual values as a key factor for their conservation.

The World Heritage Committee in 2011 (Decision 35 COM 5A, UNESCO, 2011) requested the World Heritage Centre, in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies, to elaborate a thematic paper proposing to State Parties general guidance on the management of cultural and natural heritage of religious interest, and in compliance with the national specificities. In 2018, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre launched a series of cross-thematic case studies, including consultations on Living Religious and Sacred World Heritage in a Historic Urban Context (in conjunction with the World Heritage Cities Programme).

Numerous historic cities on the World Heritage List include components of religious significance and some are recognized as *Holy Cities* by the different communities. The significance of these monuments and sites, and their coexistence and interactions in the wider urban context require co-management and need to be further explored through the application of the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape integrating the intangible components and the wider context (UNESCO, 2011).

Traditionally, many religious communities lie outside urban settlements, allowing for a life of seclusion. The ascetic life of the communities, as well as their self-sufficient way of life based on prudent agricultural management and enriched by religious practices, kept these religious communities alive for many centuries in the most diverse ecosystems, often resilient cultural landscapes. However, with increasing urbanization, modern urban development has engulfed some of these confined communities and brought them within their boundaries (Vance, 1990). Other religious communities were founded from the outset within urban settlements, though these too may have traditionally depended on the produce from their rural estates. Their roles could include worship, religious study and teaching, safeguarding religious practices and traditions, while maintaining traditional knowledge of medicinal herbs and plants. The preservation of their cultural and natural heritage makes urban religious communities an important resource for sustainability which can also contribute to the sustaining of large green protected areas in the cities.

¹ The recommendations of the International World Heritage Expert Meeting on Criterion (vi) and associative values (Warsaw, 2012) for the development of further in-depth guidance on the recognition and management of cultural associations as part of the OUV of properties.

In terms of World Heritage management planning, more and more religious communities are gaining recognition as stakeholders in the adoption of conservation policies. They ensure the continuity of living religious heritage in World Heritage urban areas and elsewhere, and the safeguarding of intangible religious practices within and without the built fabric of the properties.

One of the main challenges for the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention is to ensure, at the national level, the effective protection and management of the properties of Outstanding Universal Value inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List – guaranteeing its transmission to the future generations. A closer dialogue between stakeholders would be the best approach to gain a better understanding of the significance of the properties and the roles and responsibilities of national and local authorities and religious communities.

The role of religious communities in and around World Heritage Cities can, through the implementation of the World Heritage Cities Programme and the Initiative on Heritage of Religious Interest, support improved urban sustainability, and the strengthening of local identity, by jointly addressing the challenges of increased urban development and tourism pressures. Moreover the communities can also contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 11: *Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*.

The Holy City of Mtskheta

The Statement of Outstanding Universal Value adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2014, highlights the associative values of the World Heritage property of “Historical Monuments of Mtskheta” with religious figures, such as Saint Nino; the 6th-century church in Jvari Monastery remains the most sacred place in Georgia and *Mtskheta has maintained its role as the spiritual and cultural centre of the country, assumed ever since the introduction of Christianity in the region*.

Also in 2014, ICOMOS International highlighted “*symbolic ideas related to The Holy City of Mtskheta as the New Jerusalem, in which the most significant religious monuments in the area (inside and outside the current boundaries of protection) are enrolled in a circle representing monuments of the real Jerusalem*”.

ICOMOS also noted that “*these sites are functionally linked through a litany (religious procession), which represents the venerable pilgrimage to the holy city of Christendom - Jerusalem. This interpretation of Mtskheta has similarities with other places where monuments were intended to evoke the New Jerusalem. Accordingly, this idea perhaps could be used to explain the development of the medieval city of Mtskheta and would influence the way limits of development were defined*”.

Thus, the management of the property should aim not only towards the maintenance of its Outstanding Universal Value, but also towards the maintenance of its spiritual values, which are of primary importance to the religious community. One of the UNESCO-WHC key recommendations was that the Georgian authorities define, in coordination and involvement of all stakeholders, a shared vision for the town, with varied functions and varied requirements based on the conservation of the OUV and the associative sacred values providing mutual benefits for the city's inhabitants.

12-14 MAY 2019
MTSKHETA-TBILISI, GEORGIA

