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Report of the UNESCO mission to Cairo for the Conservation of the
site of the Pyramid Fields from Giza to Dahshur, (1-6 April, 1995)

Following an exchange of correspondence between the Director-General of UNESCO, the World Heritage Committee and the Government of Egypt, a UNESCO expert mission visited Egypt from 1 to 6 April 1995 at the invitation of the national authorities, in order to propose safeguarding measures for the World Heritage site of the Pyramid Fields from Giza to Dahshur, after studying with the Egyptian authorities concerned the possibilities of adopting a new route for the motorway under construction which at the present time cuts across the site.

This expert mission visited the site and its surroundings on several occasions and participated in extensive meetings and discussions with the Egyptian Joint Committee including representatives of the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Reconstruction and New Communities, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Local Administration and the Governorate of Giza.

This cooperation, which answered the concerns expressed both by the Director-General of UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture, was extremely fruitful and reached a full agreement from all parties on the following points:

- 1) Concerning the highway link to the ring-road, it was the view of the UNESCO mission that the crossing of the Pyramids World Heritage Site should be absolutely

avoided. This view was shared by the majority of the members of the Egyptian Joint Committee. Following the presentation of the project, a number of alternative routes for the link proposed by the Egyptian Joint Committee were also presented. After extensive examination and thorough investigations of all relevant issues by all concerned parties, the alternatives that avoid crossing the site were highly recommended.

Amongst those alternatives, the one passing to the north of the site was selected unanimously. Therefore, more detailed engineering and technical, archeological, ecological, social and economic studies and investigations should be carried out in order to determine the precise routing for the highway link over either Mariouteyya or Mansoureyya canals, or both.

In this regard, the UNESCO mission highly appreciated the full cooperation and understanding of the Ministry of Reconstruction and New Communities for supporting this alternative, although it had commenced work on the original route of the project after securing authorization from appropriate governmental agencies, including the Egyptian Antiquities Organization in 1985.

- 2) As for the rubbish dumps on the site, which are a major stain on the ecological integrity of the Pyramids World Heritage Site, the UNESCO mission, after visiting the two concerned sites, wished to express its congratulations to the Supreme Council of Antiquities and the Governorate of Giza for improving one of the sites and for the foreseen measures to be taken on the other site.
- 3) The UNESCO mission was made aware of the commitment of the Supreme Council of Antiquities and the Giza Governorate to stop any further housing project at Kafr El-Gabal and to eliminate, in the forthcoming years, the unauthorized buildings encroaching on the Pyramids World Heritage Site and the buffer zone.
- 4) There remains a major concern about the military camps, which were not discussed during the meetings. Alternative solutions should be studied by the competent Egyptian authorities in cooperation with the Supreme Council of Antiquities to eliminate inadequate occupation of the Pyramids World Heritage Site and the buffer zone.

Taking into consideration the outstanding cultural and international value of the Pyramids World Heritage Site, together with the crucial requirement for sustainable development to the Egyptian economy and the welfare of the people of Egypt, the UNESCO

mission would like to underline that conservation and development are complementary. Public awareness campaigns are essential to the promotion of this concept to both public and official levels. In this respect, the ongoing and future actions of the Supreme Council of Antiquities and the Governorate of Giza in removing inadequate buildings and routes encroaching on the Pyramids World Heritage Site and relocating some activities according to a master plan are highly appreciated.

The UNESCO mission wishes to express to the Egyptian Government its gratitude for the excellent programme of work and the sincere cooperation at high level of expertise which made the working meetings successful.

It wishes also to express its gratitude for the warm and generous hospitality extended by the Ministry of Culture and the Supreme Council of Antiquities. In particular, it wishes to acknowledge with thanks and appreciation the leadership of Professor Abdel-Halim Nour-Eldin, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, who chaired the meetings with wisdom, dedication and due diligence.

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