



International Colloquium on World Heritage Earthen Architecture Conservation Paris, 17-18 December 2012

Appeal

On 17-18 December 2012, over 200 international experts assembled at UNESCO's Headquarters in Paris to discuss the state of conservation of World Heritage earthen architectural sites. Throughout 2012, the 40th anniversary of the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the international heritage community has held a number of events, conferences, and workshops to examine achievements and identify challenges for World Heritage, with a particular focus on sustainable development and the role of local communities.

The International Colloquium on World Heritage earthen architecture conservation was convened, in the framework of the 40th anniversary of the 1972 Convention, as part of the World Heritage Earthen Architecture Programme (WHEAP), adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007).

Five years after its inception, the WHEAP programme has had a number of achievements in support of sustainable conservation and management, notably its various pilot projects and capacity building activities that have benefited a large number of World Heritage sites and communities and built a global network of experts.

The Colloquium built on the work carried out within the framework of WHEAP, as well as other initiatives and scientific research carried out by specialized institutions, training centres and experts working in the field of earthen architecture, including CRAterre, Getty Conservation Institution, World Monuments Fund, Aga Khan Trust for Culture, PROTERRA, ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Earthen Architecture, among others.

Reflecting on these issues, the participants in the International Colloquium on World Heritage earthen architecture conservation are launching the following appeal:

Noting that a very significant proportion of the world population lives in cities and houses built of earthen materials, and that earthen architecture embodies dual qualities of everyday life and architectural achievement, combining innovation, expertise, daring art, and virtuosity;

Also noting that earthen architecture plays an important role in sustainable development due to its responsiveness to environmental, economic, and social conditions;

Considering that of the 962 properties inscribed on the World Heritage List, 150 have been identified as entirely or partially built with earth, thus representing 20% of the total cultural properties, as demonstrated by the inventory of World Heritage earthen architecture undertaken in 2012;

Also noting that earthen architecture expresses a connection between tangible and intangible values and between heritage and communities, the conservation of the constructive culture of earthen architecture is at the heart of sustainable development and cannot occur without the full engagement of communities - an issue that will reverberate in future debates about the World Heritage Convention;

Taking into account that earthen architecture heritage properties worldwide are benefiting from expanding opportunities, technical and scientific innovations, and new methodological approaches, however, pressures from globalisation, urbanization, natural factors, and social change have also increased, leading to significant challenges in the ability of new generations to sustain earthen landscapes, properties, and practices; and

Underscoring that the global significance of World Heritage earthen architecture properties can add value to and serve as models for other earthen architecture sites.

Therefore, the participants in the International Colloquium on World Heritage earthen architecture conservation make the following recommendations:

Recommend advancing the implementation of exemplary conservation and management projects that contribute to social and economic development and enhance community belonging, living conditions, and quality of life as well as the preservation and diversity of local tradition and building cultures;

Recommend the development of methodological approaches that connect contemporary management practices with traditional and local knowledge, integrate intangible values in social practices in the development of territories; and enhance the role of earthen architecture in environmental sustainability and economic and social development.

Recommend the development of best practice examples for reference to heritage practitioners, and the enhancement communication, outreach and awareness-raising at all levels;

Recommend the allocation of adequate resources and the elaboration of a multi-year plan that builds on the existing state of knowledge in earthen architecture conservation and management, and identifies what is needed to work more effectively;

Recommend enhanced protection and risk assessment of earthen heritage places before, during, and after armed conflict or disasters, as well as the use of applicable technologies to rapidly assess issues on the ground and develop appropriate responses;

Noting that there are no specifications for Earthen Architecture heritage in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, **conclude that**, in order to implement the above recommendations, a specialized annex be developed to address conservation guidelines, particularly in relation to authenticity and integrity, as well as principles for use, interpretation, and other aspects crucial for these properties.