

## **Reflection meeting on the project of nomination of the city of Sfax for inscription on the World Heritage List, from 16 to 19 December 2013, Sfax, Tunisia**

The Institut National du Patrimoine (INP), Republic of Tunisia, the World Heritage Centre and the UNESCO Office for the Maghreb (Rabat) will hold a reflection meeting on the project of nomination of Sfax for potential inscription on the World Heritage List, thanks to the generous support of the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust for World Heritage. This meeting will bring together the national and local institutions in charge of the conservation of the urban heritage of the city of Sfax, as well as representatives of the civil society and independent experts. The managers of the seven cultural World Heritage Sites of Tunisia as well as representatives of the World Heritage Sites of the "Kasbah of Algiers" (Algeria), "Rabat, Modern Capital and Historic City: a Shared Heritage" (Morocco) and the city of Casablanca (Morocco) will also participate in the meeting. The main objective is to have the participants sharing their experiences and mutually benefiting from the discussions in view of the reinforcement of the management systems of the concerned World Heritage properties.

The Institut National du Patrimoine (INP), Tunisia, requested the assistance of the World Heritage Centre for the organization of this reflection meeting on the project of nomination of the city of Sfax for inscription on the World Heritage List. Following the inclusion of the Medina of Sfax in Tunisia's Tentative List in 2012, the local authorities and civil society expressed their wish to have the site's nomination file prepared in view of its submission to the World Heritage Centre in the near future. The INP solicited the assistance of the World Heritage Centre which elaborated a proposal of meeting aiming at bringing the stakeholders together and engaging a reflection on the best way to nominate the city of Sfax, considering its history and complexity as urban ensemble, beyond the boundaries of the ancient city, the medina. It was agreed to use the approach carried by the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011) to define the attributes which may carry a potential Outstanding Universal Value, with a focus on the comparative analysis and management issues, as well as the role of the local community in the nomination process and future conservation of the potentially nominated urban ensemble.

The city of Sfax, second city of Tunisia and economical capital of the South of the country, is an interesting case of coastal urban ensemble that has witnessed an exponential urbanization of its territory in the past century. The additional interest of the meeting is to assess the way cultural heritage in general and urban heritage in particular (including the modern heritage) is placed in the current context and development policies. In fact, the meeting will start with a follow-up discussion on the work already launched by the UNESCO Office for the Maghreb with an inter-ministerial group on the theme "Culture and Development".

The meeting will therefore be an interesting application of the approach carried by UNESCO's action for the conservation of urban heritage, based on the acknowledgment of the role of

culture and heritage as development vectors to the sustainable conservation and management of this heritage, through the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape.