

Regensburg Recommendation

“Earth, Wind, Water, Fire – Environmental Challenges to Urban World Heritage”

Organization of World Heritage Cities Northwest-European Regional Conference
September 16-18, 2008 in Regensburg, Germany

We, the participants of the conference, representatives of the Organization of World Heritage Cities in Northwest Europe,

emphasize the importance of safeguarding the world’s cultural heritage for present and future generations,

highlight that climate change and environmental challenges like storms, flooding, fire, earthquakes, weathering, erosion and landslides pose one of the most important threats to World Heritage cities, especially given the more frequent extreme weather situations,

emphasize that the loss and deterioration of the built cultural heritage due to natural disasters and climate change affects all people,

recall that the safeguarding of the urban cultural heritage is the shared responsibility of citizens, local and regional authorities, national governments and international organisations,

take into account the following documents:

- UNESCO’s Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 1972 and the corresponding Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention of 2008,
- the Council of Europe’s Recommendation No. R (93)9 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Protection of the Architectural Heritage against Natural Disasters of 1993,
- the International Committee of the Blue Shields Radenci Declaration on the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Emergencies and Exceptional Situations of 1998,
- the Puebla Declaration regarding Prevention and Protection Measures for World Heritage Cities in Case of Disaster adopted by the Organization of World Heritage Cities General Assembly in Puebla, Mexico in 2001,
- ICOMOS Kyoto Declaration on Protection of Cultural Properties, Historic Areas and their Settings from Loss in Disasters of 2005,
- UNESCO’s Strategy for Reducing Risks from Disasters at World Heritage Properties of 2006,
- New Delhi Resolution on Impact of Climate Change on Cultural Heritage, adopted at the ICOMOS International Workshop on Impact of Climate Change on Cultural Heritage of May 2007,
- ICOMOS Recommendations from the Scientific Council Symposium Cultural Heritage and Global Climate Change of March 2008,
- the publication of the World Heritage Centre “Policy Document on the Impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage Properties” of 2008,

point out that in most cases the issue of natural hazards and urban heritage is not yet being approached in an interdisciplinary way. We recommend that the integrated research and interdisciplinary dialogue in geo-scientific as well as in cultural and social sciences is fostered in the sense that different knowledge is brought together,

Underscore that traditional preservation techniques and local knowledge are invaluable in the protection of urban heritage sites from environmental challenges.

We the participants of this conference call on:

(1) the UNESCO World Heritage Committee,

- a. to encourage and increase dialogue on natural risks to cultural heritage and to develop proper strategies for risk prevention and management,
- b. to address the potential danger of natural disasters which confront urban World Heritage sites in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention,
- c. to foster funding programmes for prevention, preparedness, response and recovery measures in urban World Heritage sites,
- d. to capitalise on existing initiatives and projects and to disseminate the results and information gained,
- e. to encourage interdisciplinary research on environmental challenges to urban cultural heritage by establishing UNESCO chairs and UNESCO networks in that field,
- f. to support international conferences dealing with climate change and natural hazards in relation to urban World Heritage sites,
- g. to establish awareness-raising programmes and to bring the topic into focus through UNESCO publications and other sources of information,

(2) the official Bodies of the European Union,

- a. to develop coherent policies on historic urban landscapes together with international expert bodies,
- b. to support scientific research on environmental challenges to urban World Heritage,
- c. to strengthen the role of urban World Heritage and its protection from natural risks through European Regional Development funding (ERDF),

(3) States Parties to the World Heritage Convention,

- a. to assure proper funding and staff for scientific research and preventive measures in the field of natural risks to urban World Heritage on a national level and to make risk prevention a topic for national funding programmes,
- b. to foster training and education for people concerned with the protection of urban World Heritage sites with regard to natural risks and preventive measures,
- c. to develop applicable instruments and provide resources that allow a fast reaction to natural hazards threatening World Heritage cities, considering that the complexity of cause and effect is not only limited to the World Heritage cities themselves,

(4) the World Heritage cities,

- a. to make risk preparedness and the impacts of climate change an integral part of the cities' management of the World Heritage area and to develop proper emergency plans,
- b. to pursue an integrated management approach that brings together different disciplines and institutions concerned with the protection of urban cultural heritage,
- c. not to decide to interfere in the surrounding of their World Heritage, before there is absolutely no doubt about the future effects of such actions on nature,
- d. to participate in research on risk preparedness and the protection of urban heritage from environmental challenges,

- e. to share information on best practices, knowledge and experience relating to environmental challenges with other World Heritage cities,

(5) the Organization of World Heritage Cities,

- a. to disseminate relevant information on natural risks to World Heritage cities, including case studies, recommendations and conference papers online via URBO – the Organization of World Heritage Cities research hub,
- b. to establish a thematic pool on the Organization of World Heritage Cities website as a place where experts in the field of environmental hazards will be listed as contacts,
- c. to make the issue of natural risks to World Heritage cities a topic of the next OWHC World Congress,
- d. to actively encourage the exchange of knowledge and information and the establishment of appropriate networks and partnership programmes,
- e. to disseminate the present recommendation adopted by the participants of the conference in Regensburg online.

We, the participants of this conference, submit this recommendation to the General Secretariat of the OWHC to be brought to the attention of:

- a. the authorities, departments, or bodies responsible for matters relating to urban World Heritage,
- b. various organisations or institutions concerned with natural risks and environmental challenges,
- c. their contacts within appropriate international organisations dealing with the protection of World Heritage cities.