

WORLD MONUMENTS FUND

in co-operation with ICOMOS Sri Lanka

“HERITAGE CONSERVATION—NEW ALLIANCES FOR PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE”

Conference on Heritage Conservation in South & Southeast Asia • Colombo, Sri Lanka • July 28–31, 2004

For Immediate Release

July 2004

ENDANGERED HISTORIC SITES IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA ADDRESSED IN CONFERENCE ORGANIZED BY WORLD MONUMENTS FUND

Held in collaboration with ICOMOS/Sri Lanka, Heritage Conservation: New Alliances for Past, Present, and Future draws noted speakers concerned about saving threatened cultural icons in South and Southeast Asia.

World Monuments Fund (WMF), a New York-based nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and safeguarding the historic, artistic, and architectural heritage of humanity, holds its first conference addressing **heritage preservation in South and Southeast Asia**. The conference, which takes place from **July 28 to 31, 2004**, in **Colombo, Sri Lanka**, was inspired by the successful and sustained outcomes of WMF’s conference on heritage preservation in Latin America, held in São Paulo, Brazil, in 2002. The Sri Lanka conference, titled *Heritage Conservation: New Alliances for Past, Present, and Future*, addresses key issues pertaining specifically to cultural preservation in South and Southeast Asia. In this region, as in Latin America, an increasing number of monuments are endangered due to such factors as neglect, pollution, population pressure, natural disaster, and poorly managed tourism.

The conference’s opening ceremony, on July 28, is at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Centre; the conference takes place at the Trans-Asia Hotel, in downtown Colombo.

Bonnie Burnham, President, World Monuments Fund, says, “South and Southeast Asia are home to an exceedingly rich tapestry of cultures and history and, as a result, to a wealth of monuments of great historical and cultural significance, as well as unparalleled beauty. Yet due to a variety of threats, many of these monuments are being lost. In order to preserve the rich heritage of South and Southeast Asia, we must address a range of critical issues, including—urgently—the lack of public awareness of the need to conserve the precious evidence of the region’s history and culture. It is hoped that the World Monuments Fund conference will help raise this awareness and spur action on behalf of endangered monuments.”

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ICOMOS President Emeritus Roland Silva, adds, “The conference on South and Southeast Asian cultural-heritage preservation promises to open an important and productive dialogue among professionals, focusing on issues that have enormous bearing on the future of the region’s many heritage landmarks. These issues range from sustainable conservation, to the role of local communities in conservation efforts, to conservation policies and institutions. ICOMOS/Sri Lanka looks forward to continuing its work with WMF and other conservation organizations, using what it learns at the conference to safeguard our irreplaceable monuments.”

By bringing together conference participants from a variety of fields, WMF intends to stimulate multi-sector partnerships on behalf of cultural-heritage conservation. Participants include conservators, conservation architects, urbanists, and planners; representatives of international, national, regional, and local foundations; business sponsors interested in heritage conservation; civil society activists; government officials; members of the media; and academics. Speakers include Ms. Burnham; Dr. Silva; Prof. Senake Bandaranayake, Chairperson, National Heritage Commission, Sri Lanka; Augusto Villalon, Member of the Executive Committee, ICOMOS; Richard Engelhardt, Regional Cultural Advisor, UNESCO; Ros Barath, Executive Director-General, Authority for the Protection and Management of Angkor and the Region of Siem Reap (APSARA); and Jose Dominic, CEO of the Casino Hotels Group in India, among others.

The conference opens with an evening ceremony on July 28. The following two days comprise a series of round-table discussions of such topics as “Issues of Sustainable Conservation,” “The Promise of Cultural Tourism,” and “Building New Alliances for Stewardship of the Built Environment.” The final day of the conference consists of an open forum in the morning, followed by departure for an optional two-and-a-half-day excursion to the World Heritage sites of Kandy, Sigiriya, and Polonnaruwa. (*Please see attached program.*) The conference will be conducted in English.

Sponsorship

Sponsors of **Heritage Conservation: New Alliances for Past, Present, and Future** include The Brown Foundation, Paul Mellon Education Fund, axis group limited, and the American Express Company. The conference has also received generous support from Kevin R. Brine, Drs. Lois and Georges de Menil, and H. Peter Stern/The Ralph E. Ogden Foundation.

World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund is the foremost private, nonprofit organization devoted to onsite conservation of monuments and sites worldwide. Since its founding in 1965, the organization has achieved an unmatched record of successful international conservation projects in more than eighty countries. From its headquarters in New York, and working with affiliates and offices in France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom, as well as with partners around the world, WMF brings together public and private support to implement a comprehensive conservation effort that includes project planning, field surveys, fieldwork, on-site training in the building crafts, advocacy, and the development of long-term strategies for the protection of monuments and sites.

WMF's biennial World Monuments Watch list of *100 Most Endangered Sites*, established in 1995 with the support of American Express, is a call to action on behalf of threatened cultural-heritage monuments, bringing them to international attention and helping to raise the funds needed for their rescue. For many landmarks, inclusion on the Watch List is the best hope for survival. For additional information about WMF and its programs, the public can visit www.wmf.org.

ICOMOS

ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) is an international non-governmental organization dedicated to conservation of the world's historic monuments and sites. It was founded in 1965, the result of the international adoption in Venice in 1964 of the Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites. Today ICOMOS has national committees in more than 107 countries.

ICOMOS is principal advisor to UNESCO on matters concerning the conservation and protection of monuments and sites. With the IUCN—the World Conservation Union—ICOMOS has an international role under the World Heritage Convention, advising the World Heritage Committee and UNESCO on the nomination of new sites to the World Heritage List. For additional information about ICOMOS and its programs, the public can visit www.icomos.org.

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