

**TURKISH MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND TOURISM AND WORLD MONUMENTS FUND
COLLABORATE ON HISTORIC CONSERVATION PROJECT IN EASTERN TURKEY**

For Immediate Release—Istanbul and New York City, May 3, 2011... **Bonnie Burnham**, **President of World Monuments Fund (WMF)**, today announced that WMF and the **Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism** have embarked on a historic partnership to conserve the **Ani Cathedral and the Church of the Holy Savior**, in **Ani**, a medieval city in northeastern Turkey. Once the site of hundreds of religious buildings, palaces, fortifications, and other structures, Ani was, in the tenth century, one of the world's great cities. Today, however, it stands abandoned, and its celebrated historic buildings are in a precarious state. Support for these conservation projects has been provided by the **U.S. Department of State's Ambassadors Fund**, the **Turkish General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums**, and **World Monuments Fund**.



Ani Cathedral

Ertuğrul Günay, **Minister of Culture and Tourism in Turkey**, has stated about the project: “This partnership with World Monuments Fund is a milestone in Turkey’s efforts to conserve its many important cultural-heritage sites. Among these, Ani, which is of global significance, presents particularly complicated challenges. We hope that giving new life to the remains of once-splendid buildings, such as the Ani Cathedral and Church, will bring new economic opportunities to the region.”



Church of the Holy Savior

Ms. Burnham added, “There has long been international concern about the fragile condition of the many extraordinary ruins at Ani, and the site has been listed on the World Monuments Watch on multiple

occasions, beginning in 1996. In conserving these two important structures, WMF and Turkey’s General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums will develop methods that can be applied to

the other buildings still standing in this seismic area. We hope that this work will usher in a new era in the life of this important site.”

Ani

Situated on a plateau in northeastern Turkey, next to the border with Armenia, Ani was strategically located along a prosperous east-west caravan route. While the origins of settlement in the area date to the Iron and Bronze Ages, Ani reached its cultural golden age in the second half of the tenth century, when it became the political and commercial center of the Bagratid Armenian kingdom. Most of its surviving structures, which include seven churches (one later converted to a mosque), a city wall, commercial and residential buildings, and underground passages, are ruins of edifices dating from the medieval era, when the city changed hands several times and was ruled by successive Christian and Islamic dynasties.

At its height, Ani’s population numbered well over 100,000, including Armenians, Muslim Kurds, and Turks, and the city was filled with artistically and architecturally sophisticated buildings. However, by the mid-eleventh century, it had begun to decline, due to factors including internal strife, invasions by various groups, earthquakes, and the redirection of important trade routes away from the city. By the fifteenth century, Ani was in terminal decline; by the seventeenth century, it was a small village; and by the eighteenth century, it was in ruins and abandoned.

Today, Ani is a haunting presence on the windswept steppe. Long isolated in a militarized area, since the collapse of the Soviet Union the border has been gradually demilitarized and has become more accessible through the recent opening of the region to tourism.

Ani Cathedral

With its pointed arches, four interior columns, and cruciform plan with clustered piers, Ani Cathedral—completed in 1001—is a masterpiece of medieval Armenian architecture. It was designed by the renowned architect Trdat, who had rebuilt the dome of Hagia Sophia following an earthquake in the late tenth century.

Although Ani Cathedral is still standing, over the course of its history it has suffered greatly from harsh weather conditions and innumerable earthquakes. The latter have resulted in damage that includes the complete collapse of the building’s central dome and the partial collapse of its northwest corner.

Surp Amenap'rkitch Church (Church of the Holy Savior)

Completed in 1035, the Surp Amenap'rkitch Church (Church of the Holy Savior) was built as a reliquary for a fragment of the True Cross. It was a two-part rotunda in form, comprising a lower portion capped by a smaller one above. Each portion of the exterior comprised 19 sides. Inside, the lower portion was divided into eight sections, each capped by a conch, or semi-dome, while the smaller upper portion was a smooth surface regularly punctuated by windows and capped by a dome.

Like the Ani Cathedral, the Church has suffered earthquake damage throughout its history. In addition, in 1930 a lightning strike caused the southeast side of the building to collapse.

Conservation Work

The first phase of the collaboration, which began in spring 2011, entails a comprehensive condition survey, including documentation of the remains of the buildings and the development of a methodology or methodologies to stabilize the damage they have suffered. Based on these studies, a detailed plan to conserve the buildings will be developed over the next three years. This will encompass emergency intervention, structural stabilization, and seismic strengthening, with a long-term goal of conserving the structures as ruins and suggesting safe and effective access for visitors. These projects, which will be jointly financed by the Turkish government and WMF, follow the preservation programs recently completed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism at the nearby Church of Tigran Honents and the Mosque of Manuḡehr (Minuchir). Concurrently, the Ministry is preparing a site-management plan to help guide and sustain the long-term efforts of preserving and presenting the diverse cultural assets of the Ani archaeological site.

Both WMF and the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism view the work on the Cathedral and the Surp Amenap'rkitch Church (Church of the Holy Savior) not as isolated conservation challenges, but as integral components of a larger cultural landscape that, as it becomes better known, will deepen public and scholarly understanding of the region's rich heritage.

World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund (WMF) is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's most treasured places. For over 45 years, working in more than 90 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to preserve important architectural- and cultural-heritage sites around the globe. Since 1988, WMF has

been working at a number of sites in Turkey, including Aphrodisias, the Temple of Augustus at Ankara, Ephesus, and Hagia Sophia. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, the organization seeks to inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York City, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide. www.wmf.org

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Media Inquiries:

Ben Haley, World Monuments Fund, +1 646-424-9594, bhaley@wmf.org

Libby Mark, Jeanne Collins & Associates, LLC, +1 646-486-7050, info@jcollinsassociates.com