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WORLD MONUMENTS FUND

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WORLD MONUMENTS FUND ANNOUNCES NEW GRANTS AS PART OF ITS JEWISH HERITAGE PROGRAM

RECIPIENTS ARE THREE HISTORIC SYNAGOGUES AND A YESHIVA IN EASTERN EUROPE

World Monuments Fund (WMF) has announced four new grants totaling \$235,000 for conservation work to save a yeshiva and three synagogues in Eastern Europe. The sites receiving funding are **Volozhin Yeshiva** in Belarus, **Subotica Synagogue** in Serbia, **Zamość Renaissance Synagogue** in Poland, and **Vilnius Choral Synagogue** in Lithuania. These grants are part of WMF's Jewish Heritage Program (JHP), which for more than 20 years has helped protect Jewish cultural sites that often no longer have communities large enough to sustain them. Work on all four sites is expected to begin in the coming months.

“We are delighted to help save these four highly significant sites,” said **Lisa Ackerman, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of World Monuments Fund**. “All four are important reminders of Jewish culture in Europe and these grants will ensure their survival for future generations to learn from and appreciate.”

The 2008 Jewish Heritage Program has been made possible through the generous support of Joyce Greenberg, The Rothschild Foundation, the Cahnman Foundation, and the Koret Foundation.

Subotica Synagogue, Serbia

Designed by the Hungarian architects Marel Komor and Deszo Jakab and built in 1902, Subotica Synagogue is considered one of the best examples of Art Nouveau (known throughout the former Austria-Hungary as Secessionist) architecture in Europe. Among the first buildings to employ concrete and steel construction in the region, it remains a fixture in the Subotica skyline with its elaborate tile roof, zinc-topped dome, and undulating façade trimmed with red brick and terracotta.

Violent conflict in the region suspended conservation work in the mid-1990s, but since 2001 Save Our Subotica Synagogue Foundation has been working to promote the restoration and revitalization of the

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synagogue as a memorial and regional cultural center. WMF has already donated \$100,000 towards the restoration of the roof; the current award of \$75,000 is for work on the façade.

Zamość Renaissance Synagogue, Poland

This building in the World Heritage Site of Zamość in southeastern Poland is one of the most architecturally significant synagogues surviving in that country. Built in the first half of the 17th century, the synagogue was in continual use until World War II, when the Nazis converted it into a carpentry workshop. Although the architectural character of the building remains largely intact, urgent stabilization of the structure is required. WMF's award of \$75,000, as well as \$40,000 from a grant in 2007, will go towards emergency repairs of the structure. Upon completion of the project, the building will become a cultural center and museum of Zamość Jewry with a room for concerts and conferences.

Vilnius Choral Synagogue, Lithuania

This synagogue near the center of Vilnius opened on Rosh Hashanah in 1903. It survived World War II by being converted into a store. Once the center of a thriving Jewish community (before World War II, over 100,000 Jews lived in Lithuania; today there are only about 5,000), it is the only one still functioning, and a great deal of work is required to keep the building structurally sound. WMF's \$70,000 grant will be for conservation and repair work, including roof renovation, strengthening and painting the walls, restoring the façade, and renovating the synagogue's benches.

Volozhin Yeshiva, Belarus

This yeshiva in Volozhin, Belarus, is considered the model for the yeshiva system in Eastern Europe. Founded in 1803, it set the standard for Torah study in Europe and the United States. It closed its doors in 1892, over internal disagreement about succession of leadership as well as the increasing oppression of Jewish communities in the region, then part of the Russian empire. In 1993, the Union of the Religious Jewish Congregations in the Republic of Belarus was formed. The Union owns the yeshiva building, and has placed a high priority on restoring key Jewish buildings to assure the continued recognition of the important contributions Jewish communities made to the cultural history of Belarus. The award of \$15,000 is for conditions assessment and conservation planning. Once this is completed, the Union will be able to plan a manageable project and budget to be implemented by conservation professionals.

WMF's Jewish Heritage Program (JHP)

The Jewish Heritage Program was launched in 1988 to draw attention to Jewish cultural heritage threatened as a result of the Jewish Diaspora and the loss of communities to care for their sacred and secular sites. In the program's earliest years, WMF focused its attention on documentation to determine

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what remained of synagogues, cemeteries, and other buildings erected by the Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. WMF also funded symposia, lectures, and photographic surveys and exhibitions that helped the public understand the serious threats to an important chapter of architectural history.

Over the course of two decades, the JHP has supported conservation work at sites in more than 20 countries, from India to China, Greece, Hungary, France, Poland, Lithuania, and Morocco, ranging in date from the 15th to the early 20th century. As the program has evolved, WMF's activities have reflected not only a concern for the cultural legacy of these sites, but also the strengthening of Jewish communities in the post-Soviet era. To assist in these efforts, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee is now partnering with WMF to disseminate information on WMF's Jewish Heritage Program and help liaise with local Jewish communities.

World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's most treasured places. For over 40 years, working in more than 90 countries, our highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to preserve important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, we inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide. www.wmf.org

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