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WORLD MONUMENTS FUND TO BEGIN CONSERVATION WORK IN THE YUCATÁN

**FUNDING FROM WMF, BANAMEX, AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE OF YUCATÁN
WILL HELP PRESERVE FIVE SITES:
AKÉ, KABÁH, CHICHÉN ITZÁ, XOCNACEH, AND SAN MIGUEL ARCANGEL**

For Immediate Release—Maní, Mexico, July 16, 2007... **Bonnie Burnham, president of the World Monuments Fund (WMF), announced today that WMF has signed two agreements with Fomento Cultural Banamex, the philanthropic branch of Banamex; the State Government of Yucatán; and the National Institute of Anthropology and History of Mexico (INAH) to provide a total of \$925,000 towards conservation, archaeological research, and site interpretation projects at four Maya sites and a former Franciscan convent complex, all located in the Yucatán Peninsula.** To kick off the restoration work, WMF and Banamex are holding onsite press conferences outlining the plans for **San Miguel Arcangel**, a former convent, in Maní on July 16, 2007, and for the four Maya sites of **Aké, Kabáh, Chichén Itzá, and Xocnaceh**, at Kabáh on July 17, 2007. **Bonnie Burnham; Ambassador Alfonso de Maria y Campos, National Director of the INAH; Cándida Fernández, Director of Banamex; Patricio Patron Laviada, Governor of the Yucatán state;** and other distinguished guests will be in attendance.

“These sites are important testaments to the cultures that have made an impact not only on this region, but on human history,” said **Bonnie Burnham**, WMF’s president. “They are faced with a number of serious threats and we must address these issues now, before it is too late and they are lost forever. We are very happy that Banamex and the state government has once again stepped up to make such a generous donation, and we look forward to working with our longtime partner, Banamex, on a critical long-term program in the Yucatán.”

One of the three most important centers of Franciscan activity in 16th-century Yucatán, **San Miguel Arcangel** in Maní is a significant example of an early Franciscan convent complex;

(more)

these complexes bridge the past with the present and thus represent an important part of Mexico's patrimony and history. Built in the 16th century by Friar Juan de Mérida and currently maintained solely by the parishioners of Maní, San Miguel Arcangel houses one of the best collections of locally made altarpieces, sculptures, and mural paintings dating from the 17th through the 19th centuries. WMF is working with Banamex to develop a conservation plan to address a broad range of threats, including water infiltration, humidity, roof damage, cracked walls, and more. Once restored, the site will continue to serve as a parish church and cultural center for the village and surrounding countryside, as well as a stop for tourists in the region.

Thousands of tourists are drawn every year to the Maya sites of **Aké**, **Kabáh**, and **Chichén Itzá**, cities with ceremonial centers marked by impressive building ensembles and dating back to the pinnacle of Maya culture (AD 800 – 1000). An older and relatively unknown Maya site, **Xocnaceh** is a Pre-Classic settlement (300 BC – AD 300) and important for archaeologists researching the origins of Maya civilization. Xocnaceh's acropolis is one of the largest known surviving structures from the Pre-Classic Period.

While all four sites contain some of the Yucatán Peninsula's best preserved examples of architecture and urban settlements, including highly sophisticated temple pyramids, palaces, plazas, and ritual ball courts, they have been seriously compromised by exposure to the elements, which has deteriorated the stone and mortar and destabilized monuments, as well as by inappropriate repairs made in the 19th and 20th centuries. WMF's restoration projects at these sites will couple best-practice conservation methods with archaeological research, site interpretation, and tourism management.

The **World Monuments Fund** (WMF) is the foremost private, nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of endangered architectural and cultural sites around the world. Since 1965, WMF has helped save historic structures at more than 450 sites in over 90 countries. WMF's work spans a wide range of sites, including the vast temple complexes at Angkor, Cambodia; the historic center of Mexico City; the iconic modernist A. Conger Goodyear house in Old Westbury, New York; and the extraordinary 18th-century Qianlong Garden complex in Beijing's Forbidden City. From its headquarters in New York City—and offices and affiliates in Paris, London, Madrid, and Lisbon—WMF works with local partners and communities to identify and save important heritage through innovative programs of project planning, fieldwork, advocacy, grant-making, education, and on-site training. Every two years, WMF issues its World Monuments Watch list of 100 Most Endangered Sites, a global call to action on behalf of sites in need of immediate intervention. (www.wmf.org)