



**WORLD MONUMENTS FUND, YANGON HERITAGE TRUST
HOST FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF YANGON, MYANMAR**

International forum to be held January 15–17 in Yangon, bringing together more than 50 international participants; keynote speakers are U Myint Swe, Chief Minister of Yangon Region Government, and Francesco Rutelli, former mayor of Rome

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World Monuments Fund (WMF) and Yangon Heritage Trust (YHT) will host an international forum on the sustainable development of Yangon, Myanmar, from January 15–17, 2015. The forum, which will be held in Yangon, is in response to the recent political and economic changes in the country and how they are impacting the historic fabric of the former capital, which 100 years ago was one of the leading trade cities of Asia, home to people from across the globe.

Bonnie Burnham, President, World Monuments Fund, noted that “Yangon is one of the few historic cities in Asia with much of its historic character still in place. The most important priority for safeguarding the historic center of Yangon is to make clear its relevance as an economic and development asset and to bring this message to the leaders of the country. These are worldwide issues, and this forum will highlight how cities around the world have successfully featured their historic centers as places vital for the future.”

A decade of rapid change in the country has already demonstrated the pressures facing the historic city as it grapples with modernization. As a result, Yangon and its inhabitants are challenged with shaping its future. A weak regulatory framework, limited professional planning expertise, and mounting pressures for development render historic Yangon vulnerable to hasty decisions with potentially permanent effects.

The Chairman of Yangon Heritage Trust, Dr. Thant Myint-U, said that the forum would be held at an incredibly important time for Yangon. “The decisions taken or not taken over the coming year or two will shape the city for decades to come. Our goal is for the forum to raise practical suggestions, based on Myanmar realities, including the pressing legal, financial, and other challenges facing conservation and urban development in Yangon. The Yangon government has made huge progress in urban conservation, far more than many Asian cities at similar periods in their development; I hope this forum will encourage them further and provide real solutions to the thorny issues they face on a daily basis.”

Yangon was included on the 2014 World Monuments Watch to raise awareness of the value of this historic urban landscape and the need to act quickly to launch a dialogue about its future. The January 2015 forum will bring together more than 50 participants from heritage and development institutions

(more)

around the world, including representatives from national and municipal government agencies; private interests, including developers, tourism-industry representatives, and foreign investors; local civil society and professional organizations and NGOs; international groups working in Myanmar on development or built environment-related initiatives, including the European Union, Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and ASEAN; and members of the media. The keynote speakers will be U Myint Swe, Chief Minister of Yangon Region Government, and Francesco Rutelli, former mayor of Rome and former Minister of Culture of Italy.

World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund's mission is to protect against the loss of the world's architectural heritage, including the built environment, the artistic elements that enhance it, and the cultural traditions that it sustains. WMF builds global partnerships to conserve key cultural sites in response to urgent threats, and broadens public understanding about the central importance of heritage in our lives. Our work makes historic places accessible and sustainable, builds and replenishes skills needed to care for our common heritage, and communicates the benefits of this work to the global public. wmf.org, twitter.com/worldmonuments, and facebook.com/worldmonuments.

Yangon Heritage Trust

Established in 2012, the Yangon Heritage Trust promotes the proper conservation of Yangon's rich urban heritage within a cohesive planning process. It believes that good integration of conservation and development can make Yangon into one of Asia's most beautiful and liveable cities. The Trust assists in the conservation of urban heritage places, advocates for sustainable and sympathetic development within the historic city, advises on the adoption of planning policies and manages a range of training, public outreach and advocacy programs.

www.yangonheritagetrust.org

www.facebook.com/theyangonheritagetrust

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Additional information on the forum can be found at

<http://www.wmf.org/event/building-future-role-heritage-sustainable-development-yangon>