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***THE OLD TOWN OF CORFU AND ITS INSCRIPTION ON THE UNESCO WORLD
HERITAGE LIST***

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This introduction report is presenting the basic characteristics of the meeting guest town comprising two separate thematic units, which are being presented in the following order :

- The elements that are creating the cultural identity of the Old Town of Corfu, providing it with the quality of a World Heritage Site.
- The Management Plan 2006-2012, as a coordinated action plan for the protection of the cultural heritage values and their balance with the needs of the modern town.

THE CULTURAL IDENTITY

The significance of Corfu throughout its long history has been informed by its role as a port and a fortress town. Its pivotal geographical position gave it strategic importance from a very early date, since whoever exercised power there would be able to control the channel on which the town stands.

The picture that the town presents nowadays could be described as a historical chart illustrating the various phases of its development and the creative coexistence of the cultures that have occupied it at various times. Corfu, lying as it does on major seaways and on the routes taken by migrant populations, has always been home to a mixture of populations and races; it has always been situated between the two worlds of East and West, and its inhabitants have had to coexist with them. The diversity of the town throughout its history, and its ability to assimilate different elements without conflict between them, gave it a unique character from an early date, with pronounced overtones of Western Europe.

The cultural assets of the Old Town of Corfu may be considered as the sum total of those elements, in five different categories, which make a greater or lesser contribution to its unique character.

- i. The Old and New Fortresses
- ii. Urban Plan and Roads
- iii. Open Spaces, Squares and Parks
- iv. Buildings
- v. Cultural Characteristics

The inscription of the Old Town of Corfu on the UNESCO World Heritage List is backed by evidence of its eligibility under one of the criteria set by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee as an essential requirement. It is also submitted that the Site meets the two further tests of authenticity and of integrity.

Criterion iv. Be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural ensemble which illustrates significant stages in human history

Inscription on the list of World Heritage Sites will confer international recognition on the above cultural assets and focus worldwide interest on Corfu, since the preservation of the town to ensure that its cultural heritage is passed on intact to future generations will be monitored constantly. From the local viewpoint, inscription on the World Heritage List will function simultaneously as an incentive and a brake: as an incentive for greater care and effort to be expended on protection and conservation, and as a brake on certain types of modernization which might prove hazardous and incompatible with the town's status as a historic site with acknowledged universal values.

THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

In recent years it has been more and more widely recognized internationally that a concerted plan is required for the management of a complex organism such as a living historic town. In the case of Corfu, there are several factors pointing to a concerted management plan as the only way forward for the town's future development. Among them are the multiple ownership of many of the privately-owned historic buildings, the heavy concentration of shops and prefectural offices in a small area and the mounting pressure of tourism in the last few decades. Co-operation between the central government, local government, local organizations and individuals who live and work in the town is a necessary condition – and indeed the only guarantee – of efficient management.

The Management Plan is a systematic guide to the protection of all the cultural wealth contained within the Old Town of Corfu. It isolates 32 issues that impact on the Site and for each issue it records the conditions as “acknowledged”. The Plan’s 140 “acknowledged” issues recognize all the dangers and risks that threaten the Site today, as well as the problems of the existing management techniques, and formulate possible ways of confronting the problems. The sources behind the composition of the catalogue of acknowledged issues are multiple and derive from different development policies: urban planning and regulation, scientific research and, especially, practical experience from the everyday running of the town and a full awareness of the cultural wealth involved.

In order to deal with the 32 issues, an equal number of targets were set, which in turn led to the formulation of 76 actions to be taken in order to meet these targets. The actions that are not classified as “on-going” are scheduled for completion on a short (maximum 2 years), medium (maximum 6 years) and long (ten years or more) time frame. There are many authorities involved in the realization of these measures, and they are different in character, including state agencies, first and second level local administration, public organizations. The Management Plan is, above all, a programme of action for all involved agencies and organizations and it is aimed at the same goal, namely, the coordinated management of the Property.