

CIVVIH – Mediterranean Sub-Committee
ANNUAL MEETING 18- 21 May 2012, Izmir, Turkey /

Friday 18.5.2012

Scientific Symposium on
“Multilayered Historic Towns”

Opening Session Prof.Sofia AVGERINO-KOLONIAS President of CIVVIH

Honorable Rector of DEU Prof. Mehmet FÜZÜN

Honorable Dean of DEU Faculty of Architecture Prof. Atilla ORBAY

Dear professor Nevzat Ilhan Honorary member of CIVVIH

Dear Professors Nur Akin and Eti Levi ,Dear colleagues of ICOMOS Turkey

Dear Colleagues of CIVVIH

I believe that we would all wish to view the Mediterranean as a region governed by peace, stability and safety, where the respect for human rights is guaranteed and intercultural dialogue is conducted freely.

Mediterranean countries are linked not only by geographic, but also by primitive cultural and historic ties, which can form a propitious framework for rapprochement and cooperation between peoples, in order to face the problems of interstate relations devised by former generations.

These ties form equally propitious presuppositions, encouraging the tackling of new problems having risen in the Mediterranean because of globalization conditions:

- migration,
- climate change
- uncontrollable tourism
- and the degradation of the natural and cultural environment.

Over the past two years, these problems have been aggravated because of the deep financial crisis in the countries of the European south and by instability in Arab countries. However, these countries are able to produce optimistic economic data in the present and in their future, given that they dispose important resources rendering them important and attractive destinations for investments. Through targeted developmental initiatives, contributing substantially to the development of local economies, but also through a more reinforced cooperation in the fields of culture and education, we will bring the peoples of the Mediterranean closer.

Mediterranean civilizations have highlighted and maintained the stability of the values for the respect of human values and rights, for the cultural heritage of humanity and the natural environment. We therefore believe that they can continue to loyally serve these values and to create a common future of peace, democracy, prosperity, social and cultural understanding. The participants in today's meeting can actively contribute within this framework.

The participation in this meeting is not accidental:

Turkey , Greece, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Palestine, Tunisia, Israel, Italy, Portugal, Bulgaria, Germany, Belgium.

We form a circle of friendship and scientific cooperation of ICOMOS on matters pertaining to historic cities.

Six years ago, we founded the Mediterranean sub-committee of the International Scientific Committee on Historic Cities CIVVIH-ICOMOS at the city of Patras in Greece, within the spirit of Euromediterranean collaboration,

The diversity of these important Mediterranean civilizations has yielded a rich heritage, and many properties of this heritage have been included in the UNESCO list of world heritage.

Our cities have a prominent place among them.

We aspire at strengthening the cooperation on the protection and preservation of the historic cities in the Mediterranean.



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The common perils we are facing, be it natural, as earthquakes, floods and fires, or the result of economic crisis, intensive development or tourist pressure impose the need for cooperation and for joint programs in order to protect our historic cities.

To this day, four scientific meetings have taken place to tackle these issues. Two in Greece (Patras, Corfu), one in Turkey (Edirne) and one in Cyprus (Nicosia).

Our fifth meeting takes place today in the historic city of Izmir. At a place inhabited over the last 8.500 years.

Where different cultures have met over the passing of the centuries, leaving traces which we admire and are obliged to rescue.

This is the multi-layered historic city of Izmir which, thanks to its historic role is charged with the memories of the meeting that took place here, among the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean.

We Greeks are particularly touched to be here, because this region has been one of the cradles of Hellenic civilization. It has been a place of peaceful, creative coexistence but also of conflict, like the conflict with the Turks during more modern times.

We belong among those believing in the historic need to achieve a strong and permanent friendship and cooperation between our peoples.

I believe that the cornerstone for the building of this friendship is the mutual respect for each people's great values, like its historic, cultural and religious values.

With the tongue of the heart and the voice of common sense, with the art and the science, and surpassing official diplomacy, our two National Committees of ICOMOS have been constructing our friendship over the past 15 years, and as you know we have been honored with the Abdi Ipekçi award for Greek-Turkish friendship a few years ago.

I strongly believe that this Mediterranean meeting further strengthens the cooperation between the two ICOMOS National Committees but especially brings the optimistic message of rapprochement and friendship among the Mediterranean peoples, through the common goal for the protection of their common cultural heritage!



Our meeting here at Izmir on the subject of :

“Multilayered Historic Towns”

is very important, because the successive historic layers are a feature in most historic cities in the Mediterranean, which are the most ancient in the world. In Greece for example, we conducted 4 national conferences on respective topics during the 90's – in some of which were present some of the colleagues here today.

Our subject is also opportune, given that the problem we are discussing is linked to the large-scale interventions and mega-constructions imposed today by the circumstances of globalized economy and by the developing tourism, thus threatening historic urban landscapes.

This issue has preoccupied the CIVVIH and our concern is evident in the Valetta Principles, adopted by the 17th International General Assembly at Paris. This document of ours sets as basic principles for successful protection, among others, not only rationalism and the hierarchical design of protection in a historic city, aiming at its viability, but also the need for collaboration with local societies to serve this end.

The opportuneness of these directions is further amplified as we are celebrating the 40th anniversary from the adoption of the Convention on World Heritage, which was proposed by ICOMOS.

The special meaning of this celebration concerns the relation between protection and sustainable development, as well as the role of local societies.

It is recognized that without the active participation of local societies, the protection of cultural heritage cannot be ensured. To this end, ICOMOS has set the goal and works in the direction of making local societies realize the role played by cultural heritage in the preservation of the cultural identity and the preservation of the quality of living in historic cities.

On the other hand, along with the other international organizations protecting heritage, ICOMOS is undertaking the obligation to formulate its international strategy on these issues:

- to develop key issues
- to correspond to modern challenges and formulate the necessary scientific practices and synergies.



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Among the goals of the 40th anniversary, I have chosen those which we should draw our attention upon, within the context of our Mediterranean Sub-Committee:

- global climate change and natural disasters that place heritage at risk;
- conservation challenges associated with increased development pressure or underdevelopment,
- increased tourism that may in some cases threaten the values of World Heritage properties.
- the contribution of World Heritage to sustainable development and improving the quality of life of local communities.

Being a cultural organism, ICOMOS has the high duty to show extroversion and creativity and to construct a solid cooperation for the protection of our shared heritage.

I would like to congratulate and thank ICOMOS Turkey as well as the Dokuz Eylul University and the local authorities for supporting the organizing of this meeting.

I would also like to express my deep emotion and welcome all colleagues who responded to our invitation for this meeting in the historical city of Izmir.

Let us leave darkness behind, open the horizons of our thinking towards knowledge and the hope for a viable future, following the appeal of the Greek writer Nikos Kazantzakis, who loved dearly the Mediterranean and wrote so much about it through his travels:

“The light has sworn not to surrender”

Let our meeting signal this light.

