

DECLARATION

for Inter-American Cooperation to Ensure the Preservation of Historic Cities of the Americas

Gathered in Quebec, Canada, on this 18th day of April, 2001, the Mayors and Representatives of World Heritage Cities and of other important historic cities of the Americas named below hereby address the Heads of State present at the 3rd Summit of the Americas,

affirming that:

Whereas

- **All** the countries represented here at the 3rd Summit of the Americas, except for the Bahamas, Barbados and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, have made a solemn commitment to heritage preservation by signing the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage ratified in Paris in 1972 and that the inclusion of these sites on the World Heritage List confers particular responsibility upon the signatory state in this respect;
- **And** these same countries, meeting for the 1st Summit of the Americas in Miami in 1994, made a commitment to address problems specific to the Americas by focusing their deliberations and plans on four major themes essential to the preservation and rehabilitation of ancient city centres, namely, the strengthening of democracy, economic integration, the eradication of poverty; and a pledge of sustainable development;
- **And** these same countries, meeting for the 2nd Summit of the Americas in Santiago de Chile, in 1998, ratified the implementation of an action plan designed to promote quality of life in these cities, recommending especially that they address the social, cultural, economic and environmental constraints to which the oldest of our urban centres are subjected;
- **And** the Mayors of historic cities in Latin America and the Caribbean, who met at Lima in November, 1997, identified the principles of a strategic plan for assuring success in preservation projects in historic cities, namely, understanding intervention models, defining the goals of good management and public administration, program and project funding mechanisms, participation and solidarity amongst all those involved, quality of the living environment, unity within diversity, interaction between ethnic groups, research, development and communication;
- **And** the Mayors, meeting again in Mexico City in 2000, called on Governments to help cities create permanent bodies to oversee the management of historic city centres, to develop a masterplan upon which to base all their actions, to mobilize local resources to develop preservation projects, and to provide appropriate technical and financial means to implement such programs;
- **And** the Organization of World Heritage Cities, founded in Fez, Morocco, in 1993, was created with the guiding principle that resources, expertise, available knowledge and experience related to the preservation of urban world heritage sites, or "World Heritage Cities", was to be shared and freely exchanged amongst its members; the Organization is the spokesperson for World Heritage Cities of the Americas and is willing to play that role for any city that shares its values and is working towards the same objectives;
- **And** heritage preservation is a responsibility that should be shared between different levels of government, i.e. national (central), regional and municipal (local).

And Whereas

- ***Although*** historic cities of the Americas vary from one to another in many respects, they also share much, from north to south: they are all of approximately the same age, they share an historical depth, the legacy of an era of active exploration, four centuries of colonialism, and the richness of thousands of years of indigenous civilizations;
- ***And*** the historic features of these cities, especially once listed as UNESCO World Heritage Cities, do not just belong to the collective memory of their inhabitants but also to that of all humanity; they are exceptionally valuable and constitute a significant part of the investment that humanity must make if it is to evolve and leave a better inheritance to the generations to come;
- ***And*** the 3rd Summit of the Americas is an appropriate time for reflection, agreements, and for the defining of concerns, objectives and common projects for the furthering of human progress, the development of cities and the wellbeing of those who inhabit them, particularly of those living in the oldest districts.

We hereby call on the Heads of State to reaffirm their responsibility and their willingness to make a commitment to preserve historic cities, within a framework of cultural diversity and sustainable development, by

1. Confirming the importance of cities as sources of culture, and their historical legacy as a form of identity and affirming the leadership role of local authorities in controlling preservation projects in historic cities:

1.1. By adopting or updating policies and laws adapted to the specific situation of historic cities, where reconciling the apparently contradictory demands of conservation and development is a daily challenge, especially in the context of free trade implementation;

1.2. By adopting, undertaking or implementing, according to the need, urban development guidelines and strategies that are based on preservation or, if required, rehabilitation of the historic physical structure of historic urban centres and of their social fabric, and on the improvement of their living environment, while respecting their character, their authenticity, and their unique spirit;

1.3. By adopting measures that will enable people to recognize and identify with the value of their historic cities, so that all citizens feel responsible for their preservation and participate in their development.

2. Recognizing that heritage plays an important role in development, i.e. that heritage preservation and restoration projects in historic cities can, if taken well in hand, contribute to the sustainable cultural, social and economic prosperity of the resident community, and act as a pledge for the improvement of its quality of life, namely:

2.1. By establishing strategic partnerships with local authorities in order to help them provide leadership for preservation projects in historic urban centres;

2.2. By creating permanent structures within local authorities that will enable them to manage the sharing and optimal use of the human, material, information and financial resources that are available and necessary for preserving historic urban centres;

2.3. By providing local authorities with the funding and logistical support that they need to develop and implement rehabilitation strategies for their historic urban centres, or to assist them in finding the financing that they need to undertake these projects;

2.4. By passing laws that establish a fiscal policy adapted to the requirements of rehabilitating historic urban centres, and that stimulate their preservation.

3. **Creating the necessary conditions for democratic and participatory management of historic cities**, and supporting any such initiatives aimed at reforming or consolidating the governing municipal structures in this management style, namely,

3.1. By providing the tools and resources that local authorities need to help them structure their decision-making procedures in such a way as to involve the citizens and encourage them to take responsibility for the protection of their historic city;

3.2. By increasing activities that improve the local community's ability to take responsibility for heritage preservation and development, in particular activities that target poverty, delinquency and the unofficial economy, the scourge of many historic urban centres, as well as initiatives to restore the infrastructure and physical features of historic cities;

3.3. By establishing programs that support the efforts of local authorities, museums, and educational institutions, as well as the efforts of social agencies, in raising awareness among the entire population, particularly among young people, of the presence of their own history in the city, and teaching them ways to participate in its preservation.

4. **Giving authority to the agents of conservation, encouraging cooperation, and supporting partnerships** that involve governments and local authorities but also the private sector, public bodies and international institutions, so as to mobilize all resources available for the preservation of historic cities, namely

4.1. By adopting clear principles and guidelines for preservation interventions in historic cities that are based on the best international practices and on local consensus;

4.2. By supporting initiatives that local authorities wish to take to stimulate private investment and to form partnerships based on the preservation and development of historic urban centres;

4.3. By making available to local authorities the information and resources that they need to obtain direct access to investment programs offered by organizations of international cooperation;

4.4. By establishing a structure of cooperation so that local authorities have their own access to knowledge about preservation techniques and management methods for historic urban centres, through which they can also share the results of their work with other local authorities.

More specifically, the Mayors hereby call on

- **The Governments of the Americas to encourage and assist** the historic cities in their countries to register with and participate in the activities of the **Organization of World Heritage Cities Regional Network for the Americas**, whose head office is located in Guanajuato, Mexico; to support the establishment of a Cultural, Technical and Economic Exchange Program between member cities in this network that would focus on developing their historic characteristics and tourism potential;
- **The Governments of the Americas to cooperate** in establishing and funding a **Centre for Technical Cooperation in Urban Conservation**, which would come under the authority of the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) and would work in association with the United Nations' Urban Management Program (UMP) and its member organizations, with the mandate to acquire and share expertise related to urban heritage and to provide local authorities with technical and professional assistance;
- **The Governments of the Americas to support** the Inter-American Organization for Higher Education (IOHE) in its attempts to establish, within the College of the Americas, (COLAM), an **Inter-American Professional Development Network for Integrated Urban Conservation Management**, notably by supporting COLAM's appeals to international institutions, particularly the Inter-American Development Bank, to provide this program with start-up funding, a program that is essential for developing the capacity of local authorities to take responsibility for preservation and harmonious development in historic cities;

- ***The Governments of the Americas to take the initiative*** to establish an ***Inter-American Young Artisans Program*** that would encourage young people to acquire and preserve traditional knowledge and the technical skills used by artisans of the past in the building of cities; the recovery of this fast-disappearing technical knowledge and practice, especially through the use of new technologies, is not just indispensable to the preservation of historic cities but will also be a guarantee of revenue and a source of pride for young artisans of the future.

To achieve these objectives, the Mayors

- ***Call on the Heads of State of the Americas*** to consider creating, in association with their respective national institutions and with international agencies involved in urban development, a ***National Urban Heritage Fund*** for promoting investment in the restoration and revitalization of historic national urban centres, with a special focus on projects that integrate all aspects of urban life, and that they ensure the Fund responds to the needs of local authorities and that these authorities can meet the conditions required to access it;
- ***Call on the Heads of State of the Americas*** to consider creating an ***Interamerican Fund for the Preservation of Historic Cities***, which would receive ongoing funding from the States involved and through international cooperation, and which would promote the undertaking of pilot projects by local authorities for the restoration of urban historic centres; to appoint a ***Management Board of this Fund*** consisting of the principal actors in the field of urban heritage in the Americas.
