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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,  
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FIFTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES  
TO THE CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION  
OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Paris, UNESCO Headquarters, Room IV  
10-11 October 2005

**Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda: Adoption of a Declaration on the Conservation of  
Historic Urban Landscapes**

## SUMMARY

The General Assembly is requested to adopt a Declaration on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes (Decision **29 COM 5D**) based on the Vienna Memorandum on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes (see Document *WHC-05/15.GA/INF.7*).

**Draft Resolution: 15 GA 7:** see Point II.

## I. Declaration on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes

### **The General Assembly of States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention*:**

Noting that the issue of contemporary architectural interventions in and around World Heritage properties is increasingly a cause for concern among policy makers, urban planners, city developers, architects, preservationists, property owners, investors and concerned citizens;

Acknowledging that an international conference on “World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture - Managing the Historic Urban Landscape” took place in Vienna, Austria, from 12 to 14 May 2005, following a request by the World Heritage Committee at its 27th session (UNESCO, 2003) (**Decision 27 COM 7B.108**);

Considering that an important set of guidelines for the conservation of historic urban landscapes<sup>1</sup>, the “Vienna Memorandum”, was discussed during the international conference in Vienna and welcomed by the World Heritage Committee at its 29th session (Durban, 2005) (**Decision 29 COM 5D**);

Recalling that guidelines and orientations for the conservation of historic areas are included in several international Charters and Documents, such as the 1964 “International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites” (Venice Charter), the 1968 “UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Preservation of Cultural Property endangered by Public or Private works”, the 1976 “UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas”, the 1982 ICOMOS-IFLA “International Charter for Historic Gardens” (Florence Charter), the 1987 ICOMOS “Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas” (Washington Charter), the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity, as well as the HABITAT II Conference and Agenda 21, which was ratified by Member States in Istanbul (Turkey) in June 1996;

Further considering the scope of UNESCO’s *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention, 1972)* and in particular its Articles 4 and 5, striving for international cooperation and the need to integrate the economic, social and human development of the cities inscribed on the World Heritage List into comprehensive planning programmes;

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1. The historic urban landscape, building on the 1976 “UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas”, refers to ensembles of any group of buildings, structures and open spaces, in their natural and ecological context, including archaeological and palaeontological sites, constituting human settlements in an urban environment over a relevant period of time, the cohesion and value of which are recognized from the archaeological, architectural, prehistoric, historic, scientific, aesthetic, socio-cultural or ecological point of view. This landscape has shaped modern society and has great value for our understanding of how we live today.

Further recalling that properties inscribed on the World Heritage List have Outstanding Universal Value and that preservation of this value should be at the centre of any conservation policy and management strategy;

**Adopts the principles expressed by the Vienna Memorandum on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes as follows:**

1. Continuous changes in functional use, social structure, political context and economic development that manifest themselves in the form of structural interventions in the historic urban landscape may be acknowledged as part of the city's tradition, and require a vision of the city as a whole with forward-looking action on the part of decision-makers, and a dialogue with the other actors and stakeholders involved.
2. The central challenge of contemporary architecture in the historic urban landscape is to respond to development dynamics in order to facilitate socio-economic changes and growth on the one hand, while simultaneously respecting the inherited townscape and its landscape setting on the other. Living historic cities, especially World Heritage cities, require a policy of city planning and management that takes conservation as a key point of departure. In this process, the historic city's authenticity and integrity, which are determined by various factors, must not be compromised.
3. A central concern of physical and functional interventions is to enhance quality of life and production efficiency by improving living, working and recreational conditions and adapting uses without compromising existing values derived from the character and significance of the historic urban fabric and form. This means not only improving technical standards, but also a rehabilitation and contemporary development of the historic environment based upon a proper inventory and assessment of its values, as well as the addition of high-quality cultural expressions.

In view of the challenges to the preservation of the historic urban landscape, the General Assembly:

- a. **encourages** policy makers, urban planners, city developers, architects, preservationists, property owners, investors and concerned citizens to work together to preserve the urban heritage, while considering the modernization and development of society in a culturally and historically sensitive manner, strengthening identity and social cohesion;
- b. **further encourages** the enhancement of quality of life of historic cities by improving living, working and recreational conditions and adapting uses without

compromising existing values derived from the character and significance of the historic urban fabric and form;

c. **emphasizes** the need to properly contextualize contemporary architecture in the historic urban landscape and **stresses** the importance of undertaking Cultural or Visual Impact studies when contemporary interventions are being planned;

d. **invites** States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* to integrate the principles expressed in the Vienna Memorandum into their heritage conservation policies;

e. **encourages** States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* to integrate the concept of historic urban landscape in their nominations and in the elaboration of management plans of properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List.

## II. Draft Resolution

*The General Assembly,*

1. *Having examined Documents WHC-05/15.GA/7 and WHC-05/15.GA/INF.7,*
2. *Takes note of the report and welcomes the Vienna Memorandum adopted at the International Conference “World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture” (Vienna, 2005);*
3. *On the basis of the Vienna Memorandum, adopts the Vienna Declaration on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes.*