

15th General Assembly of ICOMOS

Publication of the Papers of the Scientific Symposium

Preface by the President of ICOMOS

In 2005, ICOMOS celebrates its 40th anniversary. Following a series of national and international events, the 15th General Assembly will be the final climax in the commemorations of the creation of our organisation, founded in Krakow in 1965 in the presence of 121 delegates from 26 countries. Today, about 8000 members from almost 130 countries have joined this non-governmental organisation. In close co-operation with the International Secretariat of ICOMOS, our Chinese friends have prepared the General Assembly in an exemplary manner so that during this event in the Old Imperial City of Xi'an with its unique monuments and museums an impressive programme worthy of our organisation's jubilee will be offered. On behalf of ICOMOS International, I wish to thank ICOMOS China, its President Zhang Bai and its Secretary General Guo Zhan, as well as the City of Xi'an and its mayor, for their extraordinary commitment. Our thanks also go to the many colleagues and helpers involved in preparing this General Assembly.

The scientific symposium of the General Assembly – *Monuments and Sites in their Setting: Conserving Cultural Heritage in Changing Townscapes and Landscapes* – is of topical interest for the conservation of monuments in the 21st century and I am glad that most contributions to the symposium can already be presented in this first publication of papers. The theme *Monuments and Sites in their Setting* arose some time ago from talks with our colleagues Zhang Bai and Guo Zhan in Paris, and was then further elaborated, among other, during last year's Bureau meeting in Beijing. On the basis of these talks, I already presented to the Executive Committee of ICOMOS one year ago a concept divided into different sections. The final version was the result of a lengthy process to which not only Secretary General Dinu Bumbaru, but also Vice President Yukio Nishimura and our Chinese colleagues, contributed with exceptional commitment. I am happy that apart from worldwide questions and problems of conservation the programme of the symposium thus also reflects to some extent the Chinese conservation philosophy as it finds expression in the *Principles for the Conservation of Heritage Sites in China*, edited by our friend Zhang Bai.

The programme of the symposium is made up of four sections: *Defining the setting of monuments and sites: the significance of tangible and intangible cultural and natural qualities* (section I), – *Vulnerabilities within the settings of monuments and sites: understanding the threats and defining appropriate responses* (section II), – *Evolving townscapes and landscapes within their settings: managing dynamic change* (section III), – *Cultural routes: the challenges of linear settings for monuments and sites* (section IV). In view of the overwhelming number of close to 600 abstracts and papers sent in by ICOMOS colleagues from all over the world, more than 170 of which were selected, we need to thank those colleagues who have been working in the scientific committees of these four sections, first of all the four coordinators: Tamas Fejerdy (section I), Boguslaw Szmygin (section II), Ray Bondin (section III), María Rosa Suárez-Inclán Ducassi (section IV). In this regard, I would also like to especially point out the untiring commitment of Gaia Jungeblodt, director of our International Secretariat. Finally, we are particularly grateful to the Getty Foundation for enabling once again a significant number of colleagues to take part in the General Assembly.

Thanks to manifold support we can therefore expect Xi'an to be a great international forum for exchanging different experiences in the ongoing battle to save our cultural heritage threatened worldwide. Very much in the spirit of the Nara Document, the Xi'an symposium is going to be "a timely forum in which we could challenge conventional thinking in the conservation field and debate ways and means of broadening our horizons to bring greater respect for cultural heritage diversity to conservation practice".

In accordance with this spirit, I hope our symposium *Monuments and Sites in their Setting* will be a great success.

Prof. Dr. Michael Petzet

President of ICOMOS