

ICOMOS Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting

Heritage and the Metropolis in Asia & the Pacific

Seoul, Republic of Korea, 29 May – 1 June 2007

This is a brief report to ICOMOS National Committees in the Asia-Pacific Region, to the ICOMOS International Executive Committee and to the ICOMOS International Scientific Council about this recent event, very successfully hosted by ICOMOS Korea.

This was the 4th annual Asia-Pacific Regional meeting of ICOMOS, and the 3rd hosted by ICOMOS Korea.

- In 2004, the first ICOMOS Asia-Pacific Regional meeting was hosted by ICOMOS China in Beijing, and focused on the theme of Scientific Symposium for the 15th ICOMOS General Assembly, *Monuments and sites in their setting: conserving cultural heritage in changing townscapes and landscapes*.
- In 2005, the meeting was held in the Republic of Korea, and later that year, the *Seoul Declaration on Tourism in Asia's Historic Towns and Villages* was endorsed by the 15th ICOMOS General Assembly in Xi'an, China.
- In 2006, the Regional Meeting was held in association with the ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Committee, and looked specifically at the issues of managing tourism pressures in traditional villages. The group visited the Korean villages of Hahoe and Yangdong. The *Andong Recommendations on the Impact of Mass Tourism on Historic Villages* were widely disseminated by ICOMOS, as well as contributing to the ongoing work of the ICOMOS International Cultural Tourism Committee.

These earlier documents and short reports of those meetings are available from the ICOMOS website (www.icomos.org).

Building on these discussions, the theme for 2007 - *Heritage and the Metropolis in Asia & the Pacific* - turned to the challenges posed for heritage conservation in the large and rapidly growing cities of the region. There were over 30 participants, from 11 countries – the Republic of Korea, Australia, Canada, China, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Thailand and the United States of America – as well as an observer from the World Heritage Center of UNESCO.

The components of the meeting included...

- A keynote paper from Professor Yukio Nishimura (Tokyo, Japan), former Vice-President of ICOMOS, about the integrity of historic urban landscapes;
- A presentation by Dr Ronald van Oers of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, outlining the background and progress of UNESCO's work to develop new standards for the conservation of historic urban landscapes;
- A series of case study presentations on the theme from countries within the region – Kazakhstan, Thailand, Israel, Australia, Pakistan, Japan, Indonesia and China;
- Presentations about the heritage and historic neighbourhoods of Seoul by ICOMOS Korea and representatives from the Seoul Metropolitan Government;
- Visits to some of Seoul's varied and rich cultural heritage places, including Unhyungung historic house, the Bukchon district of Seoul, the Seonjeongneung Royal Tombs, the Bongeunsa Buddhist temple, many forays into the markets, shopping and night-life of the Meongdong and Insadong districts of Seoul, and several night-time strolls along the restored urban stream of Cheonggyecheon;

- Many enjoyable receptions, meetings with national and local government authorities and shared meals – including an impromptu and evocative night-time visit to the Changdeokgung Palace, by the kind invitation of Mr You Hong-june, Administrator of the Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Korea.

A lively drafting group met several times during the meeting to identify the issues to be incorporated into the *ICOMOS Declaration on Heritage and Metropolis in Asia and the Pacific*. The issues included the multiple factors affecting the conservation of cultural heritage in large cities, and the importance of developing new assessment and management tools which are well integrated into city planning and development processes.

The text of the Declaration was further modified and adopted by the final plenary session of the meeting, with the valuable assistance of ICOMOS Secretary-General, Dinu Bumbaru. The drafting group also benefited from the participation of ICOMOS Vice-President Gustavo Araoz (USA) and Ms Michal Firestone (Israel), Co-coordinator of the ICOMOS Scientific Council, both of whom have been active in animating a discussion of the *Historic Urban Landscapes* within ICOMOS.

The 2007 Seoul Declaration is attached to this report, and ICOMOS Korea is currently arranging the design and printing of the Declaration in a more attractive format. This will assist in acting on the major recommendation of the meeting which was to continue the important dialogue and sharing of experiences begun in Seoul, and to further investigate the concept of the *Historic Urban Landscape* as tool for evaluation and management of the cultural heritage of large cities and metropolitan areas.

Thanks are due to all the participants who contributed to the success of the meeting and its friendly exchanges. Our warmest thanks and congratulations are due to our ICOMOS Korea colleagues – particularly the President, Professor Sang-hae Lee, and Professor Hae Un Rii (member of the ICOMOS International Executive Committee), whose personal energy for this event was once again truly inspiring. Thanks also to the assistance provided by Mr Jong Dal Park (currently working from the office of the ICOMOS International Secretariat in Paris), and the team of conference organisers.

Of course, many institutional partners make such an event possible – these include the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Korea, and the Seoul Metropolitan Government. ICOMOS is extremely grateful for the sustained and substantial support these organisations have provided through the series of ICOMOS Asia-Pacific Regional meetings since 2005.

Although the ICOMOS Asia-Pacific Regional meetings are relatively new, the Seoul meeting proved again how important they are in strengthening the networking capacity that ICOMOS can provide, and the value of meeting colleagues and sharing experiences. It is hoped that the annual Regional Meeting format can continue in future years. Our sincere thanks are due to ICOMOS Korea for establishing this as a regular element in our calendars.



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