



## International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage

PRESS RELEASE

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The leading international organizations for heritage protection of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Heritage have expressed their intense concern about the proposed demolition of the Novartis France Office complex, located in Rueil Malmaison. The buildings were designed by famous architects Zehruss and Burckhardt assisted by the ingenious constructive thinking of Jean Prouvé with interiors by Charlotte Perriand, all set within the remains of the gardens of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century castle of Richelieu.

The President of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, Mr Gustavo Araoz has written to the French Minister of Culture and Communication, Ms Aurélie Filippetti about the case. The ICOMOS Twentieth Century International Scientific Committee (ISC20C), together with the International Working Party for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighborhoods of the Modern Movement (Docomomo) has also written to the President of Novartis AG, Mr. Patrice Zagame and CEO of Novartis AG, Mr Joseph Jimenez requesting a halt to demolition and seeking a meeting to discuss options to resolve the situation.

The threat to this important building complex was drawn to ICOMOS's attention by citizens of France and wider interests; with increasing voice in recent weeks.

As a result, ICOMOS the International Scientific Committee for Twentieth Century Heritage assessed the situation and has now issued an international Heritage Alert. The case was reviewed by ISC20C members from Sweden, South Africa, the USA and Australia, who engaged with local citizens, examining the available documentary evidence. It has concluded that there would be serious adverse impacts on the Novartis France office complex and the modern heritage of France should demolition proceed. .

The ISC20C believes that further consideration of how to integrate conservation objectives with Novartis current workplace and code requirements could resolve a better outcome for the modern heritage of France. The Novartis Board could thus demonstrate responsive corporate responsibility to the mounting national and international concern about threats to this outstanding example of the architectural heritage of the twentieth century of France and indeed to modern architecture internationally.

The Novartis Headquarters buildings are not only a testimony of their time, but also a lesson in heritage practice for the architects of today, and considered to be a good example in France of the successful transplantation of contemporary architecture in historically sensitive sites.

The president of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage, Ms Sheridan Burke, urged the president of Novartis and the CEO to "*reconsider the current proposal to eliminate its adverse impacts by retaining and re-using the buildings to ensure that the heritage significance of the complex as a whole is retained as one of France's landmarks of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century architecture, adapted and maintained in its historic precinct setting*".

The following national and international organisations support the international Heritage Alert action: Docomomo international, ICOMOS, ICOMOS France, Docomomo France, la Société pour la Protection des Paysages et de l'Esthétique de la France (SPPEF), Vieilles Maisons Françaises, Paris Historique.

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