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2016 WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH

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THE 2016 WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH INCLUDES 50 AT-RISK CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES IN 36 COUNTRIES

World Monuments Fund's Signature Advocacy Program Has Included 790 Sites in 135 Countries in its 20 Year History

For Immediate Release—New York, NY, October 15, 2015—World Monuments Fund (WMF) President Bonnie Burnham has announced the **2016 World Monuments Watch**, presenting a diverse group of cultural heritage sites at risk from the forces of nature and the impact of social, political, and economic change. Marking 20 years of the Watch, the 2016 list features 50 sites in 36 countries, dating from prehistory to the twentieth century.

The 2016 Watch includes an entire country's cultural heritage sites destroyed by a devastating earthquake (**Nepal**); an ancient underwater city threatened by pollution and large ships (**Pavlopetri**, Greece); a historic hill town in urgent need of urban planning (**Amedy**, Iraq); the remains of a medieval Swahili town at risk from the effects of a harsh climate and looters (**Kua Ruins**, Tanzania); a modern engineering masterpiece on the verge of being dismantled (**Shukhov Tower**, Russia); the burial place of presidents and hundreds of other luminaries that has suffered the effects of many earthquakes and is now neglected by its city (**General Cemetery of Santiago**, Chile); Edwardian public baths—still in use by a diverse urban community—at risk of closure due to cutbacks in government spending (**Moseley Road Baths**, United Kingdom); and a beloved costal promenade in Beirut that is the latest victim of a development frenzy that has destroyed many of the city's open spaces (**Dalieh of Raouche**, Lebanon).

The sites on the 2016 Watch are emblematic of preservation issues that are prevalent around the globe. From conflict to development pressures, and from natural disasters to the lack of resources, the Watch is a call to action that brings the fragility of these sites and the dangers they face to international attention. It also identifies opportunities for local communities to work together with preservation agencies, governments, corporate sponsors, and others to help ensure each site's future.

Ms. Burnham said, "The 2016 Watch includes many extraordinary places that deserve to be celebrated because they represent high moments of human culture. Worldwide concern would strengthen our ability to save them. Every two year Watch cycle expands our knowledge about the state of the built environment worldwide, and the current challenges facing the preservation field. WMF looks forward to working with the local experts, organizations, and government agencies who have nominated these sites. We hope our endorsement will advance their goals to save each of these cherished places."

American Express, the founding sponsor of the World Monuments Watch, continues to fund the Watch, as well as other initiatives taken on by WMF. The company's grants, totaling \$16.5 million for the Watch, have made a critical difference to the preservation of 160 projects in 70 countries.

Timothy J. McClimon, president of the American Express Foundation, said, “The World Monuments Watch is the most important call-to-action for the preservation of at-risk historical sites across the world. For two decades, the Watch has been a driving force in securing funding and engaging local communities to preserve these endangered cultural treasures. American Express remains committed to this partnership, raising awareness and providing grant funding to help save sites at risk.”

2016 Watch Sites Highlights

Conflict and War

War is perhaps the least common and the most dramatically destructive force that heritage faces. The 2016 Watch includes the **Unnamed Monument** in recognition of the deliberate and calculated damage to thousands of cultural heritage sites in many areas of political and social instability. There are simply too many sites at risk to be included individually on the Watch, and no immediate hope for resolution. The Unnamed Monument seeks to shift the focus to local populations who are losing their cultural heritage and history, and away from our own outrage, which plays to the propaganda of those who are perpetrating this damage.

Archaeological exploration of Egypt’s ancient settlement **Abusir el-Malek** in the early twentieth century swelled the collections of museums around the world, bringing attention to the importance of the site and its history. Following the Arab Spring in 2011, when policing archaeological sites became more difficult, there was a tremendous surge in looting of heritage sites, with Abusir el-Malek being one of the more heavily looted sites in the region. Sadly this situation is not unique in Egypt, or elsewhere in the world. Times of crisis—poverty, conflict, or political turmoil—stretch the protection of our past, often to breaking point. Placing Abusir el-Malek on the 2016 Watch cannot repair the damage to the site, but it can raise awareness about looting and highlight efforts worldwide to stem the tide of illicit trafficking of archaeological objects.

Disaster Recovery

The earthquake that ravaged Nepal in April 2015 caused thousands of human casualties and widespread destruction of buildings and infrastructure. The earthquake’s impact on heritage places was extensive throughout the Kathmandu Valley, which is home to hundreds of sacred Buddhist and Hindu sites. In the aftermath, community members have been galvanized into action to restore their shared heritage. The inclusion of **Cultural Heritage Sites of Nepal** on the 2016 Watch honors the resilience of the Nepalese people, while bringing attention to the need for sustained international efforts in the face of what might appear to be a daunting set of challenges.

Development Pressures

Abandonment and demolition, the lack of investment, and the need for better planning are common threats to cities in Russia, Cuba, Romania, and South Africa. Russia’s **Vyborg Historic Center** needs better planning for conservation and stronger enforcement of heritage protection laws that would respect its architectural, archaeological, cultural, and artistic heritage. The integrity of the urban fabric of **El Vedado**, the heart of modern Havana that includes some of the best early and mid-twentieth century architecture and urban planning in Cuba, is being lost due to a lack of investment in properties in the district, weak protective regulations, and the trend of inappropriate alterations. The Romanian capital of **Bucharest**—a built environment of great historical, social, and symbolic significance—is threatened by abandonment and demolition of historic buildings, uncontrolled development, and inappropriate rehabilitation. The historic character and built heritage of **Bo-Kaap** in South Africa, recognized for its distinctive vernacular architecture and its enduring Muslim culture, are under threat due to economic forces and social change.

Places of Conscience

From a notorious labor camp in Albania to World War II concentration camps in Italy, these sites are powerful places of memory that deserve to be preserved for future generations. Albania's **Spaç Prison**, in operation from 1968 until the early 1990s when the communist party fell, is now in an extremely advanced state of deterioration. The inclusion of Spaç Prison on the 2016 Watch recognizes a new effort involving institutions, civil society, and private citizens—including former political prisoners—to create a modern institution of remembrance out of the prison's remains.

Between 1939 and 1943, over 100 concentration camps were built in Italy, and today only a few of these structures are known to remain. The neglect of these **World War II concentration camps in Italy** is largely due to the denial of this almost-forgotten chapter of the country's recent past. The 2016 Watch aims to bring attention to this vanishing piece of history and the need for further research to uncover the remaining sites.

Religious sites

All of the religious sites on the 2016 Watch have their own challenges, but the common theme is a lack of resources to successfully preserve each site's built heritage. **Mission San Xavier del Bac** in Arizona is close to reversing the effects of many inappropriate repairs over the years, which would help to preserve the architectural, artistic, and cultural significance of this site, an important parish church for the many Native Americans in the area. A restored **La Ermita de Barranco**, a symbol of Barranco's maritime heritage, would join the other cultural attractions that are helping to revitalize this district in Lima, Peru. Twelve of **Santiago de Cuba's historic churches**—the vessels for the social, cultural, and religious life of the city for centuries—have suffered from the impact of natural disasters and are currently in need of preservation.

Modernism

Modern structures are subject to the same risks as older ones, including neglect, inappropriate renovation, and even demolition. Public apathy and the lack of understanding that buildings of our own time can be important enough to be kept for the future may be the biggest challenge. For instance, the **National Sports Complex**, an iconic symbol of the massive post-independence effort that transformed Cambodia from an agrarian colony into a modern state, is used daily by Phnom Penh residents for recreation and social gatherings, and yet there are mounting fears of encroachment and loss of the space as a community asset. Its inclusion on the 2016 Watch advocates for shifts in policy that recognize heritage as a positive component of urban development.

The relocation of the Tsukiji fish market ahead of the 2020 Olympic Games warns of redevelopment pressures for some of the last remaining markers of Tokyo's historic urban architecture. **Early twentieth century architecture in Tsukiji** is included on the 2016 Watch to lend international support to the efforts of local architects and property owners to advocate for preservation-minded planning for the protection of the city's heritage.

More detailed descriptions of all 2016 World Monuments Watch sites can be found at www.wmf.org/watch

World Monuments Watch

Launched in 1996 and issued every two years, the World Monuments Watch calls international attention to threatened cultural heritage sites around the world. Watch-listing provides an opportunity for sites and their nominators to raise public awareness, foster local participation, advance innovation and collaboration, and demonstrate effective solutions. The process also serves as a vehicle for requesting WMF assistance for select projects.

The list is compiled by a panel of international heritage experts in the fields of archaeology, architecture, art history, and preservation. For many historic sites, inclusion on the Watch is the best—and sometimes the only—hope for survival.

Since the program's inception, more than 790 sites in 135 countries and territories—including those on the 2016 Watch—have been included. The international attention given to Watch sites provides a vital tool with which local entities may leverage funding from a variety of sources, including municipal, regional, and national governments; foundations; corporate sponsors; international aid organizations; and private donors. Since 1996, WMF has contributed \$100 million to date; while almost \$245 million has been allocated to the sites by other entities. The social impact of the Watch is also significant, especially through Watch Day, a component of the program established in 2012 that aims to reconnect communities to their heritage through public events.

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World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's treasured places. For 50 years, working in 100 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to the preservation of important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF seeks to inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York City, the organization has offices and affiliates worldwide. Visit www.wmf.org for more information, or connect with us on www.facebook.com/worldmonuments, www.twitter.com/worldmonuments, and instagram.com/worldmonumentsfund.

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