

**THE EDINBURGH DECLARATION**  
**for the Improved Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage**  
**at the National and Local Levels**

*The participants at the 10th International Conference of National Trusts, held in Edinburgh from 15 to 19 September 2003, debated and subsequently endorsed the Edinburgh Declaration as set out below, and pledged themselves and their organisations to implement its requirements to the best of their abilities.*

**RECOGNISING and ACCEPTING that:**

- i. the cultural and natural heritage of the world is of fundamental benefit to all humankind, irrespective of race, creed or nationality, for its inspirational, artistic, scientific or spiritual values as well as the critical role it plays;
- ii. the present generation is responsible for safeguarding this heritage and has a duty and a desire to bequeath it to the future generations in at least the same, and preferably in an enhanced, status and condition;
- iii. conservation of heritage can encourage closer co-operation and integration between people and societies of different ethnic backgrounds through the identification and communication of elements of a common heritage;
- iv. conservation of both cultural and natural heritage is fundamental to sustainable development at national and local levels by promoting socio-economic development, environmental management and educational opportunity;
- v. although some notable successes have been achieved in protecting individual sites and monuments of outstanding heritage value, throughout the world such sites particularly those of national and local importance, are increasingly threatened by social, economic, and environmental pressures, which are themselves growing at an accelerating rate;
- vi. the primary cause of this progressive loss in the heritage assets of a nation is inactivity arising from lack of knowledge, indifference, neglect or lack of capacity to address the problem;
- vii. current efforts for protection of this heritage at national and local levels are often ineffective because the limited economic, scientific and technological resources and skills available;
- viii. many of the most successful efforts in conserving sites of heritage value have been achieved through close collaboration between the governmental and voluntary movements, and that such partnerships are increasingly recognised as being an effective means of implementing conservation programmes;
- ix. the inter-governmental instruments, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, and particularly the World Heritage Convention, as well as other regional protocols have shown considerable success in protecting those sites that are recognised as being of such outstanding universal value as to warrant listing at the international level, but have been less effective in promoting and protecting sites of national or local significance; and that

x. the escalating gravity of the dangers confronting both cultural and natural heritage poses a threat to the well-being of all humankind and thus requires a concerted international response;

**WE** – the International Network of National Trusts and allied organisations; the Participants of the 10th International Conference of National Trusts; and the wider international heritage movement, including both governmental and non-governmental organisations – hereby call on all governments, organisations and individuals engaged in heritage conservation across the world to take up the challenge of reducing, and eventually of reversing, the progressive damage and destruction of our cultural and natural heritage.

Specifically we also hereby **DECLARE** that:

i. governments throughout the world at both national and local levels should give greater recognition to the benefits arising from the conservation of cultural and natural heritage both to the present and future generations, and therefore should give the conservation of heritage a higher political and financial priority in the determination of national and local policies, using their resources more efficiently and effectively. Measures for the strengthening of the commitment of governments are proposed in Annex 1;

ii. non-governmental organisations around the world should raise their efforts to halt the loss of both cultural and natural heritage at national and local levels, deploying the resources at their disposal in a professional and effective way to achieve this end. Measures for the strengthening of the commitment of non-governmental organisations are proposed in Annex 2;

iii. both governments and non-governmental organisations should work together more closely to address the problem of the progressive loss of cultural and natural heritage, developing joint initiatives both to raise public understanding and concern, and to build capacity at the national and local levels, where appropriate calling on international assistance and co-operation.

iv. the State Parties to the World Heritage Convention should reinforce their commitment to implement the requirements of Article 5 of the Convention as confirmed by the 2002 Budapest Declaration, namely “to protect heritage in all its diversity as an instrument for the sustainable development of all societies through dialogue and mutual understanding”.

The International Network of National Trusts, the participants of the 10th International Conference of National Trusts, and all other governments, non-governmental organisations and individuals who may endorse this Declaration, hereby pledge themselves to increase their efforts to conserve the natural and cultural heritage in their respective countries by implementing these actions and ideals to the best of their abilities.

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## ANNEX 1

Measures proposed for adoption by governments to strengthen their commitment to protect their cultural and natural heritage for the benefit of present and future generations:

i. to develop a national policy, where such policy has not already been developed, that aims to identify, protect, conserve, understand and promote the cultural and natural heritage situated within their territory, and that incorporates a general presumption in favour of the conservation of such heritage, based on the principle that no element of cultural or natural heritage should be lost without a thorough consideration of its significance and of all available means to conserve it;

ii. to establish a government service, where such a service does not already exist, for the identification, protection, conservation, understanding and promotion of the cultural and natural heritage within their territories, providing a professional staff with the resources and training to discharge this function;

iii. to compile a national register of sites, where such a register does not already exist, identified for their cultural and natural heritage significance at national and local level, and to develop appropriate and effective systems for monitoring and recording the status, condition and threats to sites included in such a register;

iv. to develop an appropriate inter-departmental mechanism covering all areas of government for identifying possible threats to the cultural and natural heritage arising from proposed new policies and legislation, so that any proposed government policy or legislation does not directly or inadvertently contribute to the further loss of the national heritage;

v. to encourage international collaboration, particularly between people of different ethnic backgrounds, to identify and foster greater understanding of the common elements of their cultures;

vi. to work in collaboration with the non-governmental sector, including both commercial and voluntary organisations, for the development of national and local programmes for the improved conservation of heritage sites;

vii. to develop the scientific, technical and managerial capabilities required as the basis for mitigating the threats to the cultural and natural heritage, and for the effective conservation and management of features of heritage significance;

viii. to recognise and promote the valuable role that heritage conservation plays in socio-economic development, and to incorporate it into national and local programmes for sustainable development;

ix. to provide advice, support and clear and comprehensive guidance to all those whose activities have an impact on the management, restoration, protection and conservation of cultural and natural heritage;

x. to incorporate heritage awareness and conservation into the educational curriculum for schools, colleges and universities so as to inculcate a sense of pride in the minds of young people in their national heritage;

xi. to promote heritage conservation through relevant government and non-governmental publications, official websites, and public media, including those of the heritage conservation organisations, so as to build greater awareness of the value of heritage conservation in the minds

of the public, and to encourage all people to appreciate, enjoy, and understand their national and local heritage;

xii. to develop national programmes for the education of allied professional disciplines and for the training of craftsmen, technicians and other conservation practitioners covering all aspects of cultural and natural heritage conservation, and to promote appropriate national schemes for the employment of such professionals and craftsmen in all conservation projects involving heritage sites.

## ANNEX 2

Measures proposed for adoption by non-governmental organisations to strengthen their commitment to protect their cultural and natural heritage for the benefit of present and future generations:

i. to work in collaboration with relevant national and local departments and agencies of government, and with other non-governmental organisations, to develop and implement national and local programmes for the improved conservation of heritage sites;

ii. to increase the professional and technical capabilities in heritage conservation through giving greater priority to the education of allied professional disciplines and to the training and personal development of staff, including deployment of staff to programmes set up by government to train craftsmen, technicians and other practitioners to become skilled in heritage conservation;

iii. to communicate the benefits of heritage conservation to national and local audiences as the basis for building public support for its protection, and to champion the cause of heritage conservation as widely as possible;

iv. to incorporate heritage conservation activities in programmes for sustainable development at the local community level;

v. to develop partnerships to work with local community organisations dedicated to the conservation of local sites of heritage value, and to involve the local communities in a participatory process in the planning and management of such sites;

vi. to develop programmes for education and interpretation of cultural and natural heritage to generate greater understanding and awareness of the benefits of their conservation, especially amongst communities local to heritage sites;

vii. to develop and participate in programmes set up to promote the sharing and exchange of skills and technologies in heritage conservation, including between organisations in developed and emerging nations, and for the dissemination of best practice.