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international council on monuments and sites

Completion of the first phase of the capacity-building programme on Incorporating Sustainable Development into the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Arab States Region

Press Release

15 July 2024

The Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH), the Heritage Commission in Saudi Arabia, and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and its Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGWG) concluded the first phase of the capacity-building programme on **Incorporating Sustainable Development into the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Arab States Region**. This was undertaken in partnership with Saudi ICOMOS and the Royal Commission for AlUla, with participation from heritage experts and specialists from the Arab region.

The first phase of the programme included a series of virtual sessions throughout June 2024, focusing on the exchange of ideas and experiences to achieve the programme's goals. The second phase will begin in September 2024 and will include an in-person workshop in the AlUla region. It will consist of a series of sessions, seminars, and field visit to the Hegra World Heritage archaeological site, the first site in Saudi Arabia to be listed as a World Heritage site in 2008.

The programme aims to develop new strategies to ensure the preservation of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of World Heritage sites in Arab countries while achieving sustainable development. It also seeks to enhance the understanding and application of sustainable development concepts and the protection of World Heritage in Arab countries, integrate the historic urban landscape approach with the 2030 Agenda, and provide a platform for exchanging expertise, knowledge, information, and successful practices in management, conservation, and development.

His Excellency Sh. Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Chairperson of the Governing Board of the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH), stated that "this programme represents an important opportunity to enhance the status of World Heritage and raise awareness of its importance in elevating our Arab communities and achieving sustainable development". His Excellency also thanked all the supporting entities of ARC-WH's work, which contributed to the successful organisation of the programme.

ICOMOS President Teresa Patrício comments: "For the past 50 years, ICOMOS has been actively involved in global discussions to develop strategies on how heritage sites, especially World Heritage sites and landscapes, can address global challenges. They demonstrate the positive role of heritage in building a robust cultural sector and promoting a more sustainable future for everyone."

The capacity-building programme aims to achieve a sustainable balance between preserving World Heritage sites and promoting economic and social development in the Arab region. It will also help empower those working in the field of World Heritage in the region with many skills and tools, leading to greater recognition of the role of heritage in sustainable development.

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is a non-governmental, not for profit international organisation, committed to furthering the conservation, protection, use and enhancement of the world's cultural heritage. With over 11,000 members, 110+ National Committees, 31 International Scientific Committees and several Working Groups, ICOMOS has built a solid philosophical, doctrinal and managerial framework for the sustainable conservation of heritage around the world. As an official Advisory Body to the World Heritage Committee for the implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, ICOMOS evaluates nominations and advises on the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. www.icomos.org

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