Minister of State Böhmer on the occasion of the 40th session of the World Heritage Committee in Istanbul

2016-07-13

Maria Böhmer, Minister of State at the Federal Foreign Office and Special Representative of the Federal Foreign Office for

UNESCO

World Heritage,

UNESCO

Cultural Conventions and

UNESCO

Education and Science Programmes, issued the following statement today (13 July) on the occasion of the 40th session of the World Heritage Committee in Istanbul:

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (

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) is more important today than ever before. Culture shapes identity and preserves our humanity.

Cultural heritage is the foundation of peace and security. Education, science and culture make socio-political debates and therefore civilised interaction possible in the first place.

In the face of numerous crises and conflicts around the world, the international community is being called upon to draw on the 40th session of the

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World Heritage Committee to strengthen the protection of natural and cultural heritage sites of exceptional universal value beyond state and cultural borders and to pool the expertise of the 195 States Parties of this important specialised agency of the United Nations even more efficiently.

After all, these sites are part of our common heritage. I firmly believe that acknowledging and maintaining natural and cultural heritage is a prerequisite for open-mindedness, respect for cultural diversity and understanding and appreciating other cultures.

Those who want to take their destiny into their own hands must be aware of their origins – this is true throughout the world, and especially in crises and conflicts. A key focus of this year’s

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World Heritage Conference is on the red list of World Heritage in Danger, especially the six World Heritage sites in Syria.

It is important, out of concern for the suffering of the Syrian people, to implement the recommendations for preserving Syria’s cultural heritage that were discussed at the Berlin conference of experts at the beginning of June, which was hosted by

UNESCO

Director-General Bokova and myself.

Alongside emergency measures to safeguard Syria’s rich cultural heritage, the conference discussed the bases of a post-war order in the cultural arena. Cultural heritage is an important part of the Syrian people’s identity and will play a decisive role in achieving unity in the country. The international community is called upon to help the people in Syria to reclaim their cultural heritage.

Germany will work even more closely with

UNESCO

in the future and share its expertise on such areas as countering the illegal trade with cultural property through the Archaeological Heritage Network coordinated by the German Archaeological Institute, which brings together 20 German institutions, including universities, research institutes, museums, foundations and associations.

I hope that we will be able to celebrate the 41st German World Heritage site at the end of this week. With two houses built by the French-Swiss architect and city planner Le Corbusier in the Weißenhof Estate in Stuttgart, Germany is taking part in an international serial nomination for the

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World Heritage List, which, with buildings in Argentina, Belgium, Germany, France, India, Japan and Switzerland, aims to document the development of the Modern Movement around

the world.

I shall keep my fingers crossed for everyone who worked on the application.

Background information:

The

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World Heritage Committee is meeting in Istanbul this year under the chairmanship of Turkey from 10 to 20 July. The last session of the

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World Heritage Committee was held in Bonn from 28 June to 8 July 2015 under the chairmanship of Minister of State Böhmer.

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