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WORLD HERITAGE DAY SPEECH, 18 APRIL 2016

EMMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, UK

Welcome to Cambridge on World Heritage Day! UNESCO established 18 April as International Day for Monuments and Sites (or World Heritage Day) back in 1983 with the aim of raising public awareness about the diversity and vulnerability of the world's built monuments and heritage sites, and the efforts required to protect and conserve them.

In the UK and British Overseas Territories, we have 29 World Heritage Sites and many people here in the room are responsible for or involved in their protection. One might assume that they would be well protected, but that's not the case.

Whilst we have a sophisticated system of heritage protection, even the UK has one site on UNESCO's list of world heritage in danger – Liverpool's Maritime Mercantile City due to the proposed construction of Liverpool Waters, a massive redevelopment of the historic docklands north of the city centre.

We also have one site for which we're actively pressing to join the World Heritage List, which is the Lake District.

So if it's hard here, think how much harder it must be in other regions of the world which face challenges we know nothing of – think about the Montserrat National Trust which lost half its island territory and a lot of its history in the dramatic volcano eruptions of the 1990s.

UNESCO is the organisation which lists World Heritage Sites and here's a selection [images of St Georges, Bermuda; the Old Dispensary in Zanzibar; St Kilda and Fountains Abbey], some of which I hope you might recognise and all of which are looked after by INTO members.

But today we are not just concerned about World Heritage Sites but ALL cultural heritage places and landscapes of international, national and local significance.

Here at INTO, we see World Heritage Day as a way to celebrate the diversity of the places in the care of the National Trust family, to speak out about the current threats to our global heritage and to grow public understanding of the value of community efforts to protect our shared cultural inheritance.

I was lucky enough to visit a number of places when I was Director General of the National Trust [images of Middachten, Netherlands; Red Fort, Malta; Sooke Hills, Canada and Meharangah Fort, India] and I saw the same challenges and opportunities, even played out very differently, as we face here.

World Heritage status is very important but only the tip of the iceberg – less than 1% earth's surface is designated a World Heritage Site – and a recent WWF-UK report showed that almost half of our natural World Heritage Sites are under threat from industrial development/exploitation - even more than the 48 WHS at risk on UNESCO's list. That's 114 out of 229 sites at risk from oil, gas, mining concessions or industrial activity.

The Belize Barrier Reef, for example, which is at risk from unsustainable coastal construction, large-scale mangrove clearance, harmful agricultural run-off and the potential of dangerous oil exploration.

Or Africa's oldest nature reserve, Virunga National Park in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, home to 200 of the world's remaining 880 mountain gorillas, which is at risk from oil exploration (from British companies!).

Closer to home there have been recent threats of fracking on the Jurassic Coast and battles about planning at the Giant's Causeway.

And we have all watched, appalled, as crucially important cultural sites like Palmyra, considered to be one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world, which was seized by ISIL-Daesh last May and parts of which were systematically destroyed.

UNESCO regards World Heritage sites as universally important and 'belonging to all the peoples of the world, irrespective of the territory on which they are located', so these World Heritage Sites are the crème de la crème. We designate them as the most special sites in the world but we aren't even confidently able to protect them. What on earth is going to happen to the rest???

This is where the National Trusts of the world come into their own.

National Trusts are the organisations on the ground, looking after the world's heritage forever, for everyone, keeping heritage alive and cared for, opening the doors every day.

Here are some examples of places looked after by INTO member organisations:

- A 'classic' National Trust property, Castle Hill on the Crane Estate in Ipswich, Massachusetts looked after by the Trustees of Reservations.
- Old Melbourne Goal where visitors can be locked up (literally!) with Ned Kelly's death mask is one of the state's (Victoria) premier tourist attractions – and in the care of the Australian National Trust.
- In Moravia, the Czech National Trust is about to open to the public its first property, the tomb of the writer Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach in this, her centenary year – with the help of the local community and INTO volunteers on 'working holidays' (places available for later in the year if you're interested!)
- This is Pigeon Island, a National Landmark in the care of the Saint Lucia National Trust
- From the Gelderland Trust's medieval Doorwerth Castle
- To modernist architecture Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth House, a property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the US on the Fox River and now at threat from regular flooding
- Here's a volunteer of the National Trust of Saint Helena who's been working on community forest projects on the remote island to enhance biodiversity, provide education activities and support social enterprise.
- And here in Catalonia in the thriving city of Barcelona, our newest member organization the Catalunya-La Pedrera Foundation owns the amazing Gaudi property (and World Heritage Site), Casa Milà

INTO now has 66 member organisations in 48 countries and territories and provides enjoyment for millions of people around the world.

They are not all called National Trusts, but they share common goals and a common passion for heritage. All are different – big, small, old, new, different organisational models, languages,

different understandings of the notion of 'heritage' or indeed what a 'national trust' might be. All have an important role to play.

And they have come together as members of INTO because they believe we can do more together than separately – and at our recent conference in Cambridge that collective vision was re-stated with a mission to speak up for heritage all over the world.

One of the many things our members have in common is that they are at the heritage 'coal face': they see what's happening, they do amazing things, they deliver great conservation and they run fantastic public engagement programmes.

But just as important they are also the 'canaries in the coal mine'. They pick up on things when they're not going right, spot trends and can see the bigger picture.

On World Heritage Day 2016 we can look around us and see that, whilst some things are going well, some things are not. In fact our global heritage is under threat.

After the last conference I asked all INTO's members to tell us what they thought were the biggest threats to heritage. What came back was rather surprising.

I expected to hear about climate change, acts of war or aggression and even threats from tourism. But what we heard was a story of apathy (or poor understanding?) – particularly by governments (NOT heritage organisations!) towards heritage.

The National Trust of Jersey said "there is greater public awareness but this is not necessarily reflected in political actions or policy."

Our Galician colleagues spoke about people "thinking that Governments are responsible for heritage, so there's nothing they have to do. It means heritage is getting out of the mind of citizens. The financial crisis affected budgets, and other priorities leave heritage and culture in a second position."

Or the Falklands "With a great deal of development underway in the Islands, the Public Works Department is (quite rightly) giving precedence to road-building, maintenance etc, and heritage is largely put on the back-boiler."

Relationships with government were reported as 'uncertain'. And this can be fatal if it translates into lack of government support in conserving or preserving national heritage in developments, giving in to pressures for new housing in sensitive places, or insensitive economic developments, such as energy extraction were all cited as major issues. [This image shows our colleagues at Din L'Art Helwa, the National Trust of Malta, taking to the streets in protest.] Conservation risks being seen as a barrier to development rather than an integral part of the *way* we develop.

Our Ugandan colleagues said that "collaboration between NGOs and Government is deteriorating – we will suffer from this in the coming years and will need "international cover" and other means of protection." Another respondent wrote "Political will and receptivity is THE major pressure on conserving national heritage".

It wasn't all bad news. Happily there was consensus on the value of INTO membership, with five common themes emerging:

1. To share best practice and exchange knowledge
2. International networking
3. Ability to access specialists and guidance

4. “Brand” of National Trusts giving weight to international advocacy on conservation issues – such as Ugandan National Museum or Dachen Wetlands in Taiwan
5. Membership of an international movement helping with growing reputation locally – following hot on the heels of the establishment of a National Trust in the Czech Republic, we’ve had recent discussions with groups from Malaysia, Georgia and Thailand about how to go about setting up a National Trust. Perceived as an important model.

But five major threats were identified:

1. The threat of uncontrollable development and poor planning
2. Natural disasters and climate change
3. War and conflict
4. Cuts to public funding; but most worrying and top of the list:
5. Public awareness and attitudes towards the value of heritage

Let’s look briefly at each of these in turn with a gallop around the world – and see what our INTO member organisations are doing to combat them.

1. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Many National Trusts find themselves fighting development pressures when short-term economic gain is set against the longer-term benefits of a high quality cultural and natural environment.

Here in Cambridge last year we heard urban planner and campaigner Professor Ruan Yisan speak passionately about the destruction of heritage in China.

China’s growth as a major world economy has meant that whole towns, many of them deeply historical, have been razed to the ground in favour of new development.

Professor Ruan’s work in Shanghai and the Yangtze River Water Towns has saved many architectural treasures but as legal protections for heritage can be unclear, historic structures are at risk from total destruction at any time, including from tourists as there is now a new threat, that of unsustainable tourism development.

It’s a similar story in Myanmar where the Yangon Heritage Trust is fighting hard to protect the City’s wonderful heritage from rapid urban development. And what is going to happen in Cuba when that opens up?

It’s not just in developing countries however – planning is an issue for everyone.

Amazed to hear Natalie Bull, the Director of the Canadian National Trust, say that Canadians have lost more than 20% of their heritage places in the last 30 years and many more continue to be threatened.

And even here in the UK we have seen repeated attacks on our planning system and four years ago the National Trust here had to fight off a major threat to deregulate planning. And the threat has not gone away – the Trust is still worried about new government initiatives which threaten to undermine some of the changes won back in 2012.

But among the bad news there’s good. The National Trust for Jersey has been fighting for years to address coastal blight.

Since the 1930s, the coast at Plémont had been scarred with the development of a series of holiday camps. When such holidays went into decline the site became vulnerable to redevelopment proposals commencing with an application in 1998 for 117 residential units.

In January 2000, The National Trust for Jersey began campaigning for the site to be “returned to nature”. Eventually the ‘Love Plémont’ project – after many ups and downs – resulted in the safeguarding of 11.3 acres of coastal headland in 2014 which is now slowly being returned to nature.

I spoke earlier about Old Melbourne Gaol, one of Melbourne’s most popular visitor attractions. Last year it generated the Victoria National Trust its largest annual revenue of just over \$3 million.

In Barbados, the National Trust is calling for the abandoned prison at Glendairy to be decommissioned and earmarked for restoration. Our INTO member, Henry Fraser, envisages the 14 acre site developed into a multi-faceted entertainment centre, with every kind of art , craft and culture, children’s playground and theatre, and a prison museum as the centrepiece... “Prison museums are the top tourist attraction across the world! People love them!” says Henry.

And finally, at the conference last year, we heard the story of Sdenka Fuytes, a young Bolivian architect who received death threats when trying to save and protect an historic house and garden in Cochabamba but her organisation was successfully able to use ICOMOS’s 1981 Florence Charter to argue that garden could not be separated from the house and have managed to keep the site intact for future generations. International co-operation and collaboration is vital.

2. NATURAL DISASTERS

It is a pleasure to have our Indonesian colleagues here – and they will be saying a few words about the 2017 Bali Conference later. They of course have very recent experience of natural disasters and the Director of BPPI, the Indonesian Heritage Trust, Catrini Kubontubuh speaks very eloquently about ‘first aid’ for heritage and the importance to people’s well-being of mending heritage at the same time as sorting out other services and facilities damaged in an earthquake.

BPPI’s Heritage Emergency Response Unit established in 2007 has succeeded in raising awareness of the importance of heritage conservation for both its historical value but – perhaps more importantly – also for its symbolism and value within the community.

Our thoughts today are with the peoples of Japan and Ecuador who have also just suffered major earthquakes.

In February 2016, Tropical Storm Winston wrought havoc in Fiji – and it is the National Trust that is mobilising reconstruction efforts with a positive and upbeat response and supported by INTO volunteer Bart van Aller.

In Bermuda, if – and it is predicted that this is very possible this century – sea level rises by 2 meters, 14% of Bermuda’s land area would be lost to the sea. As a taster of what might come, 56 historic buildings were damaged in the World Heritage Site of St Georges during Hurricane Fabian in 2003.

3. WAR AND CONFLICT

No-one can be unaware that war, looting and iconoclasm can wreak havoc on both cultural and natural heritage. We don’t have any INTO member organisations in the countries where the most awful current examples are playing out but these terrible conflicts impact on everyone and cause us to redouble our efforts to strengthen the ties between communities and cultures around the world.

As a sector, we can come together to support those on the ground and by raising awareness through our networks. And with the whole world reacting in horror at the destruction and looting of heritage under the control of ISIL-Daesh, it’s good to hear that the UK government is going to finally ratify the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

Back to iconoclasm. The desire to rewrite history is not new.

But the identity, memory and diversity embodied in our shared heritage and showcased by our National Trusts reminds us of who we are and where we come from. Heritage can be a form of glue that holds communities together.

These are not easy issues. INTO member organisation the Cape Town Heritage Trust are at the heart of the debate about what to do with colonial era statues. Director Laura Robinson doesn't believe that the statues should be destroyed but that the stories behind them need to be told for people to learn, so that we can all move forward. In everything it is important to be honest.

4. INSUFFICIENT FUNDING

In this age of universal austerity, it is not surprising that lack of funding made the list of threats.

Everywhere there are spending cuts and cost controls. Grants are cut, specialist staff are lost and experience disappears. Combine this with a lack of awareness by governments and individuals of the huge contribution heritage can make and we have a perfect storm of underfunding and apathy. The result of which could be devastating to heritage around the world.

So we have to be innovative.

One of the biggest UK historic houses, Wentworth Woodhouse, was recently acquired by SAVE Britain's Heritage. The deal sees the National Trust of England, Wales and Northern Ireland (NTEWNI) partnering with the local Trust, Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust (WWPT), to ensure the public opening of the gorgeous building. The long term goal of this partnership is to combine public opening with diversification of uses to generate different income streams - events, holiday rents, etc. These income streams mean that the property will become self-sufficient in the shortest possible time. The key here is that the delivery on the ground will be by a local charity that is supported by both English Heritage and NTEWNI. This model of local ownership and operation, supported by either government or large NGOs is a model that could have far reaching applications.

INTO's Central European Project saw representatives from heritage organisations in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland exploring with British counterparts different approaches to finding a viable future for historic buildings by balancing conservation, community outreach and financial return. This project was instrumental in the formation of the Czech National Trust three years ago and also helped reinvigorate the Slovak National Trust – this year celebrating its 20th anniversary with the opening of its new heritage centre in Bratislava for which INTO helped secure a significant donation.

'This Lighthouse Matters' campaign by the National Trust for Canada is a crowdfunding website and competition, inspired by programmes of the US National Trust for Historic Preservation, which groups worthy heritage projects to compete for cash prizes and raise funds.

In total, \$300,000 was distributed to community projects and 219,794 votes were cast with 6.5 million potential reach.

INTO can help too. Lots of sharing of experience and good examples, and through our Small Grants Programme, INTO can fund knowledge transfer between member organisations, for example internships, fundraising and membership recruitment projects. These catalytic small grants allow different organisations in very different parts of the world to share best practice and knowledge – this is the Cultural Heritage Project of the Rhodes Nyanga Historical Exhibition, run by the Zimbabwe National Trust, which has helped raise public awareness of the country's cultural heritage through innovative education programming. Some of the children had never been to the Nyanga National Park, despite living only a stone's throw away.

5. PUBLIC APATHY

But the main threat identified by our members was apathy – especially from Governments but also to a degree from people.

It's both the biggest problem, but also the biggest opportunity, because we can make a difference.

Many of our members reported general support amongst their members, volunteers and visitors for the benefits their work brought (even is that is just providing somewhere beautiful and interesting to visit) – but said that this did not often translate into support for their organisation's wider 'cause' or into government support.

A lack of understanding of the holistic value of the world's heritage assets was their number one concern. And they are right. Without strong awareness, a perceived apathy will be mirrored by the low position of conservation on a government's priorities and consequently lower levels of funding and support.

But it's also a great opportunity and INTO member organisations are doing some great work to reach out and engage people.

In Japan, INTO members the Amenity 2000 National Trust have started a successful 'Trust Youth Centre' which seeks to build the engagement of young people and develop their skills as future leaders so that the National Trust movement can take hold across the country.

In Italy, FAI the Italian National Trust has recently had huge success with its Spring Days Programme, opening the doors of sites not normally open to the public – 900 places in 380 towns across Italy. It also has the highest number of facebook followers of all our INTO member organisations (519,378; National Trust for England, Wales and Northern Ireland has 475,839).

And here is Martindale Hall in South Australia, which some of you may remember from the film 'Picnic at Hanging Rock'. Martindale Hall epitomises many of the threats we've been talking about – planning, funding, public awareness.

Entrusted to public hands by a generous bequest in 1950, the future of Martindale Hall has been in doubt for the past two years as the State government body has advocated selling it off for private development.

Following their attendance at ICNT and visit to Wimpole Hall, the team from the South Australia National Trust have decided to try and persuade the government to let them run the property and keep it for the people, for all time.

I am delighted that we can bring the global National Trust community together to support their proposal because this is what it means to be part of the INTO family.

And I was particularly thrilled to discover the link to the Lake District – the design of Martindale was copied from Dalemain House near Ullswater. And of course the Lake District, birthplace of the National Trust movement, is the UK's nomination for inscription on the World Heritage List, which we wholeheartedly support, particularly today!

So, Martindale is a great example of the importance of collaboration. No one can do it on their own these days. Conservation doesn't stop at national boundaries. We are all under pressure. At times like these we need good networks more than ever. And the energy and dynamism of the voluntary sector is key. The ball is in our court.

Talking of balls, and this is a tenuous link but bear with me. There is a special theme to this year's World Heritage Day and, looking ahead to the Olympics, it's the heritage of sport.

The National Trust looks after the site of the first 'Olimpick Games' held in 1612 and organised by lawyer Robert Dover which included variations on running, jumping, throwing, tug o'war and shin-kicking! The Trust continues to host the games every June.

Our sporting heritage manifests itself in different ways.

There are the obvious stadia, grounds and courts that stand as physical reminders of the development and enjoyment of sport.

When Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, proclaimed Malaysian Independence on 31st August 1957, he stood in the middle of the Stadium field and shouted out "Merdeka" seven times. This scene, often shown on film and in print, is etched on the psyche of all Malaysians.

Nevertheless the stadium was nearly demolished in the 1990s. It was the Malaysian National Trust that was able to help save Merdeka as part of a public-private partnership and today the stadium has a new lease of life for sporting events and concerts alongside "The Road to Nationhood" museum.

Miami Marine Stadium, which has been closed for 20 years, is a sentimental favourite of many Miami residents. The 6,566-seat arena is the only stadium in the United States built for the purpose of watching power boat races. Designed by Hilario Candela, a Cuban-born architect who at age 27 conceived a stadium that is now viewed as a masterwork of civic architecture and modern construction. The National Trust for Historic Preservation now seeking to preserve the stadium for future generations.

There are also the activities themselves which have been passed down from generation to generation – here is an ancient game of *omweso* which is being taught in a heritage club in Uganda.

Many young Ugandans are disconnected from their cultural heritage. Breakdown of family values, rapid rural-urban migration, a curriculum focussed on 'modernity' and pressures of globalisation are cited by INTO members the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, as being the main causes.

CCFU now runs 80 school Heritage Clubs where students undertake various activities, such as drawing their family trees, studying proverbs and meeting elders to learn about their heritage.

Other National Trusts look after horse race tracks, cricket pitches, even the TT race on the Isle of Man!

Of course many National Trust properties are also safe places for cycling, walking, surfing – but perhaps most important amongst all this 'sporting heritage' are the traditions of fair play, teamwork, loyalty, leadership, sportsmanship, doing your best.

And that brings me back to INTO and our message from today.

You will have seen Jorge's lovely posters, which I hope have given you food for thought.

By working together as a team, with a common goal and playing fairly we CAN make a difference.

Sport is unifying force – not unlike heritage and beauty. Beauty, identity, cultural heritage, nature, landscapes – these are the things that make us human, in the same way as sport.

The National Trusts of the world stand for these things that bring joy to millions of people.

I believe that with international support, local empowerment and joined up working we can counter the threat and challenges I've outlined today.

My job here today is to represent the concerns of the INTO member organisations, the biggest of which is the lack of awareness and understanding of the intrinsic value of the world's heritage assets.

So I call on our international colleagues like UNESCO and WWF to join with INTO to commit to a 2025 strategy that will both highlight the benefits of a thriving heritage sector and look at innovative ways to help countries and territories tackle threats on the ground.

Our INTO members are the canaries in the coal mine. From Fiji to South Korea and Canada to Uganda, our member organisations defend some of the world's most special places. They are the ones who can see every day and at first hand the effects of climate change, bad planning and apathy towards heritage.

The danger is clear. Unless we act and work towards significantly changing public and official attitudes to heritage, then by 2025, largely through neglect and apathy, we risk letting a large proportion of our built and natural heritage disappear.

I want to come back in ten years' time with a different story. I want to be able to show that we have turned this around.

And we can only do this by taking people with us.

The more people that share the values of heritage – of identity, memory, diversity, humanity – the more chance there is that protecting our heritage will become integral to our global society's future. Let's do it.