



Ministry of Culture

Engagement of Communities Important for Protecting and Managing Living Heritage: Dr. Mahesh Sharma General Assembly of ICOMOS International concludes successfully

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The Minister of State for Culture (Independent Charge) and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Dr. Mahesh Sharma has said that the Government of India is committed to support activities of International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), India and does look forward to engaging with the membership in the future to work in partnership for improved heritage management and sustainable development. Dr. Sharma was speaking in Valedictory Ceremony of 19th triennial General Assembly of ICOMOS International at New Delhi on 15th December, 2017. He said that ICOMOS as the global group of experts would also focus on developing or reviewing the future policy of cultural heritage.

Dr. Sharma in his speech emphasised the importance of protecting and managing living heritage through engagement of communities. He also extended whole hearted support of the Government of India to ICOMOS India towards its mission of heritage conservation and management.

The Indian National Committee of ICOMOS hosted the General Assembly from 11th to 15th December, 2017. The ICOMOS General Assembly, organized for the first time in India was attended by nearly 900 professionals from more than 80 countries.

The Minister said that the theme of the symposium in the assembly 'Heritage & Democracy' organized in the largest democracy of the world, explored inclusive models for cultural heritage in a world of multiple stakeholders, recognizing the richness in cultural diversity at both local and global level. He also said that the other theme which has been deliberated upon is the Culture-Nature journey by the multiple disciplines of practitioners, academia and policy makers to develop sustainable models for development.

The Minister said that the interactions between delegates with different skill sets, specializations and nationalities provided great opportunity to promote international cooperation and strengthen understanding and communication in the field of heritage.

Government of India has supported this very ambitious initiative of the ICOMOS India as a host of the General Assembly through the engagement of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Ministry of Culture, the Archaeological Survey of India and Wild Life Institute of India. The works of these Ministries directly impact cultural and natural heritage of the country as they protect, conserve and manage natural and cultural heritage as well as develop policy and schemes for development in historic urban areas. The state governments, such as the Government of Jammu and Kashmir, Odisha and Bihar too have supported this initiative with generous support.

The 'Delhi Declaration on Heritage and Democracy' passed in the assembly emphasized the understanding that people's perspective is central to heritage. It further reinforced that heritage is a fundamental right and responsibility of all and Development Initiatives should include conservation objectives and ensure that the significance, authenticity and the values of a heritage resource are protected. It said that heritage is a resource and should be managed in a way that its authenticity and integrity is maintained and all cultural identities must be respected.

The declaration said that ensuring continuity of living heritage is a prerequisite for sustainable development and legislative protection of heritage is the responsibility of all levels of government. It said that recognition and support must be given to persons who embody traditional cultural knowledge. Development Initiatives should include conservation objectives and ensure that the significance, authenticity and the values of a heritage resource are protected. The Assembly declared that ethical principles have to be developed for heritage. Cultural identities should not be compromised by uniform and insensitive planning. Collection and dissemination of information related to a heritage resource must be done in a transparent manner, using digital technologies by governments and institutions.

Shri Mahesh Sharma awarded the Gazzola Prize of the 19th General Assembly of ICOMOS to Professor Saleh Lamei Mostafa (Egypt) for his contribution in the fields of engineering, architecture and archaeology. Honorary membership was conferred by the General Assembly to Architect Salvador Aceves Garcia (Mexico), Professor Mario Mendonca De Oliveira (Brazil), Blanca Niño Norton (Guatemala), Professor Dr Leelananda Prematilleke (Sri Lanka), Professor Dr Isabel Rigol Savio (Cuba) and Leo Van Nispen Tot Sevenaer (Netherlands).

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