

# OWHC Organization of World Heritage Cities

Safeguarding and Further Developing  
World Heritage Cities

Position Paper

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*Safeguarding and Further Developing World Heritage Cities*

# I. What is OWHC?

## Introduction

- The Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC) was founded on September 8, 1993 in Fez, Morocco.
- The Organization is composed of 238 cities in which are located sites included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. These 238 World Heritage Cities have a combined population of over 130 million.
- Within the Organization, these cities are represented by their Mayors with the active participation of their heritage management specialists.
- The OWHC's headquarters are located in Québec City, which hosted the First International Symposium of World Heritage Cities in July 1991.



# I. What is OWHC?

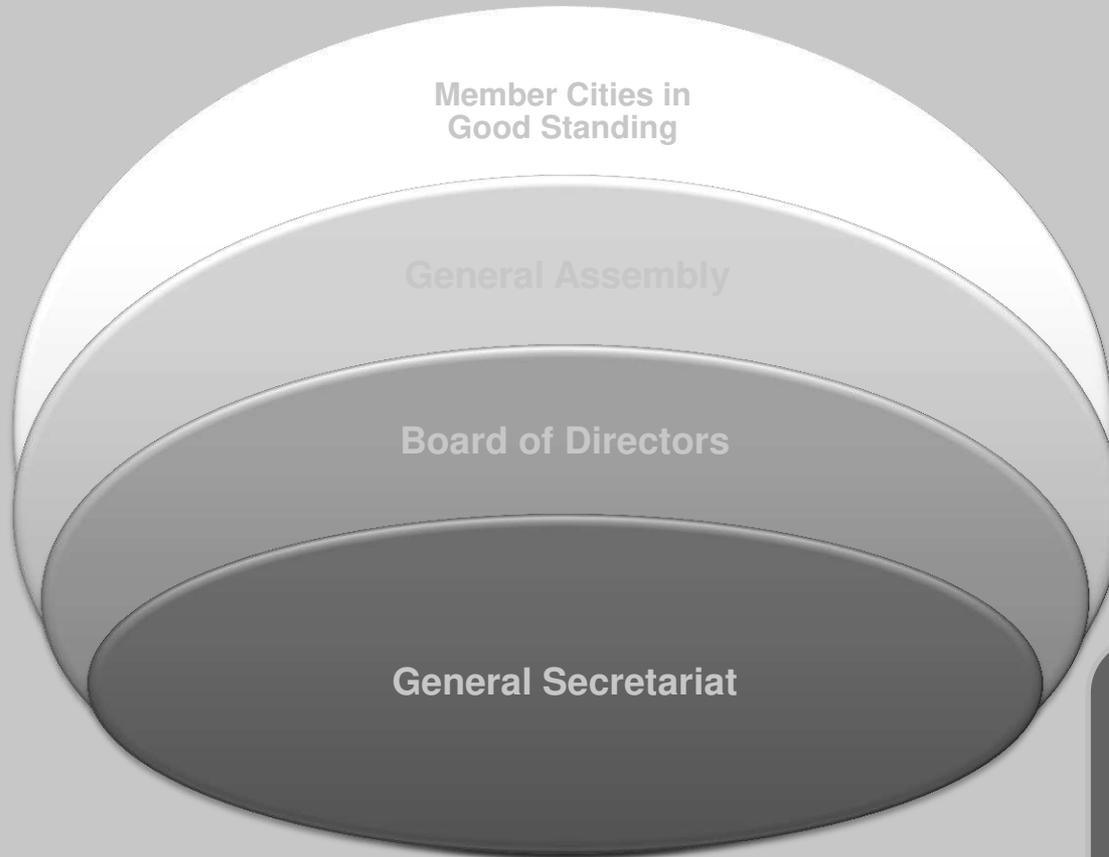
## Objectives

- favor the implementation of the World Heritage Convention,
- encourage co-operation and the exchange of information and expertise on matters of conservation and management
- develop a sense of solidarity among its member cities.
- OWHC organizes World Congresses, conferences, seminars and workshops dealing with the challenges to be met in the realm of management and strategies pertaining to the preservation and development of historic cities.



# I. What is OWHC?

## Structure



Paid their annual fee

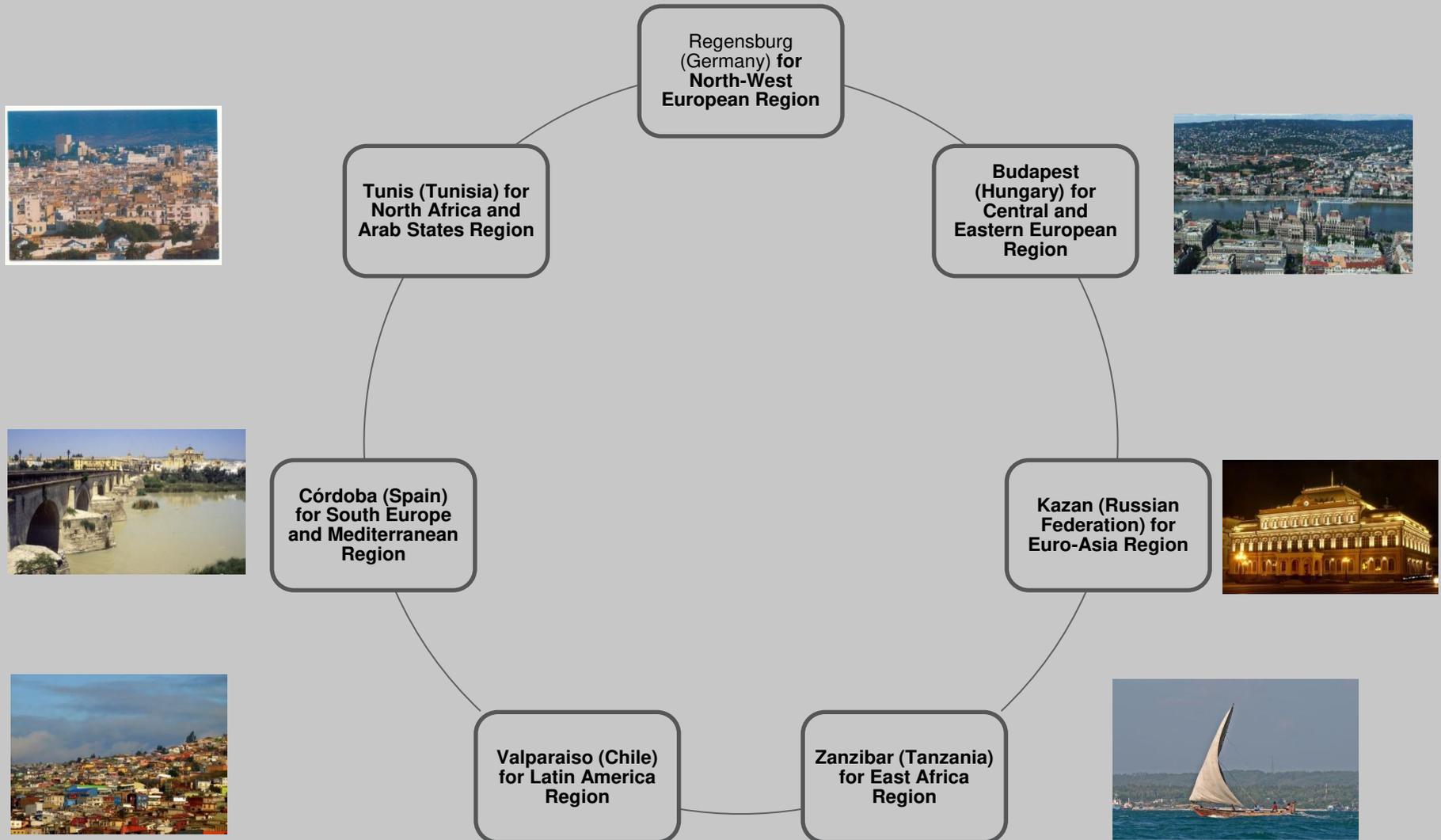
**General Assembly**  
Mayors of Member Cities in Good Standing  
Meets every second year

**Board of Directors**  
8 Mayors elected by the General Assembly  
Meets at least once a year

The **General Secretariat** is directed by the **Secretary General**, appointed by the **General Assembly**, who oversees the execution of mandates adopted by the members, the day-to-day administration of the Organization, personnel management and hiring

# I. What is OWHC?

## Structure



# II. Position Paper

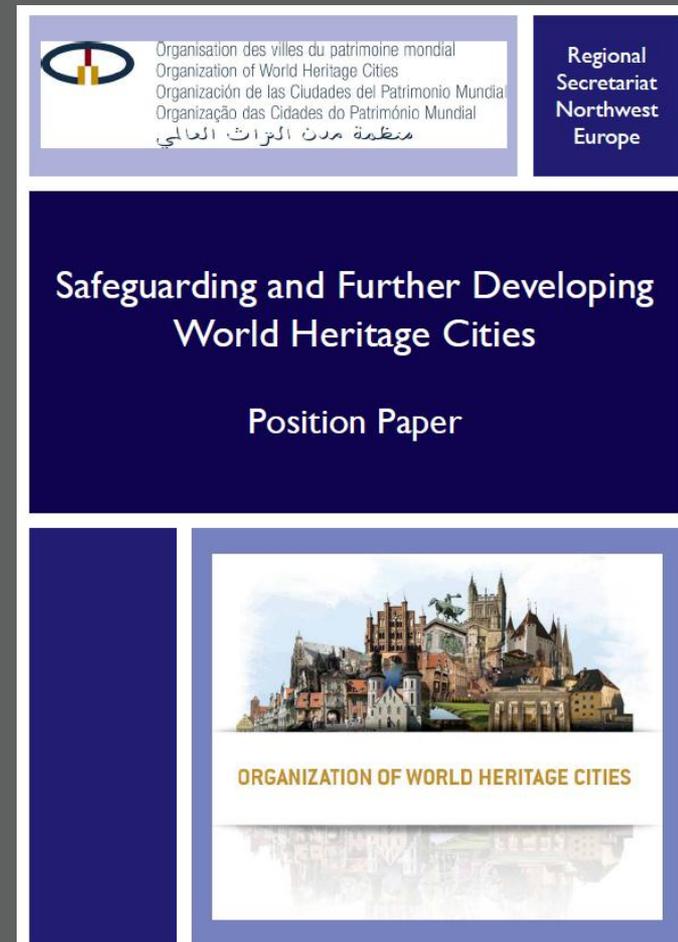
## Introduction

Idea:

„World Heritage in the context of integrated urban development“

Target:

„Serve as a basis for political recommendations at various administrative levels and initially address internal administrative structures“



# II. Position Paper

## Parameters & Challenges for UNESCO World Heritage Towns

- General Parameters

In the future, towns will **increasingly face new challenges**, such as **climate change, demographic shifts, migration** or, more specifically, **integration**. Future towns will have to react to **societal and social changes**.

**Town planners** are equally challenged in **developing future viable transport networks** that take into consideration the **spatial, economic, and social factors of historic towns**.

- Particular challenges

The **unique characteristics of old towns** must continue to be part of the consideration given **to further urban development**.

**Historic towns are to be viewed as part of the surrounding cultural landscape**.

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Particular challenges – **Conservation and Protection**

World Heritage towns are **Vibrant places where people live, work and visit** (e.g. needs of elderly and disabled can also involve radical intervention in the building fabric); they must embrace and manage **change** and view **preservation in the sense of conservation and restoration**

The preservation and conservation of a town's historic building heritage can only be effectively carried out if there is **clear understanding of the protected structures.**

In formulating an **integrated urban development plan** it helps to identify the various issues, to process them, and to make decisions that minimize conflict – Recommendation: **agreement with competent state authorities e.g. state curator and with monitoring groups from ICOMOS**

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Particular challenges – **Legal bases for the Protection**

- **Hague Convention** Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of an Armed Conflict
- **Venice Charter** Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites
- **Florence Charter** Charter on Historic Gardens
- **Granada Convention** European Convention for the Protection of Architectural Heritage
- **Washington Charter** Int. Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas
- **Lausanne Charter** Charter Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage
- **Malta Agreement** European Convention Protection of the Archaeological Heritage

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Particular challenges – **Financial Issues and UNESCO World Heritage**

## A clear distinction has to be made between

1. the possibility of above-average costs originating from a large number of historic buildings and
2. the costs of simply having the status of World Heritage

It is not self-evident that towns are willing and able to protect their architectural heritage and respective environs to the extent required by being World Heritage.

Town should assume **discretionary responsibility** for the extended area of heritage protection alongside other voluntary duties.

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Particular challenges – **Demography & Participation**

In the 21st century, towns must be readily **adaptable to the pressures** put on by **changing societal activities** (e.g. demographic changes can cause serious issues in historic towns, such as vacant buildings, usage changes and either alterations or adjustments to infrastructural and transportation systems)

Particularly in **UNESCO World Heritage Cities**, the **requirements to secure „Outstanding Universal Value“** over the long term have **increased**.

**Safeguarding** this mark of distinction is not just an honourable commitment, but a **shared responsibility** (including all stakeholders citizens, property owners, economists and administrators)

# II. Position Paper

Particular challenges – **Location factor & economic development**

## Having World Heritage status can itself bring about positive developments in a town and its environs

fosters significant community pride

attracts people to take up permanent residence

contribute to the local economy by taking advantage of the economic image of the town

More businesses settle in the town

Influx of people secures existing locations of schools and the programs and services they offer

Small and medium sized enterprises and trades people, as well as specialists from various disciplines can prosper and grow in UNESCO World Heritage Cities

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Particular challenges – **New buildings & Reconstruction**

Matters of contemporary architecture and the quality of new urban development are always a subject of controversy in European countries.

**UNESCO World Heritage Cities are testaments to past prosperity.**

**Lost architectural heritage** in the form of buildings, urban structures and town views **cannot** usually **be restored** after being lost and **authenticity is damaged**.

**UNESCO World Heritage Cities** require a high-quality, current, building culture, which **respects** the „old“ while at the same time **introducing a new layer of quality** to over-lay the old.

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Particular challenges – **Tourism**

**Tourism is a significant positive economic factor to numerous UNESCO World Heritage sites.**

**Development of sustainable tourism programmes and concepts** that low impact and of high quality, in order to keep UNESCO World Heritage Cities alive and functioning and to ensure that the benefit of tourism contributes to the preservation of the site.

However, a **tourism focus** on a historic town can **negatively influence** established structures.

- increase of restaurants and souvenir shops can be detrimental to the retail needs of the local population.
- in pedestrian zones flats remain vacant above shops.

**Solutions that meet heritage standards and current tourist demands must be seriously discussed.**

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Particular challenges – **Climate Change**

Historic towns, in general, and UNESCO World Heritage Cities, in particular, will have to **develop special programmes** that **protect a significant part of their building fabric**, especially those parts which will be **vulnerable to increasing natural disasters**, such as flooding.

e.g. **Energy-efficiency upgrades** that are **compatible with the conservation of the historic building stock** place great demands on urban renewal and are often associated with considerably higher costs and a reduction in authenticity.

- *further research is needed to find new solutions in regards to construction and material technologies and conservation.*
- *the ensuing findings should be centrally managed and easy to use.*

# II. Position Paper

Particular challenges – **Civil society & the quality of life**

More and more participatory interaction with the public has been required in recent years. The **public is basically aware of the concept of World Heritage and regards it positively.**

**The fundamental concept of World Heritage Cities must continually be communicated to the public, and as early as possible.**

It must be done with as **much transparency** as possible especially with regard to the processes involved. By doing so, **understanding and appreciation can be created for the actions that must later be carried out.**

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Particular challenges – **The Town's Identity & Identification**

The different **requirements and demands** that arise from inscription onto the UNESCO list need to be **continually negotiated** in such a way that, wherever possible, they all ultimately **serve the purpose of preservation** but also **the further development** of the heritage.

It follows that a **connection between shared identity and identification** is created, more precisely **between the World Heritage**, a carrier of identity for the town, **and the inhabitant's (civic society)** identification with the heritage.

**Envisioning and shaping the future of a shared heritage will be integral to its survival.** And it follows that **citizens with migrant background** (in some cases 30% of the population of inner cities) be acknowledged as a **complementary cultural factor** and be given appropriate consideration.

# Thank you!



## Any Questions?

# Contact



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