

CHARTER FOR THE CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC TOWNS AND URBAN AREAS (WASHINGTON CHARTER 1987)

Adopted by ICOMOS General Assembly in Washington, DC, October 1987.

PREAMBLE AND DEFINITIONS

All urban communities, whether they have developed gradually over time or have been created deliberately, are an expression of the diversity of societies throughout history.

This charter concerns historic urban areas, large and small, including cities, towns and historic centres or quarters, together with their natural and man-made environments. Beyond their role as historical documents, these areas embody the values of traditional urban cultures. Today many such areas are being threatened, physically degraded, damaged or even destroyed, by the impact of the urban development that follows industrialisation in societies everywhere.

Faced with this dramatic situation, which often leads to irreversible cultural, social and even economic losses, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) deems it necessary to draw up an international charter for historic towns and urban areas that will complement the "International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites," usually referred to as "The Venice Charter." This new text defines the principles, objectives, and methods necessary for the conservation of historic towns and urban areas. It also seeks to promote the harmony of both private and community life in these areas and to encourage the preservation of those cultural properties, however modest in scale, that constitute the memory of mankind.

As set out in the UNESCO "Recommendation Concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas" (Warsaw - Nairobi, 1976), and also in various other international instruments, "the conservation of historic towns and urban areas" is understood to mean those steps necessary for the protection, conservation and restoration of such towns and areas as well as their development and harmonious adaptation to contemporary life.

PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

1. In order to be most effective, the conservation of historic towns and other historic urban areas should be an integral part of coherent policies of economic and social development and of urban and regional planning at every level.

2. Qualities to be preserved include the historic character of the town or urban area and all those material and spiritual elements that express this character, especially:

- a)** Urban patterns as defined by lots and streets;
- b)** Relationships between buildings and green and open spaces;
- c)** The formal appearance, interior and exterior, of buildings as defined by scale, size, style, construction, materials, colour and decoration;