Dear Presidents,

Today I would like to give you some news about the International Secretariat. Indeed it seems useful to me to provide an update midway through the year 2018, without waiting for our General Assembly in December, to better keep you informed of our team’s work, which is enabled by your international fees.

I will not go into great detail about our daily tasks, even if, as always, they take up a large part of our time and energy! I will rather present the topics that we, with the Board’s support and under its supervision, have been focusing on in the past few months.

Firstly, our crowdfunding campaign was wrapped up with success at the end of January. Beyond the overwhelmingly positive impact of the campaign in terms of ethics and visibility, the financial objective was largely exceeded since, thanks to our members, friends and many Committees’ generosity, we collected 101 350 € - much more than the 80 000 € needed to reimburse the Getty Foundation. As previously announced, the surplus was allocated to ICOMOS’s Victoria Falls Fund, and will be used to support the participation of members at the next triennial General Assembly.

Supporting our network’s development is one of the Secretariat’s essential missions – in this regard we helped (re)create the Lebanese National Committee, an announcement we are happy to share with you. The recreation of the Jordanian Committee is also under way, and we are hoping that several Committees will be set up in Africa in the next few months (Zambia, Côte d’Ivoire, etc.).

We have also been supporting the Working Groups, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals Working Group (preparing for ICOMOS’s participation to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development at the United Nations headquarters in New York in July, including a side event coordinated by ICOMOS) and the Climate Change Working Group created at the 2017 ICOMOS General Assembly in Delhi last December. This group has started elaborating a working programme, with four thematic teams and a project to initiate the development of an ICOMOS doctrinal text on this issue, which would be presented at the 2020 General Assembly in Sydney.

Logo created by ICOMOS to promote Target 11.4, under Sustainable Development Goal 11: to “strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage” to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”.

The two World Heritage units at the Secretariat have been busy with the statutory work required for the preparation of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee which just took place in Manama. We have also been invited to participate in the discussions of the World Heritage Committee Ad hoc Working Group, in order to study the conclusions of the report developed last year by the UNESCO Internal Oversight Service on the improvement of the Committee’s working methods and the role of the Advisory Bodies. Regarding the examination of the nomination to the World Heritage List of the Belgian and French First World War cemeteries, we have also developed a discussion paper entitled “Evaluations of World Heritage Nominations related to Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts”, which was received with great interest by the Committee and which I invite you to read. Finally, regarding other World Heritage activities, we have signed two framework agreements in the last semester – one with the African World Heritage Fund and the other one with the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH), a Category 2 Centre in Bahrain, under UNESCO’s auspices, to develop common activities, starting with a training workshop for experts in the Arab region planned in December.
Regarding international projects, the two main activities currently underway are:

- “Connecting Practice”: this project is led in partnership with IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and supported financially by the Christensen Fund. We are currently implementing the third phase of this project which focuses more specifically on exploring bio-cultural practices on agricultural sites in order to gain knowledge on change management and dynamic preservation. This year, two expert visits will be organised: one at the Al Ain site in the United Arab Emirates, and another at the Saloum Delta site in Senegal.

- “Cherishing heritage: developing quality principles for interventions on cultural heritage in Europe” is a project initiated and financed by the European Commission in the context of the European Year of Cultural Heritage, which ICOMOS has been tasked to coordinate. The objective is to develop a reference document to help improve the quality of European financing programmes for cultural heritage. A workshop with about fifty experts was organised on our premises at the end of May, and all our European Committees were invited to be represented. A provisional version of the document in development will be circulated in October.

Lastly, we have been focusing on two other topics of a more administrative nature. The first is the implementation of the new ICOMOS Membership Database which allows us to manage our international fee payments. As you know, the switch to the new database successfully took place last November but we are still working at helping your Committees in adapting to it and at making improvements. This database allows us to export information and thus make statistical analysis (per region, per Committee, per age range, per gender, etc.). A summary report of the results of this study will be shared with you in the near future.

The second topic is linked to the European Commission’s new General Data Protection Regulation, which came into force last May, to which we are subject as an association established under French law. This has led us to revise our data protection policy: a new version will soon be made available online and all our members will be informed. You will receive more detailed information on this matter in the upcoming days.

I take this opportunity to remind you that the ICOMOS Annual Report is now available on our website, in French and in English. Do not hesitate to consult it.

With the hope that this overview will have been of interest to you, I remain at your disposal if you have further questions.

On behalf of the International Secretariat,
Yours sincerely,

Marie-Laure Lavenir,
Director General