



## **The 5th International NGO Forum on World Heritage at Risk**

Ramada City Center Hotel, Manama, 22 - 23 June 2018

We, the Civil Society Organizations who have attended the 5th International NGO Forum on World Heritage at Risk organized by World Heritage Watch on 22-23 June 2018 in Bahrain, coming from 24 countries in 6 continents, as active and concerned citizens dealing with Natural and Cultural World Heritage properties at different places, would like to bring the following to the attention of the World Heritage Committee:

### Resolution

#### **On the Historical Center of Quito in the List of „World Heritage in Danger“**

The area that is known today as Quito's Historic Center constituted the pre-Columbian ceremonial center of the ancestral habitat of societies and cultures seated longitudinally in *bulus* or residential clusters, at the foot of the Pichincha volcano. These lie upon what we currently call "the high plain of Quito" (*Aña Kitu*)<sup>1</sup>. At the beginning of the European colonization, the religious ceremonial center (*Aña Kitu*) was partially superseded by Incan walls and platforms built upon the ancient religious mounds of the *Kitu Kara*. These were at once supplanted by the Catholic Church and the European colonists, giving place to a valuable and very singular architectural symbiosis - urban and multicultural. The outstanding universal value of this symbiosis permitted the designation of the so-called "Historic Center" as a World Heritage site on September 8, 1978, citing the value "indigenous, baroque, and colonial of its edifices."

On October 16, 2015, "Metro de Quito", the company in charge of building the local subway, published an archaeological study that established the presence of several "anomalies" identified by geo-radars: 21 "anomalies" were located in the San Francisco Plaza and 15 "anomalies" on Cuenca Street (Delgado and Vásquez, 2015). Subsequently, on April 28, the National Institute of Cultural Heritage (INPC) authorized excavation works in the area where the anomalies were found. In anomalies 1 and 2 were found three chambers built in the volcanic tuff or "*cangahua*"<sup>2</sup>. This archaeological work was carried out by the Metro of Quito and its reports were published on October 27, 2016 amidst a great political and social controversy.

Regretfully, in July 2017, the metro company, the mayor of Quito: Mauricio Rodas and the city council failed to comply with the technical requirements of the INPC. The *cangahua*

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<sup>1</sup> Aña Kitu o Hanan Kitu: Kichwa word that designates high plain of Quito, or north Quito.

<sup>2</sup> Cangahua clay: *kichwa* word that designates the volcanic tuff or hardpan that underlies the city due to continuous volcanic eruptions.

constructions in the millennial sanctuary were brutally destroyed and compacted by heavy machinery, beyond any hope of restoration. In this manner, Quito, an Andean city of Pre-Columbian origin, by actions of the authorities, lost an opportunity to display to the world its millennial and multi-cultural palimpsest.

Today, fifty-percent of the archaeological surface area of the Square of San Francisco has been destroyed, and it is possible that other archaeological structures have been destroyed by the works of the Metro de Quito. As citizens of Quito hold that there are underground structures and a network of tunnels below the entire Historic Centre: some inhabitants have walked through subterranean tunnels, Ecuadorian researchers such as the anthropologist Hugo Burgos Guevara had warned of the presence of these structures before the construction works of the Metro.

For 40 years and since the designation of the World Heritage Site in 1978, there is concern about the following aspects:

- 1) There is no firm delineation regarding the limits and inscription boundaries, of the world heritage site as declared by UNESCO
- 2) Within the framework of this delineation, new blocks, segments and buildings may be added and buildings not considered 'colonial' are in danger of destruction.
- 3) There is no management plan that includes an analysis and policies for rehabilitation and conservation together with technical and specialized guidelines for the renovation of the buildings. In this situation, any action that takes place within the World Heritage property does not conform to a systematic management plan and especially when these buildings are about to collapse.
- 4) On the other hand, the Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization (COOTAD), in 2017 unambiguously establishes that Local Decentralized Governments or Municipalities should be responsible for the surveillance, maintenance and protection of their heritage, where the performance of the National Heritage Institute (INPC) becomes insignificant. In the case of the City of Quito and the City of Cuenca, which have been listed as world heritage are not protected or the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, which focuses on artefacts and movable patrimony of museums and national archaeological collections rather than the archaeology in urban areas and the cultural landscapes of pre-Columbian character. This is corroborated by the total inaction of the Ministry and the INPC regarding the safeguarding of the findings in the San Francisco Square being against economic interests of the metro.

**The recommendations are:**

- To declare the World Heritage of Quito as HERITAGE in DANGER.
- Withhold the alignment of the Metro within the Historic Center till such time that impact studies are prepared evaluating the entire subterranean area of the historic center.
- To urgently stop the work on "Metro de Quito", in its entrance to the Historical Center, until it is guaranteed that the stability of the Historical Center, will not be affected by tunnelling technology.
- Moreover, in the name of transparency, it is requested that existing and future studies be made public in the media, so that there is opportunity for citizen participation in decision making.

Quito is a unique site in the World Heritage List because it exemplifies criteria [ii] and [iv]. We consider that the destructive works by Metro of Quito affect directly the “interchange of human values, over a span of time... on developments in architecture or technology” and that “which illustrates significant stage(s) in human history.”

Manama, 23 June 2018