

CEO of Cape Town Heritage Trust Elected to Prestigious International Heritage Committee

[Cape Town, 13 December 2011] Laura Robinson, the CEO of the Cape Town Heritage Trust, has been elected as Treasurer-General of the International Committee for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS). Robinson is a founder member of ICOMOS South Africa.

The South African chapter of ICOMOS was established in 1997 and Robinson was one of the founding members. She was elected as Treasurer-General at the 17th General Assembly of ICOMOS which was held in Paris at the UNESCO headquarters earlier this month December. The assembly was attended by more than 1,000 delegates from around the world.

ICOMOS, amongst other functions, advises the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on nominations for World Heritage Sites. It also sets international standards, policies and programmes for cultural heritage.

Robinson was set to stand as a member of the executive, but "when I arrived in Paris I was asked to stand for the position of Treasurer-General" she said. The constitution of ICOMOS requires that all members to the executive be voted for and Robinson received a vote of 89.4% from the assembly - the highest vote ever recorded for a position in ICOMOS. Robinson will also be the first woman to serve in this position.

"One of my primary goals as a member of the executive, apart from my duties as a Treasurer-General, is to expand ICOMOS membership both within South Africa and the sub-Saharan region. It is vitally important to promote and encourage a broader-based membership within developing countries. We face many challenges as heritage professionals on our continent generally and we need to work with the World Heritage Centre, governments, NGOs and universities to build capacity in our field," said Robinson.

ICOMOS is dedicated to the conservation and protection of monuments, buildings and sites of cultural heritage. It is the only international NGO of its kind dedicated to promoting the theory, methodology and technology applied to the conservation, protection and enhancement of monuments and sites. Its work is based on the principles enshrined in the International Bill of 1964 on the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, known as the Venice Charter.

It is a network of experts and benefits from the interdisciplinary exchange of its members who are among them architects, historians, archaeologists, art historians, geographers, anthropologists, engineers and planners.

The members of ICOMOS contribute to heritage preservation and progress of restoration techniques and the development of standards for all cultural heritage property: buildings, historic towns, historic gardens, cultural landscapes and archaeological sites.

In November 2011 ICOMOS had 11 088 individual members, 95 national committees and 27 International Scientific Committees.

The National Committees of ICOMOS provide a forum for individual members and representatives of institutions concerned with the conservation, protection, rehabilitation and enhancement of the architectural heritage can meet and exchange information and views on the principles and practices in the field.

Robinson is keen to actively promote the importance of the preservation of heritage both in Africa and world-wide.

“My work as the director of the Cape Town Heritage Trust has given me the opportunity to work extensively in the field of urban renewal, the development of guidelines for the appropriate management of conservation areas and as an advocate for cultural heritage,” said Robinson. “I look forward to furthering these goals through bringing organisations that are working in isolation in our field together.

“The ICOMOS international logo has Pegasus looking north, but in South Africa our logo has flipped Pegasus around to look south, a reminder of the need to promote the heritage of the southern hemisphere, a task I look forward to immensely,” said Robinson.

