



## **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 Preservation of the Pulkovskaya Astronomical Observatory (Saint Petersburg, Russia)**

The ensemble of the Pulkovskaya Observatory is the component No. 540-008 of the UNESCO WHS "Historic Centre of Saint Petersburg and Related Groups of Monuments". According to the national legislation, it is also a cultural heritage site of federal significance, and a 3-km buffer zone is set around the Pulkovskaya Observatory where construction of industrial facilities and large residential buildings is prohibited.

Despite the national legislation and the obligations of the Russian Federation within the WHC, the city authorities are continuing to issue a series of building permits for **the construction of the *Planetograd* residential complex on this territory**. It is already in progress to the south of the Observatory, with a total designed space of over 2 million sq. m. The developers are Setl City (Russia) and Morgal Investments (Israel). At present, the construction at the site has been suspended due to the city preservation activists' application to court. However, the city authorities keep issuing new building permits to the developer.

In May 2018, a comprehensive expert assessment was made by the St. Petersburg branch of ICOMOS, which analyses a series of large-scale construction and development projects being currently carried out in the direct vicinity of the Observatory. The conducted research provides conclusive evidence of the harmful impact of construction on the OUV of several components of the property, including the component 540-008 Pulkovskaya Observatory.

On 5 June 2018, the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences made a questionable decision to stop scientific observations at the Pulkovskaya Observatory. Prior to this, the statement on light pollution from the new residential complex that will interfere with the astronomical research, was one of the key arguments against the construction; now it is no longer effective. After the scientific observations are fully stopped, the developer will only have to 'overcome' the national cultural heritage status and the international status of the WHS component.

In view of the aforementioned statements the State Party is called upon:

- (1) to fully stop all development and construction works on the territories of the component Buffer Zone and oblige the developer to demolish facilities under construction;
- (2) to withdraw all the construction permits issued to the present date;
- (3) to officially acknowledge the ICOMOS expert assessment of May 2018, its rationale and conclusions, or to provide an alternative expert assessment conducted in accordance with the ICOMOS Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties that fully investigates the impact of the abovementioned or similar projects on the OUV of the property;
- (4) to define and duly formalize respective Buffer Zones for all the components of the WHS “Historic Centre of Saint Petersburg and Related Groups of Monuments”, including the component No. 540-008 Pulkovskaya Observatory;

The World Heritage Committee is called upon:

- (5) **to strongly appeal** to the State Party for strict implementation of the WHC decisions and of the World Heritage Convention, including developing and duly putting into effect of the property Buffer Zone, immediately stopping all the aforementioned construction works and withdrawing all the issued construction and development permits;
- (6) **to urge** the State Party to prepare, **prior to making any decisions concerning construction and development that can potentially negatively impact the OUV of the property**, and duly conduct Heritage Impact Assessments and submit these documents along with all project proposals in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

Manama, 23 June 2018