

Press release

Why does UNESCO not discuss the Acropolis of Athens?

World Heritage Watch is shocked that the UNESCO World Heritage Committee does not intend to discuss the ongoing destructive construction work on the Acropolis of Athens. "Protecting the World Heritage and preserving it from destruction is the most noble task of the World Heritage Committee. The UNESCO has to act immediately, otherwise we lose a whole year until the next meeting", explains Stephan Doempke, chair of the organization. "It is inexplicable to me that UNESCO, in the face of the well-documented and comprehensive paving with reinforced concrete almost the entire area between the monuments could refrain from setting one of the most important and best known monuments in the world. UNESCO owes an explanation to the world public."

The works had triggered sheer horror among experts after Prof. Tasos Tanoulas, a former civil servant of the Ministry of Culture, had rang the alarm. Since March 2021, most international media have reported in detail. UNESCO had not been informed about the planned works by the Greek government, which would have been obliged to submit all their plans to UNESCO for approval.

Since last October, the Greek government has been building an elevator in the immediate vicinity of the Erechtheion with its world-famous female figures (the Caryatids), and it started to create pathways 7 - 15.5 meters wide and up to 0,5 m high with reinforced concrete, allegedly to facilitate the visit of people with disabilities. In fact, however, it is believed that room is to be created for many more tourists than those who are already pushing and shoving there. For this purpose, extensive drainage pipe systems were driven into the rock to drain rainwater. The works are financed by the Onassis Foundation.

That tourism promotion considerations are behind the works is also indicated by the plan to expand the ascent to the entrance hall (the Propylaea) to a monumental staircase, as it was created in Roman times, while the rest of the site is kept according to the time of the flowering classical Athens in the 5th century B.C. However, there is no tourist plan for the Acropolis, as it should be of course, for one of the most important and most visited archaeological sites in the world.

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