



Press release of October 21, 2005

Official launch of the first international scholarship programme for future World Heritage Site Managers

The association “Vocations Patrimoine” presided by Professor Yves Coppens, in partnership with AXA and MAZARS, in cooperation with UNESCO, and supported by the French Minister of Culture, Mr Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, launch a new training programme for World Heritage Site Management, through co-sponsored fellowships.

The first edition of this programme is an initiative taken by French enterprises. MAZARS and AXA are sponsoring the association “Vocations Patrimoine”, which has developed the programme in coordination with UNESCO, in order to respond to the present training needs for general site management and long-term development.

These fellowships bring together both the private and public sectors to support a profession and an expertise, which is specific to the conservation of more than the 812 World Heritage Sites.

Next January, 5 fellowships for the Management of World Heritage Sites, both natural and cultural, will be awarded to the prize-winners of innovative projects, allowing them to obtain a **European Master for Site Management** at either Cottbus University (Germany), or University College, Dublin (Ireland). The French Minister of Culture, Mr Renaud Donnedieu de Vabres, said on the 18th October that *“A French school for this type of training will be created shortly in France.”*

This is the first time that the World Heritage Centre has supported an international fellowship project. The Director General of UNESCO, Mr Koichiro Matsuura, highlighted on 10th October – during the 15th session of the General Assembly of the member States of the 1972 Convention - the importance he gave to *“training for site management and for correct conservation policies.”*

The concept of the programme and its setting rests on an original federative strategy: the prize-winner may become a site manager and implement a innovative project in a world heritage site; the partners of the Association Vocations Patrimoine may thus work for the enhancement of the identity of a country or a region.

Professor Yves Coppens, President of “Vocations Patrimoine”, said: *“it is an excellent way of bringing together European culture and enterprise”.*

Mounir Bouchenaki, Assistant-Director General for Culture of UNESCO, added *“ heritage is not only rich in symbolism, filled with meaning and significance. It is equally the sign of development. There are numerous examples of economic growth favoured by a new approach to management of cultural and natural heritage, which generates employment for local populations”.* His words are underscored by Francesco Bandarin, Director of the World Heritage Centre *“It is essential to facilitate the access to knowledge and know-how, which will allow its protection. This know-how implies linking « protection » and « tourism », «viable management» and «enhancement».*

Claire Dorland-Clauzel, Senior Vice President in charge of Communications and Brand for the AXA Group said: *"The programme for World Heritage Managers is totally in line with AXA's support for education, conservation and for transmission of heritage. AXA is particularly pleased with the international aspect of this fellowship programme, which corresponds to the geographical and cultural diversity of the Group today"*.

« International sponsorship, original in its content but equally by its alliances of public and private partners, tends to show, that culture and economy are at the service one of the other, to serve the development of all. », Patrick de Cambourg, President of the Group Mazars concluded.

This programme, which aims to preserve the world treasures for future generations, brings together the fields of Sustainable Development, Culture, Tourism, Foreign Affairs, Education, Training and Management within a European and International context. It will of course be open to businesses worldwide, as André Malraux stated during his campaign to save About Simbel **“ the first world civilization publicly claims the world’s art as its indivisible heritage”**.

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