



Media Note: September 23, 2008

U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation Awards Support Major Projects at Cultural Sites in Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Guatemala

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) is pleased to announce awards of more than \$2.2 million for major cultural preservation projects in Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Guatemala through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. These awards for large-scale preservation projects at cultural sites are the first of their kind in the history of the Ambassadors Fund program.

The U.S. Congress recommended that the Department of State direct at least \$1.5 million in Fiscal Year 2008 to at least three large cultural preservation projects, such as archaeological restoration of Phnom Bakheng, Cambodia, and Maya archaeological sites in the Petén region of Guatemala. ECA's Cultural Heritage Center invited the U.S. Embassies at Phnom Penh, Guatemala City, and five other embassies to submit proposals on behalf of qualified applicants working in collaboration with the national cultural authority for large-scale partnership-based preservation projects at sites of global significance that are accessible to the public and protected by law.

The Center reviewed seven proposals based on program criteria, proposal quality and project merit, and recommended three for support in 2008, which are the following:

- \$725,000 to the Aga Khan Trust for Culture for the conservation of Qala Ikhtyaruddin, the 15th-century citadel of Herat, Afghanistan, a prominent public landmark of this ancient city and one of the most impressive surviving citadels in all of Central Asia;
- \$978,705 to the World Monuments Fund for the conservation of the 10th-century Phnom Bakheng Temple in Cambodia, the most visited temple at Angkor and one of the greatest cultural achievements of the Khmer Kingdom; and
- \$575,251 to the Fundación para la Conservación en Guatemala (Conservation Foundation of Guatemala) for the conservation of Late Preclassic period Maya murals at San Bartolo, as well as the conservation of the Classic period Maya Temple of the Hieroglyphic Staircase and the documentation of plundering at Yaxha-Nakum-Naranjo National Park, all sites of great importance in understanding the ancient Maya civilization in the northeastern Petén.

The Cultural Heritage Center supports Department of State foreign affairs functions that relate to the preservation of cultural heritage. In addition to the Ambassadors Fund, the Center administers U.S. responsibilities relating to the 1970 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) convention to reduce pillage and illicit trafficking in cultural property. Information on the Fund is available online at <http://exchanges.state.gov/culprop/afcp/>.

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