

## PRESS RELEASE

### LAUNCH OF THE RESTORATION OF THE SURSOCK MUSEUM AND BEIRUT'S HISTORIC DISTRICT

**The international organizations ALIPH, ICOM and ICOMOS are jointly committed to the rehabilitation of Beirut's heritage damaged by the explosion on 4 August 2020**

**Tuesday 15 September** – As part of their joint mission to Beirut (14-16 September 2020), Marie-Laure Lavenir (ICOMOS), Peter Keller (ICOM) and Valéry Freland (ALIPH) had working meetings with the Director General of Antiquities (DGA) of Lebanon, the heads of several museums and libraries, and many representatives of civil society, including, in particular, the Lebanese committees of ICOM, ICOMOS, and the Blue Shield. The aim was to contribute to the evaluation of the situation, identify the challenges, and to assist in the coordination of international action and the implementation of concrete projects for the rehabilitation of the heritage damaged by the explosion of 4 August. During the press conference on 15 September at the Sursock Museum, in presence of Dr. Sarkis Khoury (DGA) and Zeina Arida, the Museum's Director, their strategy was presented as well as ongoing and future projects for Beirut.

Thanks to its Emergency Action and Coordination Protocol, **ICOM** was able to mobilize its network the day after the explosion. A field mission was organized with the support of ICOM Lebanon four days after the tragedy to contribute to the evaluation of damage and to kickstart the implementation of concrete rehabilitation projects for the National Museum of Beirut, the Sursock Museum, the Museum of Lebanese Prehistory of Saint-Joseph University, and the Archaeological Museum of the American University of Beirut. In close collaboration with the management of these museums, ICOM has contributed to the development of stabilization and restoration projects submitted to ALIPH for funding.

*"ICOM, this network of volunteers, can contribute to helping the country recover from this tragedy by supporting museums. A museum not only preserves collections, but also it conveys the history and identity of a nation, a city, to future generations of the world. Beirut's museums are of outstanding richness. Thus, they have an essential role to play in social cohesion and intercultural dialogue. Rehabilitation will take time, and ICOM will stand beside museums the whole way. The strength of our organization comes from its network of professionals, who are mobilized and whose eyes are turned towards Beirut."* Dr. Peter Keller, Director General of ICOM.

Within the framework of its Action Plan for Beirut's heritage and an initial envelope of 5 million USD, ALIPH is now supporting several museums: the emergency rehabilitation of the National Museum, in partnership with the Louvre Museum and the DGA; the stabilization and waterproofing of the Sursock Museum, in collaboration with the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, and as an extension of the mission carried out by ICOM; and, the protection of the collection of antique glassware at the Archaeological Museum of the American University of Beirut, with the expertise of the Institut national du Patrimoine (Paris).

ALIPH is also financing the stabilization of some twenty cultural institutions through an initiative of the Prince Claus Fund with Blue Shield Lebanon, as well as the emergency rehabilitation of about ten historic houses in the districts of Rmeil and Medawar, and the Greek Orthodox Cathedral of St. George, with the DGA, the French Institute of the Near East, and the Ecole

Supérieure des Affaires. Other projects are being evaluated for the contribution of the rehabilitation of the Prehistory Museum, the Oriental Library, and other historical houses.

*"After the disaster of 4 August, ALIPH very quickly mobilized its resources to protect the heritage of Beirut. Today, we are in the Lebanese capital to show our solidarity, but also to contribute to the coordination of international actions and to identify new concrete projects. We must move quickly to prevent further damaging of the city's heritage in the coming rainy season. Participating actively in the rehabilitation of Beirut is a priority for ALIPH, today and in the months to come."* Valéry Freland, Executive Director of ALIPH.

ICOMOS, for its part, continues to mobilize its network, focusing its attention on the several hundred thousand inhabitants who have become homeless. In addition, ICOMOS is extending efforts in favor of the destroyed historic districts, consisting of a high concentration of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century houses. ICOMOS is active in Beirut not just through its National Committee, which is very present in the field and for which exceptional financial support has just been granted, but also through the participation of its global network of experts, particularly those who have already worked on similar emergency situations. ICOMOS is a community of men and women who put their professional and personal lives at the service of the protection of cultural heritage.

*"It is on behalf of the 11,000 members of ICOMOS that I am in Beirut today, to assure the people of Beirut of our unwavering solidarity and support, as well as our commitment to contribute to the reconstruction effort, which will have to be collective and coordinated to succeed. In this regard, ICOMOS is delighted with the collaboration that has been rapidly established within the international community, exemplified by this joint visit with ALIPH and ICOM."* Marie-Laure Lavenir, Director General of ICOMOS.

Finally, **ICOMOS, ICOM, and ALIPH** announced the establishment of a joint task force dedicated to the protection of Beirut's heritage, with a view to contributing to strengthening the coordination of funding and actions carried out in the field, in close cooperation with the DGA, and within the framework of the efforts of the international community.

## About

**The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)** is a non-governmental international organisation dedicated to the conservation of the world's monuments and sites.

**The International Council of Museums (ICOM)** is an international organisation of museums and museum professionals which is committed to the research, conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage, present, and future, tangible and intangible.

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**The International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas (ALIPH)** is the only global fund exclusively dedicated to the protection and rehabilitation of cultural heritage in conflict zones and post-conflict situations.

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