

PRESS RELEASE

7th International Conference of Eurasia World Heritage Cities

The 7th International Conference of Eurasia World Heritage Cities on "Protection and use of historical and cultural heritage in the Eurasian space" was held in the city of Aktau, Republic of Kazakhstan, August 24-27, 2014.

Conference was organized by Municipality of the city of Aktau, the Eurasian secretariat of the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC), the Eurasian section of the World organization "United Cities and Local Governments." The conference was held under the auspices of UNESCO.

The Conference was attended by over 275 people from 41 cities in 10 countries: mayors, international organizations, foundations to preserve the cultural, historical and architectural heritage, unions and associations of cities, academic and research institutions, educational institutions, museums and other cultural institutions.

On the morning of August 25 conference was opened by Mayor of Aktau Edil Zhanbyrshin. During the opening ceremony participants of the conference were welcomed by the Governor of Mangistau region Alik Aidarbayev, Section Head of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Kazakhstan Aizhan Shaynazarova, Secretary General of the Organization of World Heritage Cities Denis Ricard, head of the Spassky municipality of the Republic of Tatarstan Kamil Nugaev, Deputy Mayor of Kazan and Acting Co-President of UCLG Ludmila Andreeva, Deputy Secretary General of the International Organization of Turkic Culture - TURKSOY Firat Pyrtash, Mayor of the city of Safranbolu (Turkey) and Vice-President of the Organization of World Heritage Cities Necdet Aksoy. After the ceremony the guests of the conference took part in the exhibition of cultural heritage cities of Kazakhstan and Eurasia.

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On the same day, August 25th it was hold a meeting of the Council of the Eurasian section of the World organization "United Cities and Local Governments", where the Secretary General of Eurasian section of UCLG Rasikh Sagitov presented a report on the activities of the Eurasian section for the period from 2013 to the present. Council members acknowledged the report satisfactory. During the

meeting new members of the Eurasian section of UCLG were accepted: Spassky municipality of the Republic of Tatarstan and the city of Magnitogorsk. They were presented with a certificate of membership.

All Council members unanimously supported the new initiative of the Eurasian section of UCLG on conduction Cities' International Activity rating. The Council has decided to entrust the Expert Council developing the concept and methodology of ranking of international activity of cities, and entrust control over the execution of this decision to the Secretary-General Rasikh Sagitov.

During the meeting the Council heard the report of the Audit Committee, cost estimates for 2015, the scale of membership fees and the plan for 2015 were adopted.

Advisor to the Mayor of Yakutsk G.M.Ivanov presented a vivid presentation about the city of Yakutsk and its potential for international events. It was unanimously decided to hold the next meeting of the Council of UCLG-Eurasia in the city of Yakutsk in June 2015.

At the end of the meeting a signing ceremony on twin cities of Aktau, Kazakhstan and Samsun, Turkey held. This agreement provides cooperation in the socio-economic sphere, in the development of tourism and strengthening cultural relations. *"Aktau - a real gem on the shores of the Caspian Sea. To build a modern city in the desert and live using desalinated seawater is a miracle"* - said the mayor of Samsun, Yusuf Ziya Yilmaz.

In honor of the opening of the 7th International Conference of Eurasia World Heritage Cities a festive dinner on behalf of Alik Aydarbaev, Akim of Mangistau region held. Conference guests enjoyed national Kazakh cuisine, and during performances of creative groups got acquainted with the national clothing, music and dance of the Kazakhs. A pleasant surprise for the guests was a performance of the famous Soviet and Kazakh pop singer Roza Rymbaeva.

In the afternoon the guests visited the sacred sites: Necropolis "Koshkar ata", "Kalipan", "Shakpak ata." Guests were especially impressed with the carved in thickness of rocky promontory Mosque of Shakpak Ata - architectural monument of the X-XV centuries, one of the ancient and unique underground mosques in Mangistau. Rhere was also the ancient cemetery. Experts showed interesting features of construction the gravestones structures called saganatama to surprised guests.

Participants got to know about other shrines and natural heritage sites of the region. They got acquainted with the process of social-economic development of the Mangistau region.

In the evening traditional ethnic village was built in the center of Aktau. White tent, swing-altybakan, national games and colorful costumes - it all turned out for the guests in wonder. Many of them noted that always wished to get acquainted with the way of life of Kazakh people and very excited about this opportunity. Delegates were delighted with what they saw. National ceremonies, folk songs and dances impressed everyone.

In addition, visitors of ethnic village could feel themselves as Kazakhs. Dressed in beautiful Kazakh national costumes, which were presented by Akimat of Aktau the participants themselves were built a yurt. Gathered under one shanyrak delegates tied to the base of the pole dwelling nomadic people. Immediately realizing that in this case important cohesion, guests teamed up and coped with the task in minutes.

- Now we will constantly come in Aktau. We loved it here. You are all so friendly and kind. And we invite you to come to us. We promise to meet at the appropriate level – said conference guests.

Then the participants went to the yurt (tent), where they were received as guests of honor. Tables in yurts laden with an abundance of delicious Kazakh national food: beshbarmak, sorpa, kuyrdak, kazi (horse meat sausages), kurt (hard salty cheese), irimshik (hard cheese made from sheep's milk), boursak and more. There were also variety of fish dishes from sturgeon and beluga. Also guests loved shubat - sour camel milk.

The main traditional food of Kazakhs is lamb. The tradition of treats guests with lamb meat, cutting the lamb into pieces has a deep meaning. Each part of the lamb is presented strictly to a particular person in a particular order. Boiled meat is usually served large uncut pieces. The host cut the meat giving each guest a piece: pelvic bone and shin give honorable elders, brisket – to the son or daughter in-law, cervical vertebra - the girls, and so on.

The most honorable guest is always given a specially cooked sheep's head. Guest must divide it among the others, observing a ritual in which followed the ancient tradition of respect for the guests, the elderly, children, friends and distant relatives. The ritual of cutting a sheep's head has many meanings, but its basic

meaning is to ensure that to share parts, showing his wisdom and expressing respect for the owners. After dinner, it was a theatrical literary and musical performance based on the Kazakh folklore "Dala saz", which introduced the participants to the conference with the life and traditions of the Kazakh people.

The second day of the conference on August 26 began with a plenary session. Moderator of the 1st plenary session was Akim of Aktau, Edil Zhanbyrshin. During the session, presentation on the theme "Mangistau at the junction of centuries and cultures of Eurasia" was made public and political figure, a national writer of Republic of Kazakhstan - Abish Kekilbaev. Secretary of the National Committee of the World Heritage of Kazakhstan, UNESCO expert Dmitry Voyakin talked about the main directions of the work and achievements of the Committee. The next speaker was the head of the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology Institute of History and Ethnology name after Sh.Ualikhanov - Serik Azhigali. His report called "National Pride of the Kazakh people, enduring wealth of Steppe Eurasia: about the monuments of Mangistau and Urt." Director of the State Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve "Aziret Sultan» Maulen Sadykbekov announced a report on "The Mausoleum of Sultan Aziret in modern conditions." On the prospects of the use of historical and cultural heritage as one of the tourist resources of Mangistau region said archaeologist of Mangistau regional cultural and historical reserve Andrei Astafev.

The second plenary session moderator was Secretary General of Eurasian section of UCLG, Regional Coordinator of the Eurasian section of OWHC- Rasikh Sagitov. The first speaker was Deputy Head of the Department of Cultural Heritage of the City of Moscow Sergei Mirzoyan on the topic "The mechanism of legal protection of the cultural heritage of the city of Moscow." Vice-President of the World Heritage Cities, Mayor of Safranbolu (Turkey) Necdet Aksoy told the participants about the problems and prospects of the Eurasia World Heritage Cities. The next report was made by Deputy Minister for Information and Press of the Republic of Dagestan - Muslimova Miyasat. Deputy Minister of Culture of the Republic of Tatarstan, Persova Svetlana shared the experience of heritage preservation and inclusion in the list of UNESCO the ancient city of Bolgar. The legacy of the city of Novosibirsk was told by the director of the museum of the city of Novosibirsk Elena Shchukina. A report on "Cities of the World Heritage Site by UNESCO after the Second World War" was made by the Secretary General of the Middle East and West Asia Section of UCLG Mehmet Duman. Adviser to the Mayor of the city of Yakutsk Georgy Ivanov told about the cultural heritage of the Republic of

Sakha. Further reports on their cities were made by representatives of the Republic of Tatarstan: Director of Elabuga Museum-Reserve Rudenko Gulzada, Deputy Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Board of Tourism Kazan Sannikova Darya, and Director of the "Island-Svijazhsk" Silkin Artem.

In the afternoon, the opening ceremony of the small architectural form devoted to 7th International Conference of Eurasia World Heritage Cities held. The sculpture is located on the seaside of the Caspian Sea.

During the opening ceremony Akim of Aktau E.Zhanbyrshin congratulated the participants and residents of the region with the remarkable event. The head of the city administration emphasized the importance of the event in the international scale.

In turn, the guests noted that the event is a novelty in the history of international organization: *"For 20 years of the Organization of World Heritage Cities, we have conducted many conferences in different cities around the world. However, none of these cities are not installed sculpture in honor of international conferences. We welcome and support this initiative. Aktau has already gone down in history OWHC,"* - said the Secretary-General of the OWHC Denis Ricard.

In the words of Mayor of Aktau as a basis of monument is taken an ancient stone image of a human face - balbaltas: *"The whole territory from the Altai to Europe is scattered by balbaltas, ancient stones with images of the human face. Such stone was taken as a basis for our logo. Also, the logo depicts a camel. This animal has already entered in the UNESCO World Heritage Site, and it is a symbol of the nomads, the symbol of the Kazakh people,"* - says the Mayor.

Also, participants visited the Museum of Labour Glory of Caspian Mining and Metallurgical Combine and Regional History Museum. The guests were told about the origins of the construction of the city and its socio-economic development. The conference participants got acquainted with the documents attesting to the difficult path of pioneers who laid the foundations of industrial facilities and numerous difficulties associated with a lack of drinking water and the harsh living conditions in the desert peninsula. The guests thanked the organizers for the interesting and informative stories and noted the unique history of the building of the city.

In evening for the participants of the conference it was organized the official reception on behalf of the Mayor of Aktau Edil Zhanbyrshin. The reception began

with the presentation of the city of Aktau. Mayor's idea was to tell about the city after everyone saw it live. The guests highly appreciated the idea. Reception accompanied by a performance of art groups with folk songs and dances. Also, the participants came up with good wishes to the city of Aktau, Mangistau region and all conference participants.

Guests of the city underlined the importance of the event internationally, need to work together to conserve and use of historical and cultural heritage.

Denis Ricard, Secretary General of the Organization of World Heritage Cities: - *I think it is a success of all Kazakhstan, that Aktau became the seventh city where our conference held. Authority of your country is growing rapidly in the world community. You really have something to be proud of. Here are in the Mangistau a huge number of monuments that stretch along the Great Silk Road. "Open air museum", also called the Mangistau steppe and canyons, keeps many mysteries and historical places requiring a thorough study.*

Summing up the conference, Secretary General of the Organization of World Heritage Cities Denis Ricard said that this is the best regional conference in recent years. Moreover, he assured that now Aktau will be known more in the world. Mayor of the city Edil Zhanbyrshin thanked all the participants and said that he learned a lot from the conference. In the near future the city will make efforts to collect enough material to provide for Aktau membership in UNESCO.