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WORLD MONUMENTS FUND ANNOUNCES 2006 WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH LIST OF 100 MOST ENDANGERED SITES

FOR FIRST TIME, BIENNIAL WATCH LIST INCLUDES AN ENTIRE COUNTRY IN IMMINENT PERIL: IRAQ

For Immediate Release—New York, NY, June 21, 2005 . . . The **World Monuments Fund** (WMF), the foremost private, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the historic, artistic, and architectural heritage worldwide, today released its 2006 **World Monuments Watch** list of **100 Most Endangered Sites**. The biennial Watch list is a call to action on behalf of threatened cultural-heritage monuments worldwide. By bringing the sites to international attention, the list helps to raise the funds needed for their rescue and often spurs local governments and communities to take an active role in protecting cultural icons in their regions. For many landmarks, inclusion on the Watch list is the best—and perhaps the only—hope for survival.

This year—**for the first time in the 10-year history of the World Monuments Watch**—the list includes **an entire country whose cultural heritage is at great risk: Iraq**, within whose borders lie some of the world’s most significant archaeological and architectural sites. Decades of political isolation, a protracted war with Iran, and, more recently, the conflict begun in 2003 have put this extraordinary heritage at grave risk. Widespread looting, military occupation, artillery fire, vandalism, and other acts of violence are devastating Iraq, long considered the “cradle of human civilization.”

“The World Monuments Watch provides a valuable barometer of the state of heritage preservation worldwide,” said **World Monuments Fund President Bonnie Burnham**. “The biennial Watch list tells us not only which sites are in peril, but also what kinds of threats—natural disaster, war, pollution, neglect, or other issues—are endangering the world’s heritage. By focusing attention on imperiled sites, the World Monuments Watch helps bring local communities, governments, and preservation professionals together in order to save the places that speak of

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human history. It is difficult to think of a more important time than today for diverse groups to unite in the preservation of our shared heritage.”

The 2006 Watch list features sites from **55 countries on all seven continents**, including, for the **first time, sites in Bangladesh, Cape Verde, Eritrea, Iran, Mauritania, Samoa, and Sierra Leone**, demonstrating both growing awareness of the World Monuments Watch program and increased recognition worldwide of the importance of preserving cultural landmarks. Taken together, the sites on the list comprise a **diversity of building types**—from citadels and palaces to a prison, from churches and a synagogue to cemeteries, from ancient cities and medieval mosques to a modern airport and fairground; **periods**—from the earliest human settlements some eight thousand years ago to constructions of the mid-twentieth century; and **threats**—from rising water tables to urban sprawl, earthquakes to planned governmental demolition, unsustainable tourism to vandalism, looting, and war. The 2006 list encompasses:

- 22 sites in Africa and the Middle East,
- 26 in the Americas,
- 1 in Antarctica,
- 18 in Asia,
- 1 in Australia, and
- 32 in Europe.

(For more detail, see list of highlighted sites.)

2006 Endangered Sites

The 2006 Watch list includes more **modern buildings than ever before**, reflecting the increasing understanding of the importance of twentieth-century architecture as part of our cultural heritage, and an awareness of its fragile status. Nine modern sites are listed, including the historic center of **Asmara, Eritrea**, a unique urban environment that fuses Italian modernism with African highland culture; the **International Fairground at Tripoli, Lebanon**, designed by Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer; Lisbon’s Art Deco theater, the **Teatro Capitolio**; and New York City’s **2 Columbus Circle**, designed by Edward Durrell Stone and currently at the center of an intense debate about the decision to significantly modify it.

A **broad array of historic Islamic sites** is included on the 2006 Watch list, eight in addition to those in Iraq. These include the ninth-century **Haji Piyada Mosque** in Afghanistan, one of the earliest structures in the eastern Islamic world; **two sites in historic Cairo**, the sixteenth-century **Tarabay al-Sharify** complex and the seventeenth-century **Sabil Ruqayya Dudu**; the thirteenth-century **Chinguetti Mosque** in Chinguetti, Mauritania, considered the “seventh city” of Islam and home to a unique collection of important Islamic manuscripts; and

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two monumental medieval tomb complexes in Pakistan, the **Mian Nasir Mohammed Graveyard** and the **Thatta Monuments**. **Two twelfth-century citadels, built during the Crusades**, are also listed: the **Chehabi Citadel** of Hasbaya, Wadi Taym, Lebanon, erected by the Crusaders and wrested away in the 1170s by the Chehabi Emirs, whose descendents have occupied it to this day; and the **Shayzar Castle**, near Hama, Syria, defended in the time of Nur al-Din against the Franks during the Crusades. In addition, the Watch list includes the **Historic Center of Prizren**, Kososvo's most important historic town, which features architecture that represents both Christian and Islamic traditions.

A number of archaeological sites on the Watch list exemplify the geographical sweep of the Roman Empire at its height. These range from the **Segovia Aqueduct**, a miracle of Roman engineering at the Empire's western edge, to Roman cities in the east, including the renowned archaeological site of **Aphrodisias**, in Turkey, which features some of the best-preserved examples of Greco-Roman architecture in the eastern Mediterranean. In the capital is the **Temple of Portunus**—one of the best preserved early Roman temples in the world. Archeological sites in other parts of the world that are on the Watch list include **Chalcatzingo**, one of the most important early Olmec sites in Mexico, and **Naranjo**, Guatemala's second-largest Mayan site.

World Monuments Watch List

Launched in 1995, the biennial World Monuments Watch, with its list of **100 Most Endangered Sites**, is one of the major program areas of the World Monuments Fund. In order to create the Watch list, WMF calls for nominations of sites from ministries of culture and international and local preservation groups and professionals. All nominations must include not only information on the value of the site and the threats it confronts, but also a concrete proposal for action that has local support.

The World Monuments Fund then convenes an independent panel of international experts to review the hundreds of nominations received and select 100 of them for inclusion on the list. The selection is based on the significance of the sites, the urgency of the need for support, and the viability of the conservation and/or advocacy plans. *(See list of 2006 panel members.)*

Previous lists were released in 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2004 and included sites ranging from widely known landmarks such as the Taj Mahal, the Great Wall of China, Pompeii,

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Teotihuacan, and the Valley of the Kings (now part of the West Bank 2006 Watch listing), to such lesser-known sites as the Larabanga Mosque, in Ghana, and the National Art Schools, in Cuba. Many endangered sites on previous lists have been rescued or are well on their way to being preserved, thanks to timely intervention. Among previous Watch-list sites where WMF is currently working are the Angkor temples, in Cambodia; Petra, in Jordan; the Chateau of Chantilly, in France; St. George's Bloomsbury, in London; and the Jesuit Guarani Missions, located in Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay.

The World Monuments Fund is grateful to American Express, founding sponsor of the World Monuments Watch, for its commitment of \$10 million dollars to the World Monuments Watch over the past ten years. Together with funds for the Watch from other major donors, WMF has distributed about \$35 million since 1996 and has leveraged more than \$118 million, resulting in a 75 percent success rate in bringing heritage sites back from the brink of extinction.

World Monuments Fund

The New York City-based World Monuments Fund—which celebrates its fortieth anniversary this year—has achieved an unmatched record of successful conservation in more than 80 countries. In 2003, WMF established WMF Europe, based in Paris, in order to coordinate the work of the organization's affiliates in France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, and to expand its activities in Continental Europe. WMF in Britain, located in London, addresses WMF's agenda in the United Kingdom. Working with these offices and affiliates, as well as with partners around the world, WMF brings together public and private support to implement a comprehensive conservation effort that includes project planning, field surveys, fieldwork, on-site training in the building crafts, advocacy, and the development of long-term strategies for the protection of sites. For additional information about WMF and its programs, the public can visit www.wmf.org.

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