

Saudi Arabia Fund for Culture at UNESCO – “Dive into Heritage” to promote and conserve World Heritage sites

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA, September 20, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- At the extended 45th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Riyadh this week, Saudi Arabia and UNESCO organised a side event on the Dive into Heritage initiative. This groundbreaking project will leverage digital technologies to explore and conserve UNESCO World Heritage sites and their related intangible heritage.

Dive into Heritage has been made possible through the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and has seen the team develop an online platform that will create unique ways to digitally experience World Heritage. The platform harnesses the power of digital technology such as 3D models, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), interactive maps and geolocated narratives to recreate a truly accurate and immersive digital viewing experience.

The ‘Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Funds-in-Trust for Culture at UNESCO’ was established in 2019, following a commitment of US\$25 million from the Government to fund UNESCO projects in support of the strategy and actions for the preservation of heritage. Phase I (2022-2024) of the Dive into Heritage initiative will see the development of a platform that allows people to digitally discover World Heritage sites in the Arab States region. A full public release of the platform is planned by the end of Phase I in 2024, when other regions will benefit from the Dive into Heritage programme.

Mr Ernesto Ottone, Assistant Director General for Culture at UNESCO highlighted at his opening remarks that “with Dive into Heritage, we are entering a new digital era for World Heritage exploration and preservation.

The endless potential uses of Artificial Intelligence will allow us to transform the way in which people can experience heritage. An innovative project such as Dive into Heritage demonstrates the various uses of AI, bringing heritage sites to life, like never before. The narratives and stories this technology helps create will resonate for generations to come, and enable people to live a piece of history.

The event included a panel discussion where some key contributors to the project discussed how technology can contribute to heritage interpretation and preservation using digital storytelling techniques.

Mr. Suhail Mira, Site Management Historic Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Dr. Heba Aziz, UNESCO Chair on World Heritage Management and Sustainable Tourism at the German University in Oman, Dr Ona Vileikis, ICOMOS CIPA, Mr Olivier Van Damme, UNITAR/UNOSAT and Sheikh Ebrahim Alkhalifa, Acting Director of the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage were invited to share their views and perspectives on the future of the platform.

The event was also an opportunity to showcase some of the first results of this innovative project. Video animations of high-resolution 3D models of World Heritage sites were displayed in addition to 3D printed replicas that invited users to have a closer look at the digitisation process required to build the Dive into Heritage platform.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/dive-into-heritage/>

For further information please contact: moc@sandpipercomms.com

Notes to editors

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) is proud to be hosting the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The session is taking place in Riyadh from 10-25 September 2023 and highlights the Kingdom's commitment to supporting global efforts in heritage preservation and protection, in line with the goals of UNESCO.

The Cultural Development Fund

The Cultural Development Fund was founded by Royal Decree No. M/45, issued on January 6, 2021, as a development fund that is organizationally linked to the National Development Fund. The Fund's establishment came to develop the cultural sector and achieve sustainability by supporting cultural activities and projects, facilitating cultural investment, and enhancing the sector's profitability. Additionally, enabling those interested in engaging in cultural activities and the Fund to have an active role in achieving the National Culture Strategy's goals and the Kingdom's Vision 2030.

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