

Mirko Petrić
Split, Croatia

To: Mr. Francesco Bandarin
Director
UNESCO
World Heritage Centre
7, place de Fontenoy
75352 Paris 07 SP, France

December 1, 2006

Dear Mr. Director,

Three weeks ago (on November 8, 2006) I wrote you a letter regarding the World Heritage Centre's concern about the reconstruction works of the city of Split's waterfront. In that letter, I have expressed my opinion on the matter, assuring you that the project that served as a basis for these works resulted from a scrupulously prepared public competition, under the supervision of the Croatian heritage protection authorities.

In my letter, I also informed you that - as a citizen actively engaged in the efforts to protect cultural heritage and the initiator of the Internet petition "Support Urban Planning, Oppose Commercialism!" (February 2003) - I would do everything possible to oppose any intervention potentially harmful to the urban character of the historic core of the city of Split.

Unfortunately, only a short while after I have written to you, I have to inform you that the historic core of the city of Split is again under threat.

Namely, on November 24th, 2006, the City government of Split has decided to start the process of amending the urban planning document of the city's historic core, in order to enable building of new structures at 21 locations in the Diocletian's Palace and the surrounding zones of the city core. Among the planned structures are an underground garage and several hotels.

The historic core of the city of Split is a living organism, in which new construction has been happening continually over the centuries. There is no reason to artificially stop this process in our time: the contrast of the old and the new is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the urban character of the city of Split. However, any new construction in the city core has to be painstakingly planned and supervised.

Unfortunately, the way the City government of Split has started the process of amending the planning document of the city's historic core gives rise to serious doubts as to the intentions of the process and its potentially very harmful consequences.

At the end of the last year (2005), the City government has completed the new General urban planning document (GUP) for the city of Split. It was stipulated that the urban planning documents for various sections of the city (UPU) will be produced

in accordance with the General urban planning document and that they will be based on public competitions.

But in spite of this, the City government has – following the mentioned meeting on November 24th, 2006 – started the process of amending the so-called Urban planning implementation plan (PUP), dating back to the year 1990, and itself based on the General urban planning document (GUP) dating back all the way to the year 1978!

This fact reveals the manipulative character of the amendment process the City government has started. It also warns us of the potentially highly damaging effects it may have for the city's cultural heritage.

Namely, instead of starting (preferrably international) public competition with the goal to come up with a competent concept of urban planning treatment of the city's historic core, the City government has decided to completely neglect the procedure it has itself advertised when the new General urban planning document (GUP) was adopted at the end of last year.

As I have already pointed out, it has now asked for amendments of the old planning document that would enable building at individual locations without heeding the complexity of the urban planning process for the entire city core.

In addition to being immoral, the proposed amendment process is legally doubtful. Namely, the category of "Implementation urban planning document" (PUP) does not exist in the legal documents of the Republic of Croatia (which gained independence in the year 1992). This category was an urban planning instrument in former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in which the document the amendment process of which has started now was produced (in the year 1990).

Knowing all this, we can say with a great deal of confidence that the only goal of the proposed changes in this dated and outlawed urban planning document is commercial gain for the construction entrepreneurs and future owners of the commercial establishments proposed at 21 locations in the city core.

It is very sad to report that this is exactly the same thing that the former Split's City government wanted to do in December of the year 2002 (the only difference being that it then wanted to enable building of new structures at 14 locations, and the City government now asks for building at 21 locations).

Faced with exactly the same situation as the present one, in February 2003 - helped by several engaged citizens - I started the Internet petition entitled "Support Urban Planning, Oppose Commercialism!" (available at: www.lerotic.de/urbicid).

The petition was signed by 1088 persons, including many citizens of Split and concerned international experts. I am glad to inform you that we were successful in our efforts: public pressure that was built around the petition has led to the abandonment of the plans to build in the historic city core of Split.

We are now again starting the petition , under the title “Support Urban Planning - Help Save the Palace of Diocletian!” (available at: <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/savepalaceofdiocletian>).

We are asking for exactly the same thing as in February 2003: lawful and supervised urban planning for the historic city core of Split, obtained by public competitions and supervised by the cultural heritage protection agencies.

We ask you to join our efforts by signing the petition and doing everything in your power to stop the process threatening to result in serious damage to UNESCO-protected city core of Split.

Yours sincerely,

Mirko Petrić

Initiator of the petition
“Support Urban Planning,
Help Save the Palace of Diocletian!”