

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Message by

H.E. Professor Michael Omolewa,

President of the General Conference of UNESCO

On the occasion of the inscription of the

White City of Tel-Aviv – the Modern Movement (Israel)

On the World Heritage List

6 – 8 June, 2004

Mr President of the State of Israel, Moshe Katzav,
Honorable Mayor of Tel Aviv, Ron Huldai,
Distinguished City Counsellors,
Members of the Israeli World Heritage Committee,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Shalom my brothers and sisters,

It is my great pleasure to participate in this solemn and joyful event to celebrate the inscription of Tel Aviv – The White City on the World Heritage List.

I can truly say, as Member of the World Heritage Committee and in my capacity as President of the General Conference of UNESCO that the *World Heritage Convention* is at the very heart of UNESCO's work. It is perhaps UNESCO's most successful normative instrument in terms of the number of participating States Parties. Just over thirty years after its adoption, the Convention has become the most universal international conservation instrument. The World Heritage Committee's efforts to strengthen the credibility of the World Heritage List, can be also seen in Tel Aviv. Your city illustrates the treasure of modern heritage, one of the most underrepresented themes on the World Heritage List.

Ensuring the effective conservation of World Heritage is now your task here. I strongly encourage you to do your utmost to protect this unique heritage of humankind, through enforcing conservation measures, restoring individual houses within the property, and building capacities and, through communication, increasing public awareness of, involvement in and support for World Heritage.

With the World Heritage flagship, the minds and spirit of people around the world can connect and become actively involved in understanding the astonishing voices and messages of our cultures and civilizations. Here we see international co-operation used as a key force for conservation. This mission, and all that UNESCO stands for, is an impressive foundation for conservation of our World Heritage.

Tel Aviv represents a wonderful experiment in organic town planning and architecture for social and individual well-being. And the odyssey with UNESCO to recognize and revitalize this heritage in Israel and around the world

began in your city some ten years ago. On 22 May 1994, a first conference was held here with UNESCO, the “World Conference on the International Style in Architecture”. The conference was held in large part due to the commitment of the world-renowned Tel Aviv sculptor, Dani Karavan. That cooperation led to his gift of the Yitzhak Rabin Square of Tolerance within UNESCO’s gardens. I show this monument to peace and understanding to my visitors and come to meditate there myself.

As you well know, the Tel Aviv experiment began between the First and Second World Wars. The Bauhaus School was founded on the principles of liberty, tolerance and equality, the spirit that was to unite many artists and intellectuals. Its aim was to devise forms of art, architecture and urban planning to forge a new alliance between human creativity and modern technology and, at the same time, promote communication between people. During that period, the growing waves of European immigrants to this land included many outstanding Bauhaus architects. For example, they gave Tel Aviv the largest number of cooperative workers’ apartments in the country. A connection to the land and to greenery was also intrinsic. Each neighborhood was designed with gardens and tree-lined squares. Architecture conceived originally in Europe was adapted to the climate and social purposes in the new homeland.

This heritage is replicated in different ways in cities around the world. The international style although originally formulated in France and Germany, developed thanks to the ways in which it was interpreted by Israeli, American, Czech, Moroccan, Turkish and Egyptian architects as well as those from other countries. Your cooperation with international architects, city planners and conservationists of the Modern Movement is already rich. Through the World Heritage *Convention* you will have even more opportunity to work with other Bauhaus sites including the *Bauhaus and its Sites in Weimar and Dessau* of Germany.

So, it is with great pleasure that I am here to congratulate you wholeheartedly on behalf of the General Conference of UNESCO, that is to say, all our Member States, for the inscription of the *White City of Tel-Aviv - the Modern Movement* on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

May I close on a more personal note:

Osé shalom bimromav hou yasé shalom alenou vé al kol Israël vé imru amen.

(He who made harmony reign in heaven will bring peace to all of Israel and to all humanity).

Toda raba. Thank you.