



## PRESS RELEASE

Date: 9 October, 2013

### **‘Yangon’s City Center’ selected for 2014 World Monuments Watch**

YANGON: World Monuments Fund announced that the historic Yangon’s city center has been selected for inclusion on the 2014 World Monuments Watch on October 8, 2013. World Monuments Fund, the leading independent organization of preservation dedicated to the important architectural and cultural heritage site around the world, released this announcement in New York where the organization is headquartered.

President of the World Monument Fund, Bonnie Burnham, said “The 2014 Watch presents a selection of monuments from around the world in need of both new economic resources and innovative ideas about how to preserve them for future generations. These sites—and countless others like them—recount our human history and highlight our achievements. It takes vigilance to keep them active in the world; yet it is often the case that the very places that provide rich character and texture to our lives need more assistance and attention than they are given.”

Dr Thant Myint U, founder and chairman of Yangon Heritage Trust (YHT) which is working to conserve and revitalize the city’s heritage, said that the city’s unique architectural landscapes can and must be incorporated into a vision of a more modern and vibrant 21<sup>st</sup> century Yangon.

"We have a tremendous opportunity to make Yangon one of the most beautiful cities in all of Asia. It will be a great asset for the future, for tourism and business, for the economy, and for the hundreds of thousands of people who live and work downtown," said Dr Thant Myint U.

“We're delighted that World Monuments Fund has decided to include historic Yangon in its 2014 Watch.”

“We're at a turning point in Yangon's history. Inclusion in the Watch can make a big difference by drawing even more international attention and demonstrating here as well the terrific importance of Yangon conservation,” he said.

Daw Moe Moe Lwin, an architect and the Director of YHT, said that the worldwide recognition of this old downtown area as a cultural heritage site to watch has been great encouragement for the Yangon community and city government – it enables thinking of conservation on the larger scale of urban areas

rather than on individual buildings.

“It would help our effort in advocating the preservation of city character, which has been under threat in this newest wave of development – brought on by the country opening up, coupled with an ever increasing interest in real estate investment in the area,” she said.

U Toe Aung, the director of Urban Planning Division under the Yangon City Development Committee, said that inclusion of WMF’s watch list is an important approach for conserving the unique characters of the historic buildings and the heritage zones of Yangon City.

“I am very proud for that the Yangon Historic City Center has been selected for the 2014 World Monuments Watch. To promote and protect Yangon’s built heritage as part of a comprehensive urban planning process is the responsibility of Yangon City Development Committee,” he said.

“Under the watch advocacy of World Monuments Fund and Yangon Heritage Trust, I hope we will achieve a positive effect on the heritage conservation process which includes international attention, cooperation of international heritage conservation agencies, consults from worldwide conservationists, public awareness and participations and providing the supports from various governmental organizations by setting guidelines on land use planning, zoning and conserving Yangon’s built heritage.

The city center of Yangon hosts the highest concentration of historic structures and architectural gems of the city. As such, 89 of the 189 Yangon City Heritage Listed buildings are located in downtown Yangon. It is a multi-faith and multi-ethnic setting with few peers anywhere in the world. Added to this unique religious heritage, the city endowed the largest collection of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century colonial architecture in Southeast Asia.

Every two years WMF publishes the World Monuments Watch since the first list was compiled in 1996. The Watch has attracted international attention to cultural heritage sites around the world threatened by neglect, vandalism, armed conflict, commercial development, natural disasters, and climate change. The sites are nominated by international and local preservation groups and professionals, including local authorities.

### **Yangon Heritage Trust**

The Yangon Heritage Trust (YHT) is a local NGO founded in January 2012 by a group of historians, architects, and business people and dedicated to the revitalization of Yangon by preserving and protecting the city's unique heritage. Its mission is to protect and promote Yangon’s rich urban heritage within a cohesive urban plan by advocating for heritage protection and revitalization of the historic city, advising the government and developers on heritage law and public policy and undertaking research and public outreach on preservation projects, studies, conferences, and training.

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