



PRESS RELEASE

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Preserving Yangon's heritage is a challenge: UN-Habitat Executive Director

The Executive Director of UN Habitat Dr Joan Clos expressed the appreciation for the exceptional architectural heritage of downtown Yangon saying urban revitalization requires partnerships between the government and the private sector.

During his and the Regional Director for Asia and Pacific Mr. Yoshinobu Fukasawa's visit to the Yangon Heritage Trust's office on Pansodan Street on Monday, October 14, 2013, Dr Joan Clos noted that preserving and repurposing the large number of heritage buildings poses a number of practical and economic challenges.

Dr. Clos is on an official mission to Myanmar until October 16 during which time he will be meeting several government ministry officials, UN colleagues, and development partners to understand the spectrum of development challenges in the country and the potential areas in which UN-Habitat might assist and cooperate.

He encouraged Yangon Heritage Trust to be realistic in what it can achieve and advocated the Trust's continuing focus on policy and legislative frameworks in addition to its public outreach and heritage awareness raising activities.

Dr. Clos immediately recognized the need to revitalize the waterfront of the city.

"There is a need to bring life to the harbor area, especially in the evenings, and the development of the water front is one way in which this can be achieved, with walkways along the harbor and markets and food stalls in the buildings nearby," said Dr Joan Clos.

The founder and Chairman of Yangon Heritage Trust Dr Thant Myint U commented on the important role of urban planning in combating poverty in urban and rural areas.

"International donors and agencies need to think about combating urban poverty as well as rural poverty; the right urban planning processes will be essential in preventing greater inequalities and the social tensions that will inevitably result," said Dr Thant Myint U.

"We hope very much that UN Habitat will be able to partner with the Yangon Heritage Trust, in safeguarding our priceless heritage at the same time as ensuring a more modern, green and livable city for all of Yangon's people."

"We want to integrate our conservation aims into a wider vision of urban revitalization, and for this we would welcome a partnership with the UN and with UN Habitat," he said.

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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