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Nan Madol: First World Heritage Site in Micronesia



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Istanbul, Turkey, 15 July—The World Heritage Committee, meeting for its 40th session since 10 July, this morning inscribed four new sites in China, India, Iran and Micronesia on the World Heritage List. Nan Madol: Ceremonial Centre of Eastern Micronesia in the Federated States of Micronesia was inscribed both on the World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Nan Madol: Ceremonial Centre of Eastern Micronesia (Federated States of Micronesia). Nan Madol is a series of 99 artificial islets off the south-east coast of Pohnpei that were constructed with walls of basalt and coral boulders. These islets harbour the remains of stone palaces, temples, tombs and residential domains built between 1200 and 1500 CE. These ruins represent the ceremonial centre of the Saudeleur dynasty, a vibrant period in Pacific Island culture. The huge scale of the edifices, their technical sophistication and the concentration of megalithic structures bear testimony to complex social and religious practices of the island societies of the period. The site was also inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger due to threats, notably the siltation of waterways that is contributing to the unchecked growth of mangroves and undermining weakening existing edifices.

Mr Augustin Kholer, the FSM National Archives Culture and Historic Preservation (NACH), speaking on behalf of the Paramount Chief of Madolenihmw (Isophau) who by custom is the traditional guardian and protector of Nan Madol, the people of Pohnpei State, and the people of FSM, extended sincerest thanks and gratitude to the World Heritage Committee for its decision. "The Pacific covers one-thirds of the surface of the earth but it is very much under represented on the World Heritage List. We need to prioritize the region and provide assistance for the Small Island Developing States in the context of climate change that we experience daily," said Augustin.

Much of the archaeological researches of this outstanding sites were conducted in the 1970s. Further studies and collection of oral traditions on Nan Madol were also carried out in the following years. The extensive research by JCIC-Heritage in Japan and the following community consultation held in Pohnpei in 2011 re-invigorated the programme for the safeguarding of Nan Madol and the nomination process. Since then, a number of researches, stakeholder consultations, workshops, and study visits were carried out by the FSM authorities with the assistance of international experts, specialized agencies such as the US National Park Service and the financial assistance under UNESCO/Japanese Funds-in-Trust.

Making a decision on its simultaneous inscription on the World Heritage in Danger List, the World Heritage Committee members emphasized the need to strengthen international cooperation for FSM to support its efforts in the safeguarding of the unique and outstanding sites of Nan Madol.

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