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First "World Heritage Day" on the 5th of June 2005

German UNESCO-Commission establishes the World Heritage Day nationwide

30 culture and nature sites from Germany are on the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. They are in-plane with the Pyramids of Gizeh, the Taj Mahal, the Galapagos-Islands and the Grand Canyon because of their "outstanding universal value". The status of World Heritage is regarded as a significant award, which is also bound to an international commitment. The aims of the World Heritage Day will be to increase the awareness of the importance of the World Heritage Monuments in Germany as places of particularly preservation and to strengthen their role as a mediator of the UNESCO ideals. The main event of this years World Heritage Day will take place at the World Heritage Site abbey of Lorsch.

"Each World Heritage Site is a joint in a cultural network, which embraces the whole world", says Dr. Roland Bernecker, the state secretary of the German UNESCO-Commission (DUK). Encounter and cultural dialogue are therefore the topical main focus of the World Heritage Day, to which the DUK and the UNESCO World Heritage Sites Association of Germany call for the first time this year. In the future the World Heritage Day is going to take place every first Sunday in June. Each year a different German World Heritage Site is to organise the main event.

The World Heritage Day should overall be a forum for communication with the people on site. For them, "their World Heritage Site" presents an important cultural and historical reference point. The aim is to "make World Heritage liveable" and to understand one's own culture as part of a diverse heritage of humankind. Each World Heritage Site is a place on a fascination map of cultural differences and a place of education of intercultural communication.

The 30 German World Heritage Sites are partners of the UNESCO and obliged to the core idea of the World Heritage convention, an international understanding based upon a mutual cultural acknowledgement. On the "World Heritage Day" they present themselves as "ambassadors of the UNESCO". Therefore is besides the preservation of ancient monuments and the assurance of authenticity the communication the most important task of the World Heritage Sites. Part of this are international partnerships as well as innovative tourist concepts, the support of scientific cooperation and the development of a "World Heritage Education".

Central scene of the first World Heritage Day on the 5th of June is the abbey of Lorsch in Hesse, which was taken into the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 1991. "Lorsch has, as one of the first World Heritage Sites, grasped the initiative of building up an intercultural network of convents on the list of World Heritage Sites and given the keyword for this day", says Bernecker. Partner World Heritage Sites from Armenia and South Korea, the Monastery of Geghard and Haeinsa Temple Janggyeong Panjeon, will help organise the World Heritage Day in Lorsch.

To track down the relationship of the people to their heritage Lorsch has had an educational program with model character for over 10 years. The aims and tasks of the World Heritage Sites and their great variety of tourist, educational and scientific offers will be presented on the World Heritage Day. The visitors can talk to experts in culture and monument preservation and find out about history, the research and prevention of cultural sites and their concepts of tourism compatible with the monuments. The World Heritage Day should also be a day offering special guided tours, concerts and exhibitions, culinary offers and a program for children and teenagers.

Besides the main event in Lorsch there will be activities nationwide concerning the World Heritage Day.

The German UNESCO-Commission is represented with a information stand in Lorsch and UNESCO project schools and UNESCO associations of the regions will take part in the event of the World Heritage Day. Sponsors and foundations have the opportunity to present themselves.

The UNESCO has passed the "Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" in 1972. Until today 180 nations have signed the convention. The UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites includes 788 monuments in 134 countries. Germany is represented on the list with 30 World Heritage Sites.

The World Heritage Convention is worldwide the most significant instrument which has ever been established by the community of nations to protect the cultural and natural heritage. The convention claims that cultures always have to be regarded as equal. It is an instrument of international understanding. In the guidelines of the carrying out of the convention it says: "Considering that parts of the cultural or natural heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole."

More Information:

Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission
Dieter Offenhäuser, Pressesprecher
Telefon: 0228 / 6 04 97-0 / -11
Email: offenhaeusser@unesco.de
Internet: www.unesco.de

UNESCO-Welterbestätte Kloster Lorsch
Dr. Hermann Schefers
Telefon: 06251 / 51 44 6
Email: info@kloster-lorsch.de
Internet: www.kloster-lorsch.de

UNESCO aktuell (UA), Pressemitteilungen der Deutschen UNESCO-Kommission e.V.
Redaktion: Dieter Offenhäuser, Colmantstraße 15, 53115 Bonn
Telefon: 0228-60497-11 ▪ Fax: 0228-60497-30 ▪ E-Mail: offenhaeusser@unesco.de ▪ Internet: www.unesco.de

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