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# Preface

2002 is designated United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage, coinciding with the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ratification of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, lending special significance to the International Conference on “The Conservation of Urban Heritage: Macao Vision”.

Thanks to its strategic geographic location, Macao has for centuries been an international trading port and a meeting point of Eastern and Western cultures, resulting in a rich cultural heritage. Thanks to restoration and repairs in the past, many historic buildings have been preserved as the city has become modernised. Macao is often referred to as a “Museum of Architecture from East and West” and, while its historic architectural heritage bears important witness to the development of Catholicism in China and the Far East, it also reflects the religious beliefs and social patterns in this part of South China.

After the Handover of Macao, under the leadership of the Macao Special Administrative Region, the Cultural Institute has pursued the protection of historic heritage in accordance with the principles of authenticity, integrity and conformity, bolstering renovation projects and keeping a balance between different styles. An application has been submitted requesting the inclusion of “The Historic Monuments of Macao” in the World Heritage List, in a move to promote Macao’s unique cultural image. In our determination to adhere to international standards, a series of activities has aimed at enhancing civic awareness of the need to protect cultural heritage, with a special focus on our younger generation. This campaign has included a training scheme for “Young Cultural Heritage Ambassadors” and other activities that have increased the enthusiasm of Macao’s citizens for their cultural heritage and enabled them to take an active role in protecting it.

Since entering the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Macao S.A.R. Government has confirmed that tourism and gambling will be its main focus for development, generating other opportunities through them. Following the opening up of the gaming concession, economic development and urban infrastructure construction are expected to reach levels previously unknown in Macao. This development poses



challenges to our work in the cultural heritage arena, requiring a firmly integrated approach within a complete system, and the use of new technology to preserve a meaningful historic and cultural environment to create new opportunities for tourism and diversify urban planning. The Cultural Institute proposed three special subjects for discussion during the conference on “The Conservation of Urban Heritage: Macao Vision”: “Cultural Significance”, “Urban Development vs Heritage Conservation” and “Adaptive Re-use”. Our intention was to seize this moment of transition to provide a forum for relevant parties to engage in in-depth discussion of the future. These parties included government departments, internationally renowned conservationists, academics, professional organisations in Macao and higher education establishments. I believe that all gained from the ideas voiced and valuable experiences shared, in establishing a theoretical foundation for Macao’s future urban planning.

The Cultural Institute was honoured indeed that Dr. Daniel Tse, Chairman of the Macao University Council, accepted our invitation to serve as Chairman of the Academic Committee of the Conference, and I take this opportunity to thank him for his invaluable contribution. Professor David Lung, Chairman of the Hong Kong Historical Heritage Committee has given his support as Honorary Secretary while Dr. José Chui, Architect Eddie Wong, Professor Carlos Marreiros and Mr. Stephen Chan were also members of the committee.

The keynote and sub-theme speakers came from organisations in both the public and private sectors, working in China, Canada, India, the United Kingdom and Southeast Asian countries as well as the United Nations. Their wealth of experience in the fields of urban planning, building, utilisation of cultural heritage and tourism promotion brought a variety of perspectives to the complex issues addressed in the conference, and set the tone for the Workshop discussions that followed each paper. Taking advantage of modern technology, the reports from these discussions, and the session summaries are available to the public in the electronic version of the Proceedings posted on the Cultural Institute’s website at: [www.icm.gov.mo](http://www.icm.gov.mo)

The Conference on “The Conservation of Urban Heritage: Macao Vision” opened up a series of new issues for consideration. On behalf of the Cultural Institute, I offer my heartfelt gratitude to every person and organisation involved in making the conference a success.

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of the Macao Special Administrative Region Government