**PRESS RELEASE**

Tangible and intangible heritage values – what is worth preserving?

**Study day marks recognition of Bahá’í properties in Haifa and ‘Akko as World Heritage sites**

HAIFA, Israel, 20 February 2009 – About 220 people participated in a study day that took place today at the Bahá’í World Centre in honor of the declaration of the Bahá’í sites in Haifa and ‘Akko as World Heritage Sites. The event was a joint initiative of the Bahá’í World Centre and the Council for the Preservation of Heritage Sites in Israel. The chairman of the study day was Architect Walid Karkabi, Head of the Conservation Unit at the Haifa Municipality.

Professor Michael Turner, Chairman of the Israel Committee for World Heritage, who accompanied the process of the selection of the Bahá’í sites, lectured on the idea and the rationale behind World Heritage. His lecture dealt with the idea behind heritage sites and the criteria according to which heritage sites are selected, with the Bahá’í sites as an example for sites whose value is not necessarily only tangible.

Dr. Albert Lincoln, Secretary-General of the Bahá’í International Community, told of the process of preparing the nomination file of the Bahá’í sites, which emphasized the experience of pilgrimage. In the beginning of the process, the Bahá’ís proposed to include all the pilgrimage sites in ‘Akko and Haifa, but in the end, the recognition referred only to the two sites surrounding the shrines.

The Bahá’í sites were chosen to be included in the World Heritage List based on criterion no. 6 of the World Heritage Convention, according to which a site will be included if it has a direct or tangible connection to events or traditions, ideas or beliefs, artistic and literary creations of outstanding universal significance.

Architect Ruth Liberty Shalev, a lecturer in the Masters program for the study of conservation at the Technion, lectured on the intangible values in conservation and the migration in the world of conservation from single monuments and structures to the conservation of complexes because their structures have a symbolic significance or represent a social or historic phenomenon, rather than because of their outstanding architectural esthetic qualities.

Dr. Noga Kreiner-Collins, from the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at Haifa University, presented a study she had recently conducted at the Bahá’í gardens, in which she studied the shared space that was created at the gardens in Haifa that “both tourists and pilgrims use simultaneously”. The study examined the basis of the coexistence between these two groups in one space and attempted to produce recommendations for other sites.

Architect Ariel Waterman, City Engineer of Haifa, spoke of the advantages of having a World Heritage site in Haifa and told of the steps taken by the Municipality to ensure a buffer zone surrounding the site to prevent it from being harmed by inappropriate building projects. From his speech it appears as though the advantages far exceed the drawbacks, and that the Bahá’í gardens and shrine in Haifa constitute the symbol of the city.

At the end of the study day, Architect Danny Raz made a short presentation about dilemmas that conservation people face in many locations, some of which are common to the fields of nature conservation and sustainable planning in general. The presentation introduced a panel chaired by Mr. Daniel Milo, Director of the Ethics Center in Jerusalem, which discussed the question of which heritage is to be conserved and who should make the choice, as well as the question of whether conservation and development necessarily contradict one another.

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