



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
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22 September 2004

**Subject: Concerns expressed by religious groups regarding the
Sri Harimandir Sahib nomination**

Your Excellency,

I have pleasure in contacting you regarding a cultural heritage site in India, Sri Harimandir Sahib, of which the nomination file was submitted to the World Heritage Centre in February this year, and is currently being technically evaluated by ICOMOS, the Advisory Body to the World Heritage Committee.

However, here I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the Director General of UNESCO as well as myself has been contacted during the recent months by several religious groups of the Sikh faith, based not only in India but also in the U.K and Canada, who are strongly concerned with the possible impact of the World Heritage listing on the character of this sacred site.

I enclose herewith the 16-page "Opinion" that was submitted to the World Heritage Centre from the concerned Sikh religious group. The main issue raised by the authors of this document concerns the lack of consultation with the representatives of the Sikh community in the process of the nomination. In particular, the new proposed management system, through a specific consultation process followed by the Indian authorities in preparing the nomination file for the Sri Harimandir Sahib and particularly in defining a well-coordinated management system. Such clarification would be very important also in the context of the examination of the site by the World Heritage Committee.

For your further reference, I would like to indicate below some extracts from the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

H. E. Ms Bhaswati Mukherjee
Ambassador
Permanent Delegate
Permanent Delegation of India to UNESCO
UNESCO House
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Para.13. In certain cases it may be necessary for States Parties to consult the Secretariat and the specialized NGO concerned informally before submitting nomination forms. (...)

Para. 14. Participation of local people in the nomination process is essential to make them feel a shared responsibility with the State Party in the maintenance of the site.

I would like you to kindly ensure transmission of this matter to the relevant national and local authorities in India, and I would very much appreciate to receive clarification from your Government on the necessary consultation held with the Sikh community, and that the nomination dossier ensures a well-coordinated management between the religious community and the State Party. Inscription on the World Heritage List may be delayed, if it is deemed necessary to ensure the universal agreement from concerned parties.

Thank you for your continued interest in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and in safeguarding the heritage of humankind.

Please accept, your Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.


for Francesco Bandarin
Director
UNESCO World Heritage Centre

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Encl. OPINION of the Sikh community in the matter of the application by the Indian Government for inclusion of the Sri Akal Takht Sahib on the World Heritage List