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NEWS RELEASE

Presentation at the World Bank: Batonistsikhe Conservation Plan and Planning of Future Rehabilitation Works

Tbilisi, 23 December, 2013. The World Bank Office hosted a comprehensive discussion of the on-going research and architectural restoration works carried out in the Telavi Batonistsikhe (King's Palace) Cultural Heritage Complex. The Batonistsikhe Complex incorporates monuments and buildings that belong to various periods and carry various functions. They are included in the State Register for Monuments of Cultural Heritage: XVII-XVIII centuries' fence, XVII-XVIII centuries' small court church, XVII-XVIII centuries military church, XVII-XVIII centuries cannon tower, and mid-XIX century "Treasury House". The rehabilitation of Batonistsikhe Complex is carried out in accordance with all the rules and regulations set out in the Law on Protection of Georgia's Cultural Heritage.

Representatives of the Ministry of Culture, the Municipal Development Fund, Georgian Arts and Culture Center (GACC), members of the Project team working on the Complex, and conservation experts participated in the discussion. Among them – art critics, architects and restorers working on historic and new parts of the Complex.

The conservation plan for the Telavi Batonistsikhe Complex was commissioned by the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia through the GACC. The project was funded by the Municipal Development Fund, through the state budget, under the auspices of the World Bank-financed Regional Development Project, focusing on Kakheti region.

The materials presented included: the art survey, graphic and photo studies, archaeological and engineering conclusions, monument conservation and sociological survey materials, interdisciplinary survey analysis and guiding principles for the monument rehabilitation. These documents constitute together a Site Management Plan for the complex and will serve as the foundation for restoration of the historical parts of the Complex and design of a new building to function as History of Kakheti Museum.

"This was a very important meeting, as it was devoted to such a significant historic monument as the Batonistsikhe Complex in Telavi. The work on its conservation plan has been completed, and it is now a crucial stage in the process of research and restoration of the monument, which, in its turn, is a crucial step in the further rehabilitation of this site, said Marina Mizandari, Deputy Minister of Culture of Georgia. "These activities are important for rectifying the previous actions that could have significantly harmed this cultural heritage site. As a result of summing up the outcomes of the work on the conservation plan, we now see the ways we can choose in future - how the building, which is being constructed there, can be adapted to the monument, how this site with all its components can be perceived in unity. This Complex lacked such a vision since the 1970s, when this area was declared a cultural heritage site. This is an unprecedented case in recent years when after inappropriately conducted works, a proper methodological approach has been applied as the way to save the existing situation. This envisages the use of only the comprehensive, integrated approach and definition of functions and roles of each monument in the Complex based on that approach. It also envisages the defining of the ways of its development, again within the context of a comprehensive approach, so that different monuments are not

regarded as separate elements, but rather as parts of a larger and very valuable concept and structure,” she added.

In Marina Mizandari’s words the meeting, initiated by the World Bank, that has brought together various stakeholders and members of the team who elaborated the conservation plan, has been extremely useful. It sets an important precedent upon which further work on other historic monuments will be founded in future.

“Batonistsikhe Complex is the jewel in the crown of Kakheti region. Our joint effort with the Government of Georgia and conservation experts to appropriately restore the historical parts and construct the new history of Kakheti museum is instrumental to the overall success of the Kakheti Regional Development Project. The Complex is the pride of the people of Telavi and we will soon organize consultation workshops with them in Telavi to seek their views;” **said Ahmed Eiweida, Sector Leader, Sustainable Development, South Caucasus Region, World Bank.**

Developing this cultural heritage site is a joint effort by the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation and Georgia Municipal Development Fund, supported by the World Bank.

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