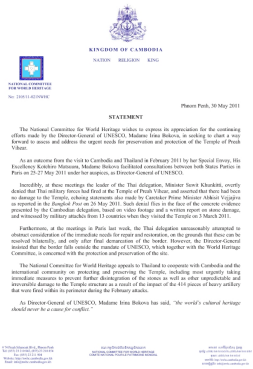
Statement of National Committee for World Heritage



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

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NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR WORLD HERITAGE

No. 230/11.022/NWHC

Phnom Penh, 30 May 2011

STATEMENT

The National Committee for World Heritage wishes to express its appreciation for the continuing efforts made by the Director-General of UNESCO, Madame Irina Bokova, in seeking to chart a way forward to assess and address the urgent needs for preservation and protection of the Temple of Preah Vihear.

As an outcome from the visit to Cambodia and Thailand in February 2011 by her Special Envoy, His Excellency Koïchiro Matsuura, Madame Bokova facilitated consultations between both States Parties in Paris on 25-27 May 2011 under her auspices, as Director-General of UNESCO.

Incredibly, at these meetings the leader of the Thai delegation, Minister Sorett Khunkitti, overtly denied that Thai military forces had fired at the Temple of Preah Vihear, and asserted that there had been no damage to the Temple, echoing statements also made by Caretaker Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva as reported in the *Bangkok Post* on 26 May 2011. Such denial flies in the face of the concrete evidence presented by the Cambodian delegation, based on video footage and a written report on stone damage, and witnessed by military attachés from 13 countries when they visited the Temple on 3 March 2011.

Furthermore, at the meetings in Paris last week, the Thai delegation unreasonably attempted to obstruct consideration of the immediate needs for repair and restoration, on the grounds that these can be resolved bilaterally, and only after final demarcation of the border. However, the Director-General reminded the Thai delegation that UNESCO, as mandated by States, together with the World Heritage Committee, is concerned with the protection and preservation of this site.

The National Committee for World Heritage appeals to Thailand to cooperate with Cambodia and the international community on protecting and preserving the Temple, including most urgently taking immediate measures to prevent further disintegration of the stones as well as other unpredictable and irreversible damage to the Temple structure as a result of the impact of the 416 pieces of heavy artillery that were fired within its perimeter during the February attacks.

As Director-General of UNESCO, Madame Irina Bokova has said, *"the world's cultural heritage should never be a cause for conflict."*

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