

## **Open letter to those engaged in and responsible for the UNESCO World Heritage Programme and status of World Heritage Sites regarding Draft Decision WHC/19/43.COM/B Convention Concerning the Protection of The World Cultural and Natural Heritage Venice and its Lagoon (Italy) (C394)**

In consideration of the Draft Decision WHC/19/43.COM/B of 20 May 2019 the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM highlighted the following in their “analysis and conclusions”:

- *“New measures are being deployed ... to allow large ships to reach the Venice Maritime station without passing through the San Marco Basin and the Giudecca Canal. Initial initiatives have been pursued, but the **detailed timeframe and overall plan for the project, including impact assessments, are yet to be provided.**”*
- *“Interventions to support residency and related revisions to tourist rental regulations are intended to address significant threats to the authenticity of the property, and it would be relevant to **seek further information on the outcomes achieved by these initiatives.**”*
- *that the ‘Project of Territorial Governance of Tourism in Venice’ is an essential planning instrument, but still incomplete.*
- *“**Sufficient improvement in the state of conservation and further progress with mitigation are therefore, still needed,** in order to maintain the authenticity and integrity of the property and to protect its OUV to a level that will prevent the property to be considered for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger.”*

Hence the World Heritage Committee is requesting further information and yet another postponement of the decision to declare Venice as an endangered site.

The undersigned associations and committees, engaged in protecting Venice and its lagoon and safeguarding Venice as a living city, together with its cultural heritage, would like to bring the Committee’s attention to the evident divergence between the recommendations contained in the “Mission Report Venice and its Lagoon WHC/16/40.COM//A.Add of 6.6.2016”, the conclusions of the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM and the Draft Decision WHC/19/43.COM/B/86, to be presented at the 43rd session in Baku, notably point 6:

*The World Heritage Committee) welcomes **the alternative navigation path that has been identified for the relocation of ships with a gross tonnage of over 40,000 tons to Marghera, and the support for the Venetian cruise industry through construction of a new terminal in Marghera, and further requests the State Party to submit detailed plans and the timeframe for the implementation of the proposed plans that will allow large ships to reach the Venice Maritime station without passing through the San Marco Basin and the Giudecca Canal.***

As representatives of national and international organizations as well as broadly representative community groups we are asking the World Heritage Committee to explain on what basis it has chosen to ignore the recommendation WHC/16/40.COM//A.Add/5.1:

***Strategic environmental planning for the relocation of the Marittima passenger transport terminal, as well as the Marghera large ship harbour facilities outside of the Lagoon should be undertaken. A priority aim would be to consider an alternative location for the passenger***

***terminal that would not require crossing of the Giudecca canal and San Marco basin or other passage of large cruise ships across the Lagoon.***

Furthermore we emphasise that the new route proposed by the State Party [through Marghera] worsens the problems of air pollution, instability of the lagoon system, erosion caused by ship traffic, risk of species loss along with pressure from tourism due to bigger ships considering that, as noted in the “analysis and conclusions”, *there is still no detailed plan, nor timeframe, or environmental impact assessment of the proposed alternative route..*

The listed organizations are also asking for an explanation regarding the encouragement offered by UNESCO as “*support for the Venetian cruise industry*” since **the emphasis should surely lie in safeguarding the site** - Venice and the lagoon, UNESCO World Heritage since 1987.

We also ask why the decision relative to recommendation WHC/16/40.COM//A.Add/5.6, relating to Venice as an endangered site, that seemed urgent back in 2014, and is even more urgent now considering that 60% of homes in Venice are now available as short term tourist accommodation (Banca d'Italia - Venezia, 2019) and the share is still growing. This defies the Monitoring Mission's recommendations:

*to install efficient legal measures to discourage*  
*- the purchase of flats for second residences and*  
*- change of use from ordinary habitation into any form of hotel industry (hotels, B&B, etc.) and encourage the reconversion of B&B facilities into rented flats.*

The following organizations, representative of a large and significant share of the local population and including numerous experts and professionals, are all engaged in promoting the protection of Venice and the lagoon as well as safeguarding Venice as a living city together with its cultural heritage **have come together to present this appeal to the World Heritage Committee of the 43rd session and ask that the Venice case is discussed during the plenary discussions in Baku (30/6 - 10/7/2019):**

*Nationally represented organizations*

Francesca Barbini, Delegazione FAI di Venezia  
Lidia Fersuoch, Italia Nostra, sezione Venezia  
Paolo Franceschetti, Legambiente, sezione Venezia  
Giampaolo Pamio, LIPU Venezia  
Valeria Ercolin, WWF Venezia e Territorio

*Principal local organizations*

Armando Danella, Associazione Ambiente Venezia  
Marco Gasparinetti, Associazione 25 aprile Venezia  
Tommaso Cacciari, Comitato No Grandi Navi  
Daniela Perdibon, Forum Futuro Arsenale  
Matteo Secchi, venessia.com  
Jane da Mosto, We are here Venice