

DECLARATION OF LA LAGUNA

8th International Forum UNESCO Seminar

"World Natural Heritage:

Natural Sites, Development, Sustainability and Ethics"

November 24 – 29 2003, University of La Laguna-Tenerife (Spain)

The rectors, deans, professors and students of universities from fifteen countries from America, Arab Countries and Europe.

THANKING the support to the international seminar by the local authorities of La Laguna and by the University of La Laguna .

CONSIDERING THAT:

1.- Language is an essential heritage of man, since it is the means to know the world as a repository of memory transmitted from generation to generation. For that reason, the names of places are a cultural heritage themselves and are inseparable from the places they refer to and therefore they should be studied, understood and protected.

2.- Today, more than ever, the natural and cultural heritage of towns is not only threatened by natural catastrophes, but what is worse, by the lack of suitable management plans for their conservation. In this sense, universities are essential to promote multidisciplinary research, workshops and scientific publications. It is emphasized that these management plans of natural and/or cultural sites should be based on ethical principles. Thus, ethics, in this context, is the gratitude towards nature and the founder ancestors of these privileged sites which will provide an ecological, archaeological, historical and social balance.

3.- The means for the conservation of those species in danger of extinction shall be established, as their disappearance would imply the loss of a valuable natural heritage. Thus, the protection of land and marine ecosystems, and the biodiversity of flora and fauna shall be a priority through permanent controls and environmental impact assessments. The biosphere reserves should also serve as a crucial element to preserve the cultural and historical heritage.

4.- In a globalized world, the concept of cultural diversity and creativity should be the main concern. Universities should closely collaborate through networks with the civil society and NGOs, by encouraging participation mechanisms through training in heritage and

environment, tending to the transmission of the values of such heritage for future generations.

5.- It is necessary to place special emphasis on the conservation of rural and vernacular architecture, as the basis to understand a lifestyle, its adaptation to the land, and traditional technologies. It is recommended further research, inventory and assessment. It is also recommended to keep in mind that this heritage should be included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

6.- Massive tourism should be controlled in heritage sites. Only through planning we will manage not to unbalance the environment, which should preserve intact its integrity.

Therefore, the collaborative work of universities with tourist operators, entrepreneurs, and hotel managers, can offer services, and accept conservation studies, plans and projects of the sites. Rural tourism and ecotourism as a formula of development for local people cannot be planned without taking into consideration the communities and their needs to improve their quality of life. The exploitation of the natural and cultural heritage that trivializes history, minimizes culture, falsifies emotions and commercializes feelings and traditions, entails a loss of authenticity and character of the sites.

7.- It is recommended to call the attention of the Member States so that there is a coherence between the principles underlying their declarations of heritage and the follow-up of their implementation and institutional management through regulation plans that do not lose the spirit of the original declarations.

8.- In the future, during the processes of declaration of a world heritage property, it is recommended to define the inherent obligations to their membership and ensure the follow-up and monitoring procedures of the goods declared as world heritage.

9.- University complexes, whether old or ex-novo, should have to establish in the future a model of environmental management within the conception of their architectonic, urban and landscape complexes, thus integrating them within an inseparable unit. Therefore, they will become paradigmatic models for the whole society, taking into account inherited designs as well as the most recent creations.