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PRESS RELEASE

Subject: Subject: New threats to Elefsina (Eleusis) and its antiquities, despite its designation as the 2023 European Capital of Culture

The establishment of industrial installations in Elefsina began in the last decades of the 19th century, on the coast, very close to the Sanctuary of the "Eleusinian Mysteries", one of the most important pan-Hellenic ancient sanctuaries, with unique architecture such as the "Telesterion", around which the accessible archaeological site is confined. No excavations have yet been carried out on the hill where the ancient city was located (west of the Acropolis) nor in the areas where the Stadium and Theater likely stood (south of the Acropolis), due to the establishment of industrial installations, especially the TITAN cement factory, whose chimneys emit cement dust that damages the antiquities.

The ICOMOS Hellenic considers that the inclusion of Elefsina in the UNESCO World Heritage List is possible, since Elefsina possesses the most essential element for inclusion, namely "Outstanding Universal Value", due to the "Eleusinian Mysteries". For this inclusion to be feasible, a comprehensive management plan must be developed and adopted; according to international doctrinal texts and UNESCO guidelines, must include all measures for the protection, promotion, and management of the archaeological site, as well as the necessary funding mechanisms. A first and absolutely necessary step is to establish the required buffer zone, which is complicated by the close proximity of TITAN. But the wider area, especially the coastal area, is also suffering greatly. Today, following the economic crisis that led to the closure of many industries, two refineries operate in Elefsina (out of three in our country; the third is a few kilometers away, on the Saronic Gulf), two shipyards, the TITAN cement plant, the commercial port for bulk cargo (the only one in Attica) and several other businesses that contribute to the pollution of the Gulf of Elefsina. Within the municipality's boundaries and the wider Thriasio plain, numerous logistics facilities operate, creating major problems, particularly through vehicle traffic.

Instead of protecting the Gulf of Elefsina, new difficulties are in preparation:

1. The Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (HRADF/ΤΑΙΠΕΔ) is preparing a relocation to the Vlycha area (next to TITAN), a wetland at the mouth of the Soures stream, a project that will involve depositing fill over many hectares and possibly dredging in the sea. Any dredging of the seabed will release substances currently found in the sediment, with unpredictable consequences. The commercial port must be relocated to free up the waterfront for residential development, but not in Vlycha. The best location is in the inactive areas of Halyvourgiki, within the Municipality (not near the residential area), where there is a possibility of connection to the road/rail network. Vlycha must be protected and revitalized.

2. Relevant legislation enables the Elefsina Shipyards to expand their activity, namely:

A. Expansion of shipbuilding activities, primarily through the repair of commercial, passenger, and military vessels, as well as the construction of new ones, so that Elefsina may emerge as a leading shipbuilding center.

B. The railway industry, with the establishment of a new company for the production and repair of railcars.

C. Logistics and Port Infrastructure, featuring a modern freight hub with road/rail connection to the Thriasio Plain Freight Station and the Military Airport of Elefsina.

D. Energy Hub for natural gas transportation.

3. The Port Authority of Elefsina (OΛE) is being pressured to cede a large tract of land in front of the residential area and the inactive KRONOS factory (which the Municipality of Elefsina recently purchased to restore and redevelop), for the installation of petroleum waste, despite the unanimous opposition of the Elefsina Municipal Council.

4. Plans are underway to “develop” 5,000 acres, mainly forested land in Magoula, for new business activities and the creation of an organized industrial park.

Elefsina and Thriasio are already saturated with industry. New charges are being proposed, while a Municipal Urban Plan is being drafted, which, among other things, provides for the protection of natural areas, management of the waterfront, and the development of cultural tourism.

On behalf of I.C.O.M.O.S. Hellenic National Committee

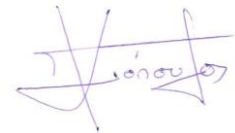
The President,



Sofia Avgerinou-Kolonias



the Secretary General



Ioannis Panopoulos