



WORLD HISTORICAL CITIES



137 Member Cities

AFRICA

Alexandria / Algiers / Fès / Giza / Luxor / Tunis

ASIA

Andong / Baglung / Bhotekoshi / Buyeo / Chengdu / Chiang Mai / Dujiangyan / Gongju / Gyeongju / Hanoi / Hariharpurgadhi / Harion / Himeji / Hue / Kaesong / Kamakura / Kanazawa / Kathmandu / Kurunegala / Kyoto / Lahore / Masuda / Matsue / Nanjing / Nara / Shankharapur / Sunkoshi / Suwon / Taichung / Tainan / Ulaanbaatar / Varanasi / Vigan / Vyas / Wuxi / Xi'an / Yangon / Yangzhou / Yogyakarta / Zhengzhou

EUROPE

Alba Iulia / Amsterdam / Athens / Bad Ischl / Barcelona / Bordeaux / Bratislava / Brussels / Budapest / Chernivtsi / Cologne / Constanța / Córdoba / Corinth / Dublin / Edinburgh / Florence / Geneva / Helsingborg / Iași / Izhevsk / Kazan / Klaipėda / Kraków / Kutaisi / Kyiv / Lisbon / Ljubljana / Lutsk / Lviv / Minsk / Montpellier / Mtskheta / Nicosia / Niš / Norwich / Odesa / Paris / Prague / Riga / Rome / Santiago de Compostela / Sarajevo / Sheki / Shusha / South East Region of Malta / Strasbourg / Tashkent / Termez / The Hague / Veliko Tarnovo / Venice / Vienna / Vladimir / Zagreb

LATIN AMERICA

Cartagena / Cuenca / Cusco / Guadalajara / Mexico City

MIDDLE EAST

Ankara / Ardabil / Baghdad / Bursa / Hamedan / Hebron / Isfahan / Istanbul / Jerusalem / Kashan / Kong / Konya / Mashhad / Masouleh / Natanz / Nayshabur / Osmangazi / Şanlıurfa / Selçuklu / Semnan / Shiraz / Tabriz / Tehran / Yazd

NORTH AMERICA

Boston / Montreal / Quebec

PACIFIC

Ballarat / Melbourne / Norwood Payneham and St Peters / Whanganui

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Date: November 10 – 13, 2026
Conference Venue: Arcrea HIMEJI



PROGRAM (Tentative)

10 DAY 1

09:30	Opening Ceremony
10:00	Keynote Speech
10:40	Coffee Break
11:00	Roundtable Part 1
12:00	Lunch
13:30	<Group 1> Himeji Castle Site Visit <Group 2> Board of Directors Meeting
17:30	Welcome Reception at Himeji Castle

11 DAY 2

09:30	Roundtable Part 2
10:50	Coffee Break
11:10	Youth Program (Speech Contest)
12:00	Lunch
13:30	Experts Session
14:40	Coffee Break
15:00	Mayors Session
17:30	Dinner



MAIN THEME

Preservation and Utilization of Cultural Heritage for a Sustainable and Resilient Future

12
DAY 3

09:00
10:30

General Assembly and Closing Ceremony

Transfer to Excursion Destination

* Selected from three cities: **Himeji, Nara and Kyoto.**

Course 1
Himeji City

Fishing
Industry Tour

(Nov.12)

Course 2
Himeji City

Mount Shosha
Engyoji Temple
Tour

(Nov.12)

Course 3
Nara City

City Tour
&
Reception

(Nov.12-13)

Course 4
Kyoto City

City Tour
&
Reception

(Nov.12-13)

Post Conference
Excursion (Optional)

13
DAY 4

Participants in Course 3 and 4 will stay overnight either in Nara or Kyoto, depending on their choice of destination. A city excursion scheduled on the following day, November 13, as well.

Note: Those participants will be requested to pay an additional fee to cover costs for the accommodation, meals, and transportation to the nearest airport from Nara or Kyoto.

Experts Session

Two experts will share their insights on the preservation and utilization of cultural heritage.

Himeji Castle Site Visit

A site visit will be conducted to Himeji Castle, a World Heritage site and a wooden structure built over 400 years ago, and the adjacent Koko-en Japanese Garden.

Round Table

Sub-theme: Co-creating a Sustainable Future for Cultural Heritage Preservation

Speakers will each give a presentation and hold a Q&A session on their initiatives to protect cultural heritage from threats such as natural disasters, environmental issues, and human-induced hazards, fostering a joint reflection on a sustainable future.

Mayors Session

Sub-theme: Building a Virtuous Cycle of Cultural Heritage Preservation and Utilization

Speakers will exchange ideas and discuss a challenge in not only protecting cultural heritage but also utilizing it appropriately, aiming to achieve a virtuous cycle of preservation and utilization. The challenge to be discussed will be announced in advance.

Youth Programs

Art Exhibition: "My Town's Treasure" (for Elementary School Students, Ages 6-11)

Participants are invited to draw treasures of their town—tangible or intangible, anything they wish to pass on to the future. The submitted artworks will be displayed at the venue.

English Speech Contest: "My Town That I Want to Share with the World" (for Middle and High School Students, Ages 12-18)

Participants are asked to submit their speeches as videos for judging. Outstanding speeches will be selected and screened at the venue.

Call for Speakers in June

Call for Participants in June

The Purpose of the Main Theme

The 20th World Conference of Historical Cities will focus on the following SDGs goal and target:

SDG Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Target 11.4: Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

SDG Goal 11 aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The cultural heritage referred to in Target 11.4 includes areas and structures of cultural and historical significance. By preserving this heritage and sharing its value beyond national and regional boundaries, we can learn the importance of understanding and respecting diverse cultures and histories. However, due to changes in the natural environment and social conditions, cultural heritage faces a wide range of threats, including natural disasters, environmental issues, and human-induced hazards.

The 20th Conference will bring together historical cities to share knowledge and experiences on initiatives to protect and utilize cultural heritage exposed to these threats. Through this exchange, the Conference aims to raise awareness of cultural heritage preservation and to reaffirm the importance of a safe and secure society that promotes well-being.

The Conference Official Website Will Be Launched in May 2026

- Details of the registration procedure and calling for speakers will be announced in March 2026.
- Details of the Youth Programs will be informed in June 2026.
- Registration for the conference and speakers' application starts in June 2026.

Mashhad, a bustling metropolis in northeastern Iran and the center of Khorasan Razavi province, welcomes millions of pilgrims and tourists annually to the radiant shrine of Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (AS). Once being the capital of Iran during the Afsharid era, the city boasts its profound ties to Iranian history and culture, enhanced by its natural attractions, historical sites, and extensive transportation and accommodation infrastructure.

The urban management policies of Mashhad prioritize the conservation of historical heritage to bolster the city's identity and sustainable development. Protection, restoration, revival, and utilization of cultural assets form a core strategy, particularly in the historic fabric around the holy shrine, aiming to stimulate the economy by transforming heritage sites into tourist hubs and revenue generators. The Mashhad Municipality's Urban Renewal Organization leads these efforts, collaborating with stakeholders and private sector partners to implement comprehensive initiatives.

Mashhad: Iran's Spiritual Capital and Guardian of Historical Heritage

Key Preservation Initiatives

Restoration of Historic Buildings: In Mashhad, the restoration of historic landmarks bridges the spiritual past with modern urban life. By breathing new life into structures like the Malek House, Darugha House, Tavakoli House, and the Azizollah-af Caravanserai, the city transforms static monuments into vibrant cultural hubs. Through both municipal funding and private investment, these sites now serve as active community spaces, ensuring that architectural heritage survives alongside the city's rapid expansion.

Historic Fabric Management: Establishment of dedicated facilitation offices, neighborhood development plans, and incentive packages for restoration (including design approvals, permits, owner loans, promotional campaigns, street paving, facade repairs, historic neighborhood plans, and renaming streets to their original names).

Revival of Historic Passageways: Simultaneously, the revival of historic passageways focuses on the traditional pilgrimage experience. Key routes such as Sarshour, Eidgah, Khosravi, and Tabarsi are being

rehabilitated to reclaim their historical identity. In a pilgrimage-centric city like Mashhad, these corridors do more than move traffic; they preserve the ritualistic "spirit of place," connecting the modern cityscape to the sacred Imam Reza Shrine through authentic, pedestrian-friendly environments.

Identification and Promotion: Compilation of old street names for historic districts with corresponding signage; installation of historic site guideboards; citizen tours to highlight heritage stories; feasibility studies for historic gates and event spaces; restoration of landmarks like Targh Historic Rabat, Targh Ivan, and Tus Historic Wall.

Adaptive Reuse and Investment: Social partnerships for up to two million Euros in reviving valuable houses, repurposing them into boutique hotels, traditional cafes, and restaurants, while promoting private investments to support local economies.

These endeavors safeguard 56 nationally registered historic houses and 650 identified culturally valuable buildings, positioning Mashhad as a leader in urban regeneration and heritage preservation.

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Two cities, Hamedan and Natanz, have been officially approved to be our new members. The current number of member cities has reached to **137.**

The program was well structured and all activities were executed smoothly. There were ample opportunities to engage and exchange insights with representatives from other cities, which added significant value to the experience.

Feed-back from Directors

The City of Himeji prepared the halal menu and that was a particularly good idea for members of various religious faiths.

The Exhibition Hall - Arcrea HIMEJI



The Exhibition Hall on the first floor is a column-free space, measuring 4,000 square meters with a height of approximately 10 meters. It can be divided into three sections and the two-thirds of the space shall be used: one-third for the conference and another one-third for PR booths of applicant cities and refreshments.

Highlights of Inspection visits



Fishing Industry Tour - Himeji



Mount Shosa Engyoji Temple - Himeji



Ninnaji Temple - Kyoto



Todaiji Temple - Nara

Overview

- Date : Nov. 4 – 5, 2025
- Venue : Arcrea HIMEJI Conference Room 407
- Format : On-site
- Official language : English
- Cites in Attendance: 7 Directors out of 8
 - Chair : Kyoto (Japan)
 - Vice-Chair : Xi'an (China)
 - Konya (Türkiye)
 - Directors : Gyeongju (South Korea), Ljubljana (Slovenia), Bad Ischl (Austria), Kraków (Poland)
- Host City : Himeji (Japan)

Note:

1. Shiraz (Iran) was absent with a delegation of powers letter submitted.
2. Ljubljana attended the meeting as an observer with a delegation of powers letter submitted.
3. Himeji participated the meeting to give a presentation on the next conference after all the deliberations and reports were made.

● Inspections

< November 4 > Himeji City
Arcrea HIMEJI
Himeji Castle

< November 5 > Himeji City
Fishing Industry Tour
Mount Shosa Engyoji Temple

< November 6 > Kyoto City
Nijo-jo Castle
Kyoto City Hall
Ninnaji Temple

< November 7 > Nara City
Todaiji Temple
Nara Park
Nara Palace Site Historical Park



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Request for FY2026 Membership Payment

The Secretariat is accepting annual fee payments.
Please check the invoice on the official website.