



June 18, 2020

### Message from the Chairperson

It is today when we were supposed to gather at the 17<sup>th</sup> World Conference of Historical Cities in Kazan to exchange our opinions. However, the world is still faced with the COVID-19 pandemic and we regrettably had to postpone our conference.

We as the League of Historical Cities and its former organization called the World Conference of Historical Cities Council have had opportunities to discuss various themes such as “Preservation and Development,” “Succession and Renovation,” and “the Innovative and Creative Future Developed by Technologies” for 16 times in 33 years. At those opportunities, we gathered together with knowledge and experience we had gained over the years to integrate them into the great wisdom of Historical Cities and share it among members for developing our cities.

Now, all humans have to tackle the common issues such as preventing the spread of COVID-19, developing new medicines to treat COVID-19 patients, deliberating how to shape the society “with Coronavirus” and “after Coronavirus.” Our current challenge requires each city to create a new standard for city planning in overcoming the crisis and to build resilience. Each country and each city around the world has taken all possible measures to protect lives and livelihoods and, at the same time, is struggling to find a way to reshape its future taking account of each political situation, religion and culture. As you may have already known, we have shared the measures taken by each member city on our official website. I believe that sharing our knowledge and practices among members will also be a clue for a city to enhance its resilience.

The theme of the next World Conference of Historical Cities in Kazan is “Historical and Cultural Heritage as the Basis of National and Regional Identity.” Although the coronavirus has made it difficult for us to have exchanges beyond borders, it has given each of us a chance to learn about our local history, cultural assets, and local communities to re-affirm our national and regional identity. In other words, our current situation has made the theme more meaningful for us to discuss. In the era of COVID-19 as well as the post-COVID-19 era, I believe that another theme as “Encouraging Exchanges and Preventing the Spread of Infectious Diseases” will be added to our consistent theme as the “Preservation and Development of Historical Cities,” which seems to be contradictory. I would also like to promote exchanges of ideas on such newly emerging issues.

I am convinced that the discussion to be made in Kazan and knowledge we share online will help us overcome the difficulty such as the COVID-19 pandemic that the whole world is confronted with at present. I am very much looking forward to the day when I see all of you in Kazan.

Yours Sincerely,

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Chairperson of the League of Historical Cities, Mayor of Kyoto