

## SHIRIN NEWSLETTER

June 2016

### *Meeting in Vienna*

The second statutory meeting of the SHIRIN International Committee was convened on Monday 25 April 2016 (4:00 pm) as part of the tenth *International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East* (10ICAANE) in Vienna.

Representatives (listed by country in alphabetical order) from Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Poland, Switzerland and Syria attended the meeting. The following items were discussed: National and International Committees, Financial Report and Website, Membership and Donations, Cooperation and Collaborations, Existing and New Projects, Payment of Site Guards in Syria and Operational Matters. A full report of the meeting will be available on the SHIRIN website(<http://shirin-international.org/>)

It was moved at the meeting to elect Marc Lebeau as an honorary member of the SHIRIN board, in recognition of Marc's expertise and his important role in creating and founding SHIRIN. The vote was unanimous and Marc Lebeau was declared an honorary member of the SHIRIN executive board.

Below are short updates and reports on key SHIRIN projects and initiatives.

### *Motion on Palmyra*

On 3 May 2016 a motion on Palmyra was sent to Director General of UNESCO. The motion was signed by 49 directors of excavations, 36 researchers, archaeologists, art historians and historians, and 9 institutions involved in Syria and the Near East. A copy of the Motion on Palmyra is available on the SHIRIN website.

### *Damage Assessment Files*

The update on damage assessment on excavated sites began last April 2016. All the 100 directors of excavations were contacted and on June 20<sup>th</sup> we received answers from 28 colleagues. In parallel, a SHIRIN volunteer, remote sensing specialist, made a systematic checking of free access satellite imagery (Google Earth, Bing) and of the 103 images we obtained through UNOSAT. Both reports on 32 sites where damages were identified are currently submitted to directors of excavations for expertise, and a final synthesis will be produced in the coming month.

### *Digitized Inventories of Museums of Syria (DIMS)*

Renewed funding of the Project “Digitizing the Inventory of the Museum of Deir ez-Zor was provided by the Foreign Ministry of Germany in February 2016 but administrative and bureaucratic procedures were only finalized in April. Since May 2<sup>nd</sup> the project is continuing its work. By now (end of June) the digitizing of the analogue material in Berlin (file cards, photographs, negatives, analogue texts) has been completed. A prototype of the illustrated list of objects (final product) has been launched on the newly established website [www.museumdeirezzor.org](http://www.museumdeirezzor.org) which is not openly accessible yet. The transfer of data from the DGAM is now beginning. By the end of this year it is aimed to have completed the list. Simultaneously work has started on excavation inventories to filter the objects delivered to the Museum.

### *Syria Historic Environment Record (HER) project*

The first stage of the database development was completed in late June. It is hoped news about funding for phase 2, scheduled to take place Aug-Sept, will be announced soon. After that it is hoped to be able to begin batch loading data, from the Fragile Crescent Database to begin with, followed by data from PaleoSyr. It is also hoped that the project’s initial Postdoc (Dr Emma Cunliffe) will be starting work in Durham at some point in July, so there will be a full-time person to deal with data issues on day-to-day basis.

### *Emergency Safeguarding of Syria’s Cultural Heritage – International Expert meeting, Berlin, 2-4 June 2016*

The meeting was sponsored by UNESCO and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany. It was supported by Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission, Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gerda Henkel Stiftung, and Archaeological Heritage Network. The venue was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany in Berlin.

170 experts were participating. The representative of Shirin was Hartmut Kühne.

It was conceived as “Follow-up to the Implementation of the UNESCO Action Plan for the Emergency Safeguarding of Syria’s Cultural Heritage” of the meeting in Paris in May 2014. Organized in four thematic groups the participants were discussing aspects of A. Local Communities, B. Documentation and Archives; Damage Assessment; Technology and Innovation, C. Capacity Building Activities and Future Needs, and D. Preparing Future Safeguarding Plans in four rounds. The results will be implemented into a road map for the next round of the “Emergency Safeguarding of Syria’s Cultural Heritage” Project which is scheduled to start in spring of 2017.

### **SHIRIN Executive Board:**

Frank Braemer (President), Hartmut Kühne (Vice President), Graham Philip (Treasurer) and Andrew Jamieson (Secretary)