Five months after the launch of its first call for projects, ALIPH (International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas), at its Foundation Board meeting on 19 June in Paris, decided to support fourteen new projects aimed at protecting or rehabilitating sites, monuments and museums afflicted by terrorism or threatened by conflict in Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East, and more particularly, in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Of the 50 projects submitted to ALIPH in response to this first call, driven by actors from Europe, the Americas, Asia and Africa, the Foundation Board, at the recommendation of its Scientific Committee, has selected fourteen concrete new initiatives, receiving overall funding of USD 6.3 million.

The foundation has reaffirmed the priority it has placed on the rehabilitation of Iraqi heritage, which has fallen victim to terrorism and war in recent years.

It has committed to actively continuing its support for the rehabilitation of the Mosul Museum, severely damaged by Daesh in February 2015. The damage and needs assessment phase for the museum building and collections, jointly launched in October 2018 by the Musée du Louvre, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, with USD 500,000 in funding from ALIPH, will be completed in the fall. During this time, together with the Iraqi party, engineering studies on the Mosul Museum building will be conducted by the Smithsonian, with the Louvre contributing to the definition of procedures for the conservation and restoration of collections. Emergency measures, particularly concerning collections storage and protection, are also financed by the foundation.

The Board decided to support the “Mosul Mosaic” project, which aims to finance a series of NGO-led projects for the rehabilitation of six places of worship and historical sites in the old city of Mosul, representative of the cultural diversity and rich heritage of this millennia-old city, which suffered severe damage between 2014 and 2017.
This is an ambitious and long-term project seeking to contribute to the “revival of the spirit of Mosul”, in keeping with the wishes of Iraq and UNESCO, and which should be implemented in close cooperation with Iraqi authorities.

ALIPH also provides USD 900,000 to support a project for the conservation, digitization, diffusion and enhancement of Iraq’s written heritage, and more particularly, the rare manuscript collections held by several private and public libraries, including the Syro-Chaldean library of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Seeds, and the two main libraries of Mosul. The Bibliothèque Nationale de France will lead this project with an array of Iraqi, French, and international partners. The foundation also funds the initiative undertaken by the Association Paul Collart au Proche-Orient and the University of Lausanne, striving for the virtual reconstruction of the Temple of Baalshamin in Palmyra, completely destroyed in August 2015, using documentary heritage from the Swiss archaeological mission in Syria. With the foundation’s support, the French Institute of the Near East in Damascus, temporarily based in Beirut, will digitize documentary collections encompassing some 50,000 photos, images and historical plans of archaeological sites and landscapes in Syria and neighboring countries.

ALIPH also sought to increase its support for the protection of the world’s museums. The foundation thus finances preparatory missions to define architectural plans, collections management and training needs for the National Museum in Tripoli, partially damaged by war, and which has seen its collections scattered in recent years. These missions will be led by the French Archaeological Mission in Libya. ALIPH has also committed to the rehabilitation of the Raqqa Museum in northeast Syria, to allow it to welcome its collections and visitors once again. These two projects will respectively receive funding of USD 130,000 and USD 85,000.

The foundation provides USD 2 million for a major safeguarding project of the Minaret of Jam, in Afghanistan, a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2002. This represents the first concrete partnership between ALIPH and UNESCO. The recent flooding and Taliban attacks on the site have illustrated the urgent need for intervention, as well as the difficulties it entails.

Lastly, ALIPH launched its second call for projects to select new initiatives for prevention, protection and rehabilitation for heritage in conflict areas and post-conflict situations. Applications may be submitted from June 19 to September 20, 2019.

Dr. Thomas S. Kaplan, Chair of the ALIPH Foundation Board: “Following the launch of a first series of projects in 2018, including the rehabilitation of the Mosul Museum, ALIPH is pursuing its ambitions in providing support for 14 new projects. Geared toward action, the foundation has quickly become a major actor for the protection of cultural heritage in conflict areas – accompanying local organizations, governmental authorities, and international NGOs to implement complex and urgent operations, which are, quite simply, necessary for the survival of our common heritage.”
Jean-Luc Martinez, President Director of the Louvre, Chair of ALIPH’s Scientific Committee: “ALIPH’s Scientific Committee has selected the projects that respond to the most urgent needs expressed by actors on the field in charge of protecting cultural heritage in conflict areas. These 14 projects handle different situations, before, during, or after conflict. They aim to protect monuments and sites, to safeguard museums and their collections, and to document and diffuse information on heritage, particularly in order to prepare rehabilitation efforts as soon as monuments are accessible once again.”

Background information: ALIPH “protecting heritage to build peace”

The International alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas, ALIPH, has the objective of providing concrete support for the protection and reconstruction of cultural heritage in conflict zones and post-conflict situations. Operating under Swiss law, this Geneva-based foundation, which has the status of an international organization, was established in response to the massive destruction in recent years of outstanding, often ancient, cultural heritage, particularly in the Sahel and the Middle East.

The creation of ALIPH, a human-scale organization benefiting from both public and private support, emerged as the most appropriate response to the need to act quickly and concretely in favor of projects for heritage protection led by local and international actors in geopolitically fraught regions. ALIPH aims to financially support associations, foundations, cultural and heritage institutions, and international organizations working to preserve cultural heritage in the face of imminent conflict, or to intervene for its rehabilitation or reconstruction.

ALIPH set the objective of becoming a central actor in the protection of cultural heritage around the world within a three-year timeframe. The foundation has already committed to the ambitious project of supporting the rehabilitation of the Mosul Museum in Iraq; restoring the Tomb of Askia in Gao, Mali; and rehabilitating the Mar Behnam Monastery in northern Iraq.

On January 15, 2019, this young organization entered a second phase with the launch of a worldwide call enabling it to support prevention, protection and restoration projects on every scale, from the smallest local initiatives to ambitious long-term projects, and to supply immediate aid wherever this is most urgently needed.

Through its mission for heritage protection, ALIPH strives to contribute to reconciliation processes, local development and cultural diversity, and to the enhancement of social bonds.

More information is available on the website aliph-foundation.org.

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