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UN to assist Uganda rebuild burned World Heritage List site



Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi, Uganda

13 April 2010 – The United Nations will help Uganda mobilize resources to restore the Tombs of Buganda Kings, a World Heritage List site, following their near-destruction in a fire last month.

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)) reported today that a mission of experts it had sent at the Government's request had determined that reconstruction of the Tombs, which were badly damaged in the 16 March fire, is feasible.

Only the walls and some of the frame of the Muzibu Azaala Mpanga, the building that housed the four royal tombs, still stand, and they have been seriously weakened. Situated on the Kasubi Hill, five kilometres from the centre of Kampala, the capital, the building was thatched with dry grass and wood which burned in the fire.

"I am glad to report that an expert mission confirms the feasibility of this unique World Heritage site's reconstruction," UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova said. "UNESCO will do everything in its power to help the Ugandan authorities mobilize the resources needed to bring this site back to life and to ensure its future safeguarding. We are already activating emergency funds for this purpose."

The Tombs of Buganda Kings were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2001 when they were recognized as a masterpiece of human creativity, bearing eloquent witness to the living cultural traditions of the Baganda people, Uganda's largest ethnic group. The site has been an important centre of religious activity for the Baganda since it was established at the end of the 19th century.

"The know-how and material resources used in building the original edifice in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are still readily available locally," said Lazare Eloundou, Chief of the Africa Unit at UNESCO's [World Heritage Centre](#), who led the mission.

"The main priority even before reconstruction has to be the building of temporary shelters for the royal tombs to allow ritual ceremonies and practices to be maintained and the collection of all available documentary data about the property."

The mission's report will be examined by the World Heritage Committee during its next session in Brazil in July and August. The Committee is expected to mobilize international support for the reconstruction and the mission urged the Ugandan authorities to wait for international input, both material and technical, before they start rebuilding the property.

Two people were killed during protests sparked by anger at the destruction a day after the fire, the cause of which remains unclear.

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