

# WHEN RISK AND HERITAGE CREATE A TEAM

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Cultural heritage is the source of the Egyptian identity and the imprint that sets us apart as a nation. It is what our forefathers have achieved, treasured and preserved for millennia. Learning about our heritage intensifies awareness of our roots, increases our empathy towards other cultures and allows us to better appreciate the values and accomplishments of other peoples. Thus, respect for heritage opens the door to intercultural dialogue<sup>1</sup>.

Egypt's cultural heritage represents its most important asset: it comprises rich and diverse typologies of monuments, sites and artifacts belonging to different epochs, from prehistory up to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among all, urban and architectural heritage is the most vulnerable, especially when we talk about Historic Cairo, because it is our living environment, where we move, work and entertain. Consequently, it is exposed to all the challenges that affect the city such as real estate and building speculation, pollution, fire and deterioration.

Historic Cairo represents an extremely valuable environment: as it is stated in the front page of the UNESCO Project «Urban Regeneration for Historic Cairo» (URHC), it hosts a variety of historically significant districts and monuments, ranging from the ruins of Al-Fustat, the Fatimid nucleus of Medieval Cairo, the citadel and surrounding Mamluk palaces, to its urban domestic architecture, mausoleums, bazaars, its Nilometre and other inventions related to human use and mastery of the River Nile. All serves to demonstrate the wealth of Cairo not only as a historic capital of the Islamic World, but as a marvel of the human urban experience throughout its history. As such, the site of Historic Cairo was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979, recognizing its «absolutely unquestionable historical, archaeological and urban importance»<sup>2</sup>.

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