

To:
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Vienna, April 16, 2013

High-Rising building within the core zone of the World Heritage site
Development project "Hotel Intercontinental – Wiener Eislaufverein – Konzerthaus"

Dear Sir,

Since the inclusion of Schönbrunn Palace (in 1996) and the Historic Centre of Vienna (2001) in the World Heritage List, protracted discussions have proved that the Government of Vienna has not adhered to its commitment to protect and preserve its World Heritage sites. On frequent occasions, citizens' initiatives and representatives of civil society have had to point out the threats posed by development-projects that would have a major adverse impact on these World Heritage sites by causing comprehensive and irreversible changes to their historic setting. Only after pressure had been exerted by UNESCO, half-hearted compromises were achieved. Furthermore, the Viennese population is largely excluded from participation in the daily management of the World Heritage sites in the city despite some alibi-like activities. Again, this inappropriate situation is made evident by a development project in the Historic Centre of Vienna. For the first time, the construction of a high-rise building is planned amidst the core zone of this World Heritage site. This plan is in total contradiction to the views of the ICOMOS and WHC-monitors, Dr. Tamas Fejerdy and Ms. Patricia Alberth, who definitely excluded the construction of a high-rise building after their visit to the site on the occasion of their Joint Reactive Monitoring Mission in September 2012.

While the heavily disputed project "Wien Mitte" was located in the buffer zone outside the World Heritage site, for the first time an investor – with the apparent support of political leaders of **the City of Vienna - intends to develop a high-rising building within Vienna's Historic Centre**. The civil movement Initiative for the Protection of Historic Monuments (Initiative Denkmalschutz) was shocked when it learnt about the project. The new high-rise building is supposed to tower over the nearby 12-storey Hotel Intercontinental by some 30 (!) meters. We wish to point out that the construction of this hotel between 1960 and 1964 was heavily disputed at the time owing to its height and location in a sensitive area as regards urban development. Following a compromise, the height of the hotel was then reduced to some 44 meters. To compensate the hotel for the corresponding loss of floor space, the City issued an exceptional permission allowing the height of those floors with guest rooms to be reduced.

In 2008, the former Municipal Councilor for City Planning, Rudi Schicker, criticized the reded-

ication of the Ice Skating Rink. The Rink “lay directly on the edge of a World Heritage site, many of the neighbouring properties were in a protection zone, therefore **it would be unthinkable to erect high-rise buildings on this spot**” (regional council on 29 February). Now, after the Skating Rink and the neighbouring Hotel Intercontinental have been sold (and the “right” people have “taken their cut”?) **suddenly the planning rules prohibiting high-rise buildings are no longer a problem**. However, the basic conditions, namely the location in the sensitive UNESCO World Heritage core zone, remain the same as in 2008! **The publication** “Vienna, World Heritage – the State of the Art” (Municipal Department 19; also in English; see: <http://www.wien.gv.at/stadtentwicklung/studien/pdf/b007828.pdf>) that appeared **in 2006** and was described by the City of Vienna **as an integral component of the management plan according to the guidelines of UNESCO** (OTS 6.12.2006; http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20061206_OT0070/wien-weltkulturerbe-der-stand-der-dinge) **concludes quite correctly “all World Heritage Sites in Vienna” are exclusion zones for new high-rise buildings**” (p. 95). Reference is made to the high-rise building guidelines of the City of 2002 (Municipal Department 18, see: <http://www.wien.gv.at/stadtentwicklung/studien/pdf/b007383.pdf>) in which the sensitive sightlines are investigated (p. 11f. criteria A and B). The planned tower would cut into the famous “Canaletto view” of the City from Belvedere as a central disturbing factor and its construction is therefore, according to the aforementioned Municipal Department 19 guidelines for the World Heritage Sites, not capable of being approved.

Therefore, in the name of numerous citizens, the Initiative for the Protection of Historic Monuments (“Initiative Denkmalschutz”) demands a clear commitment of the City of Vienna to exclude high-rise buildings from this World Heritage site and its buffer zone. As a result, **the development project “Hotel Intercontinental – Wiener Eislaufverein – Konzerthaus” at the corner of Lothringerstraße/ Johannesgasse should be reduced in its dimensions to a size in keeping with World Heritage requirements and the project’s location within the core zone of Vienna’s Historic Centre.**

Therefore, Initiative Denkmalschutz demands that the Historic Centre of Vienna will be defined legally, unequivocally and forever as an exclusion zone for high-rise buildings!

With kind regards,



Markus Landerer



Claus Süß

on behalf of the Organisation Initiative Denkmalschutz
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