

28th March 2018



R.O.S. Reg. No. 007106-SWK

YAB Datuk Patinggi (Dr) Abang Haji Abdul Rahman Zohari Bin Tun Datuk Abang Hj. Openg
Chief Minister of Sarawak & The Minister of Urban Development and Natural Resources,
Level 3, Wisma Sumber Alam,
Jalan Stadium,
Petra Jaya
93050 Kuching, Sarawak

Through the Permanent Secretary, Dr. Wan Lizozman bin Wan Omar

Dear YAB Datuk Patinggi,

TOWARDS A BALANCED AND SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Responding to your wish conveyed when we paid you a courtesy call last November 2017 for SHS to provide inputs on Sarawak Heritage, we accepted an invitation, for which we are thankful, from your Permanent Secretary Dr. Wan Lizozman bin Wan Omar to participate in the recent Lab on heritage management. Our sincere apologies for not submitting these revised recommendations earlier, but we thought we need more time to review it, in view of the fact that the workshop was of short duration. We therefore attach herewith to the Workshop's Report the Sarawak Heritage Society's considered view as to the critical issues that are required to be addressed.

Our team contributed to the discussions of Working Group 1, whose reframed mandate was to look at the ways and means to strengthen Sarawak's heritage management with a medium to long term outlook.

We regard the document produced by the group on the second day of the Lab as a good starting point for renewed action that the Government is now calling for. To facilitate reading, we have taken the liberty to streamline the presentation of the document and present it more succinctly. Please find enclosed this revised version for your consideration.

Group 1 presented **two key recommendations**:

1. The commissioning of a Technical and socio-economic Baseline Study on Kuching's heritage core
2. The commissioning of an Institutional Review, which would assess the status and present proposals on the State's policy and strategy, institutional, regulatory, financing and enforcement frameworks.

These two exercises are required as a way to provide a sound foundation for future action. They complement each other. Indeed, our over-arching goal of going for a UNESCO listing for old Kuching would require clear and candid assessments on both the technical and institutional/policy dimensions, based on international best practices and guidelines.

They also complement the recommendations made by the Working Group 2 on addressing the current flow of development applications in the Kuching core heritage zone, by setting up an *interim task force* in your Ministry.

For both the Baseline Study and the Institutional Review, we would recommend that the Government mobilize experienced international consultants.

On the *Technical Baseline Study* for Kuching heritage management, we wish to draw your attention to the relevant and valuable expertise developed by Think City Sdn Bhd. Our feeling is that Think City would be the best positioned agency to pilot the implementation of the Baseline Study as they have valuable experience in implementing similar studies in other Malaysian settings, with innovative urban rejuvenation approaches. Our understanding is that Think City, which is mainly funded by the Khazanah foundation, may be able to contribute to the cost of a Baseline Study if invited by the Sarawak Government. We have noted that Think City is also in talks with DBKU on a study of the sort for Kuching, further to a recent study tour by DBKU executives to George Town.

For The *Institutional Review*, UNESCO or ICOMOS may be approached for technical assistance and/or perhaps funding.

For both studies we would like to offer our interest in participating in one form or another as we do have members who not only have very keen interest but also have the experience and expertise in this subject area. In fact one of our members, a Sarawakian too, was very active in the Penang study when he was an academic at University Science Malaysia, Penang and a now attached to University Malaysia Sarawak as an associate Professor.

I wish also to mention that at a recent meeting we had, on your advice, with the Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports to present our views on heritage, he said that he will welcome inputs from SHS for a possible updating of the Sarawak Cultural Heritage Ordinance 1993 and on the concept of a Heritage Board or equivalent. We are happy to share with the Government the ideas that Sarawak Heritage Society could provide in this respect, and we will therefore continue, given the greenlight from you, to engage with and to contact the relevant institutions or authorities on this matter so to provide our support and contribution.

We remain at the disposal of your Ministry for further contributions to the exciting discussion that the Lab has opened.

Wahneema Lubiano
Robert Jacob Ridu

Dato Sri Robert Jacob Ridu
President
Sarawak Heritage Society



cc

1. Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development and Natural Resources.
2. Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports.