

TRANSCRIPT

DAY 3 22.4.21 13:00 – 15:00 Panel: Expanding Horizons

In conversation with INTO Ambassadors

Speakers:

- Chair: Dame Fiona Reynolds, INTO Chair
- His Highness the Maharaja Gaj Singh II of Marwar-Jodhpur, India
- Her Royal Highness Princess Dana Firas of Jordan
- Hashim Djojohadikusumo, Indonesian philanthropist

Fiona Reynolds

Well hello everyone and welcome to this important session of our online conference. I'm Fiona Reynolds, the Chair of INTO and I'm joined by three of our amazing Ambassadors. Princess Dana Firas who is president of the Petra National Trust and UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Cultural Heritage.

Hashim Djojohadikusumo, the Indonesian philanthropist chairman of the Indonesian Heritage Trust, and his Highness Gaj Singh, the Maharajah of Jodhpur, whose Fort Mehrangarh, you can see behind him and who's played an extraordinary role in heritage in India for many years. So we're going to be talking about some of the themes that we hope have been coming up at our conference because as you can imagine, recording this in advance, we're being a little ambitious in trying to see the future. But perhaps because of that, we're going to turn as much to the future and to the challenges the heritage movement faces and these three people have all been incredibly ambitious not only in what they've done already but in the way that they think and plan for our future.

So it's an important time for heritage. We've experienced the rigours and challenges of covid, we've experienced and are going through a global recession with all of the challenges that brings. We've all been confined to our homes, we've been



working from home, we've had to see the enormous adaptability of the heritage movement. The pressures have been absolutely enormous and our conference has been dealing with those issues and thinking about the three big themes that underpin those challenges.

First of all, building more resilient organisations, places and communities. Secondly, Connecting people with their local heritage and with nature. And third our role as organisations in diversity, equality and inclusion. So we're going to try and keep those themes in mind as I talk to each of our extraordinary ambassadors.

So first of all, Dana, perhaps I can talk to you a little bit about resilience and you've been very engaged with the challenges both of Petra, heritage in conflict zones, fighting the effects of climate change – what for you are the challenges posed about resilient communities and the role of cultural heritage?

HRH Princess Dana Firas

Thank you very much Fiona it really is a pleasure to be part of this and to contribute to the work that INTO has been doing with National Trusts everywhere. There have been many lessons over the past year. One, I think we've all learned that we truly are just not sustainable, we're not sustainable as economies and we're not sustainable as the cultural heritage sector and that was a very painful lesson for us as the Petra National Trust.

We're heavily reliant on very few income streams to support the work that we're all of doing and I think that once this pandemic hit and Jordan, which is incredibly heavily reliant on tourism as a source of national income, about 14-15% of our national income, if not more, is reliant on tourism. Once that came to to a standstill, basically a complete stop, we realised that we cannot move forward, without thinking very seriously about sustainability, diversifying our support network, our sources of income and really engaging communities in more than one source of income for us the communities around Petra which essentially survive on tourism income.

And they've been hit incredibly hard this year and so in my mind our major lesson here has been that we must look at communities around heritage sites and diversify our sources of income. We must think organisationally very long term as Trusts, as the heritage sector, to have a very solid financial plan, to take into consideration shocks in the future.

So we've been very seriously looking at establishing a national endowment for heritage and something that can support the



word of work of local communities and help diversify their sources of income and their support. The second lesson has been related to policy priorities. We know, we've learnt that when push comes to shove heritage is not a national priority and so as an organisation, even as INTO as we come together, we have a very big role to play in advocacy.

We have to constantly strive to push cultural heritage to become a priority area for governments, for the private sector. We have to work together for data, we must invest in research that shows empirically why heritage is important so that is something that's been incredibly important. Culture in crisis has been another big lesson for us. So we've realised that people hold onto culture and cultural heritage more during difficult times than before.

And so while we're facing, you know, a crunch in terms of our ability to deliver programming, our programmes are in demand more than ever before. And so I think that for us has been an eye opener. What we do is critical and it's critical in times of crisis because people look for it, people reach out for it, people seek it.

One of our greatest engagements this year has been when a construction project in the middle of downtown Amman came across Roman remains, a Roman bath. And trying to protect that has garnered more national support and public engagement and, you know, discussion and debate on social media than practically anything we had done all year. So that for us was a very important lesson, that culture is important, people care, and they care during times of crisis.

It really gives people hope, it keeps the spirits high. And it's an important anchor during difficult times. You know my final very quick point is organisationally we've had very important lessons to learn. We have to be flexible, adaptable, and lean. Our financial planning has to be very long term and we have to be very flexible and we have to incorporate technology much more than we've ever done before.

I think technology - we've been weak in our ability to utilise technology and we've learnt a very important lesson now that much of what we can do can be supported by technology and our ability to engage people online.

Hashim Djojohadikusumo

Thank you Fiona for the invitation to join you. I think there are two things which have come up which are actually positive from the covid pandemic, you know, I mean this is quite ironic but it's actually something that I think I've learnt.



And that is two things: one is the appreciation from urban people for the outdoors, for national parks, for urban parks, for the national parks outside of the big cities. A greater appreciation of it as people are getting fed up with being cooped up in the slums of Indonesian cities, in their apartments. I myself live in an apartment not a slum admittedly, but still there is greater appreciation of the outdoors.

You see more and more people trying to get out of town. They go mountain biking, they go up in the mountains, so I mean that's I think one of the positive things of the many negative things from the covid pandemic. The second thing I think has come out is this appreciation of the abuse, the awareness of the abuse of wildlife in international trade. I mean Indonesia is one of the biggest sources of illegal, illicit trade in wildlife and with all due respect to my Chinese friends the biggest market for this, and it's quite well known, the biggest market for this illicit trade for these endangered animals is China. It's a fact. I'm not trying to disparage anyone here or being, you know, politically incorrect Fiona if you know what I mean.

But it's a fact, and as a result of the covid-19 crisis, it seems that the science leads us, it appears, to wildlife markets, markets for illicit trade of endangered species. I mean there's estimates that the value, the monetary value of this illicit trade is about \$2 to \$3 billion dollars a year from Indonesia alone. So, the fact now that even the Chinese government is aware of this and is aware that there is a direct danger and a direct threat to the people, the population, the people of China itself.

And the world is leading to steps now to crackdown on this illicit trade so I think that is something that I think you know from this crisis is a positive outcome and people saying that it would not have been been, you know, the steps that are undertaken by the Chinese authorities would not have been the same, had there not been actually a danger to the health and the well-being of the Chinese population. So I think that's the two things that have come out from this crisis.

And obviously I appreciate it, you know, because I'm very much into wildlife conservation, as you know. We're trying to crackdown and we're trying to help the government crackdown on this illicit trade, it's very difficult. And so that's one thing and the other thing I wanted to mention was also the effect of tourism or the lack of tourism as Her Royal Highness mentioned and the effect on Jordan, it's the same effect in Indonesia.



I mean Indonesia earns about 20 billion a year from international tourists and the fact is that has gone down I think 98%, 97% so you can imagine the impact on the purses of the government and on the tourism business. But then there is also a positive aspect. You know there is also a positive factor and the positive aspect is that the amount of garbage and waste has lessened. I mean you know there's less garbage, there's less waste being thrown around in these tourist places. Even domestic tourists are limited in their movement. So there again there's a positive aspect from an otherwise sorry state of affairs so those are the things that I think we take and I think for the future as Indonesia is going to open again.

I mean, Your Royal Highness you mentioned I think that Jordan is going to take steps to reopen borders for international tourists, Indonesia, I understand, is going to reopen in July this year. And I think those are the things that we have to be very careful of of course mitigating the health aspect but also what I got from the ICNT in 2015, when I was with you Fiona, and friends of ours from different parts of the INTO community were warning me about the negative facts of mass tourism on heritage the garbage the waste, you know plastic pollution into sites, all these negative things that will happen as a result of mass tourism and development.

So that's something I took away from ICNT 2015 in Cambridge and I mentioned that to the authorities here. Yes tourism is very positive for the economy and for jobs but has to be mitigated. Negative aspects have to be mitigated. And ironically because of covid we've had less of that, you know, from both international tourists and domestic tourists. I don't know whether you've had, you know, the same specific experience in Jordan, Your Royal Highness?

Fiona Reynolds

Well I think Pak Hashim you've raised this extraordinary challenge of sustainability which princess Dana was referring to as well, that sustainability of everything to do with, you know, trade and food production and through to tourism. And so I think what covid has made us all think very deeply about is we were so used to exploiting the tourism potential and now we have to manage.

And so with that I want to turn to Bapji who's done such extraordinary things in heritage in India. Well you have Mehrangarh Fort behind you now, I visited Mehrangarh in 2007 which seems quite a long time ago now and I remember being completely captivated by its beauty, by the extraordinary way



that you look after it. And its meaning for the people, you know, spiritual meaning in every sense of the word.

And that third aspect of sustainability is very much the sense of connection with the local community and I know that at Mehrangarh you've been thinking very hard about that particularly in this covid year. So Bapji, tell us what you've been doing at Mehrangarh, especially with your local community over the last year.

His Highness Gaj Singh II

Yes, as we're all suffering from the effects of covid, our first concern was to look ahead and actually analyse what a financial situation was going to be and then cut our cloth accordingly. And so my daughter has been working on that with other people, and the next priority was of course to make sure that we managed to retain all our staff. So we had no, we decided we would not have any layoffs, but at the same time as we're working from home or not working at all, we had to cut salaries by 50% but now gradually we're getting back to full salaries. And then to stay in touch with people, our trusts have been doing various things like distributing masks.

We had this terrible problem in India, you must have heard about the migrant workers getting back and they were on the roads. So one of our trusts set up a free food station where people could be, when they were passing, they could feed themselves. And through Mehrangarh also we reached out to our musician community, the minstrels, who again have had no work and so we actually identified them, going to their remote villages and have distributed bags of rations etc to them.

And of course our main Trust we opened again in October. The Palace Hotel opened in September and people are drifting in. In India we're fortunate, more fortunate than most places, because of our vast population and so the tourism really now, there is zero foreign tourists but tourism is dependent on indigenous traffic. And also as others have said, people were getting fed up so when things opened up, you wanted to get out and so. And also one of the big things has been weddings. The Palace is well-known for hosting weddings so we've had a number of weddings.

Of course it's now regulated - you can not have more than so many people, 100 people. Small weddings but we've had quite a few. And so that's kept things going but our major programme is 'Reimagining Mehrangarh' which we spoke



about earlier and that is taking Mehrangarh to the next step of not just being a repository of objects in the normal museum sense, but actually the objects telling the story of Mehrangarh and Mehrangarh telling the story of the family and the region.

The answer is we're working towards that, and work has begun again especially on the outside part where we're setting up a new reception centre so that we don't get the crowding you get inside because although it's a fast building it's an old building and it was built for that reason. Narrow spaces, narrow corridors, and so one has to find ways and means of moving people safely. To keep it going and yet not having bottlenecks. We're building up our new reception centre. It will have some information there and we'll move on from that.

And also I think when we talk of tourism, like our friend from Indonesia just said, the downside of tourism and I think that is very important especially for heritage and culture, because these are delicate things, they're fragile, and can easily be inundated with numbers of people, garbage and so on. So I think responsible tourism needs to be on the agenda and we've tried to do that, in fact a society in India, working on the environment and responsible tourism, of which I'm a member.

And it is very important because. And also carrying capacity. We need to have certain limits of carrying capacity at fragile sites which is not happening. It's very difficult to actually enforce but I think in private museums one could have certain regulations, like certain times for certain things. You pre-book yourself online and that's what we're looking at we're looking at different tours for different kinds of people within the fort.

So whether some people are pilgrim traffic, are only interested in seeing the fort from outside, not particularly interested in the objects and going to the temples they go on one tour. For larger groups you can have one tour. Specialised groups and some of the specialists are very fond of looking at our storage systems. That's very special, when you come of course we'll take you to everything.

Fiona Reynolds

But I think what you're describing Bapji is a really interesting, you know, new articulation of sustainability because you have first of all this emphasis on stories and objects being, you know, becoming much better understood through their stories and their connections both with place and people.

Your role as an employer is huge actually isn't it. I mean not only in the Fort itself in the conservation business, but your



beautiful shop and the craftspeople producing the objects which very much have that local, authentic feel. And then your role in the local community through, you know, festivals and music and the way that you reach out. You seem to me to have so many wonderful ideas of a new kind of sustainability around the local community as well as the, I mean the global visitors will come back I'm sure, but actually you're building something very special and and I hope it all goes well. How's the construction going with the new visitor welcome is that underway now?

His Highness Gaj Singh II

Yes, that's underway thank you that's going. One of the things also was the workers. They wanted to get them back as quickly as possible because they were suffering. They had no work and so we began with the workers on the outside and fortunately the visitor centre is on the outside. So we could start that and so that's going on well.

Fiona Reynolds

That's a wonderful, wonderful story and you have led not only Mehrangarh but within the heritage movement in India and globally and it's a great privilege Bapji to have you here. I want, can we return back to the international community, not the tourists, but the sort of decision making, the role that perhaps we as INTO need to play on heritage and on nature and perhaps if I talk to Princess Dana and Hashim about that now.

Dana we've talked a lot about the need to reconnect with people on our doorsteps and the kind of huge challenges posed by covid in particular, but actually there's that big global job to do as well. How would you articulate INTO's mission now in this new environment for the next couple of years on the heritage side? And then I'll turn to Hashim around nature in a moment.

HRH Princess Dana Firas

Thank you for that question. I believe most strongly in the work that INTO is doing in bringing together Trusts and like-minded organisations and people from all over the world. At the end of the day our goals are shared and they are global in nature. We are looking after beautiful places. We are looking after the people that live around, and from, and because of these beautiful places. And this is really shared across all of our countries and all of our sites.

So when we, in Jordan for example, sites often garner attention and get the protections that they need when there is international attention. I mean this is the whole idea of the World Heritage List almost that you know when you get the international recognition and the values and importance of a



site are sort of validated by the global community there is much more political will and interest on the national level, on the local level to protect these sites.

And I think this is where INTO comes in because, you know, we can amplify our voices. We can work together to make sure that, you know, we bring these things to international attention. All instruments that we rely on to protect the sites that we work in and to engage local communities tend to be international in nature. If you look at the World Heritage Convention, we always go back to the World Heritage Convention, for example when we're looking at development projects in and around Petra. And say, you know, we've signed on to this international instrument.

We cannot violate it and so there is very much an international, global aspect to all of the local work that we are doing that can be amplified through partnerships in INTO. There are shared experiences across places, across countries, across sites that will bring invaluable insight into the work that we are all doing on the local level. The knowledge can benefit all of us and I think having an organisation like into can facilitate incredibly this exchange of knowledge finding the right expertise everywhere to support the work that we do locally.

And then shared support and I know for example that we had incredible support from INTO as we worked on our digital programme over the last year which has been incredible so we've had to bolster our digital ability to deliver programming. We needed to work with the communities in and around Petra whose income levels went down to zero. To retrain them to provide their goods and services through digital markets to the world eventually to enable them to survive and that would not have happened had it not been for the support we got from INTO and so it really enabled us to help local communities specifically in and around Petra. And to deliver services that otherwise we would not have been able to deliver giving the restrictions that we were all facing.

Fiona Reynolds

Good, no well thank you again for keeping making that connection. The local and the global they are not separate things are they? There's a fantastically important chain of thinking and action that joins them together. And now nature though, you know, in many ways at least there are, you know, World Heritage sites and there is some structure there. But nature is still in decline and there's a massive challenge and a massive opportunity globally isn't there? What can INTO do to help protect nature better?



Hashim Djojohadikusumo

I've used INTO in my lobbying efforts. I mean you know we met the Minister of Tourism a few years ago, that's the former Minister of Tourism, and we said look, we just came back from this international conference in Cambridge and our friends at INTO and I think I mentioned your name Fiona, frankly.

Fiona Reynolds

I hope it was useful [laughs]

Hashim Djojohadikusumo

We said look, the national heritage community around the world is very concerned about the, let's say, the saturation of the negative impact of mass tourism on the physical, you know, the physical landscape and buildings and villages and so forth and so forth. And one of the aspects, the negative aspects, is plastic pollution in the oceans, garbage when a cruise ship comes in with 5000, you know, very well healed people with a lot of, you know, garbage to dispose, when it's thrown out into the sea, what is the government going to do about it?

Actually I've used INTO, I've used you know the INTO community. I've said this strengthens our case because frankly Indonesian government officials being Indonesian government officials ... If I were to to say, here's Hashim and a few Indonesian friends, this is what we are worried about it doesn't care the same amount of weight, Fiona, as if I said you know, my friends, Fiona and Her Royal Highness Princess Donna, and you know His Royal Highness the Maharaja and so forth and so forth and so forth that carries frankly more weight.

It does help. It does help.

Fiona Reynolds

Well, I'm very glad to hear it because with both the International Biodiversity Conference and of course the Climate Conference happening later this year, it is true that working together we are able to do more and we've learnt so much from each other over the years both at the practical level but also at the strategic level around what are the core arguments, what are the lessons we're learning for society, what are the things we are discovering as we go?

And I'll never forget I must say coming to Delhi back in 2007 when we launched INTO in its current form with you Bapji there and others to welcome us and it felt as though we were saying something very significant. We were a family of organisations who share the same values, share the same vision, share the same sense of the critical importance of heritage and nature, and who are the world's population.



That we can do more by working together than by working alone. That the challenges of sustainability are complex, multifaceted but that actually in our own ways and through our own experience we have found solutions. We have many many challenges but we are also, and you just have to look at Mehrangarh Fort behind you there to show what an extraordinary thing we can do. I have to say I have yet to visit Petra but I'm really hoping that that chance will come.

Our experience with you in Indonesia Hashim, now 4 years ago I think, when in Bali we saw the extraordinary work that the Indonesian Heritage Trust and others are doing. So it seems to me that we're at a bit of a crunch point for society where we've been through this awful collective experience but we know that if we can build a more sustainable set of systems where we value the things that money can't buy. The heritage and nature - the things that really matter for the long-term survival of the planet and for people - that we will be able to get there.

And INTO's playing a part in that and is proud to be playing a part in that. And with you three Ambassadors, all of you global leaders, people who have enormous influence, who have a voice at the table of key institutions and who share our passion it's been wonderful to talk to you, to learn from you and to share ideas with you.

So thank you so much for joining us today. Thank you for being Ambassadors for INTO and I very very much hope that in 2 years time, we'll be meeting in person somewhere in the world, thank you.

Thank you.