

ICOMOS



International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage


Iscarsah
<http://iscarsah.icomos.org>

Mr. Vladimir Putin
President of the Russian Federation
Ilyinka Street
Moscow, 103132
RUSSIA

By email: <http://eng.letters.kremlin.ru/>

16 March, 2014

Dear Sir,

As the presidents of the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage (ISC20C) and the International Scientific Committee on the Analysis and Restoration of Structures of Architectural Heritage (ISCARSAH) we have been advised by colleagues and through the mass media of the negative situation now facing the future of the famous Radio Tower in Moscow, designed by Vladimir Shukhov in 1919-1922.

This unique structure is a globally famous masterpiece of 20th Century, showcasing Russian engineering skills and architecture, yet it is threatened with dismantling and removal.

International heritage authorities recognize the Shukhov Tower as a pioneer hyperboloid steel construction- a Russian concept which influenced structural engineering and architectural creativity for over a century globally and it is one of the modernist icons of our time. This innovative and prescient concept was envisioned in the spirit of the times; it was realized in an era when construction activity was at a virtual standstill; and it led the way for the Russian Avant Garde architecture that would flower in the late 1920s.

As you know, Shukhov Tower has been published intensively in architectural and technology histories worldwide. It is one of the most recognisable symbols of the Russian capital, used as reference in many architecture and structure engineering schools in the world.

Although it is now almost hundred years old, it still embodies bold innovative ideas addressed to the future-the concepts of structural transparency and lightness particular to 20th century architecture – but in this case it is specifically culturally associated with Moscow and Russia. It is also one of the vertical dominants of the city, a landmark in its panoramas and cityscapes, supporting the city belfries. The Shukhov Radio Tower became the compositional focus of the constructivist residential complexes

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of the Shablovskaya neighborhood and its location is an essential attribute of its significance to Moscow and to Russia.

We note that the Shukhov tower is an official monument of Regional significance, used by the 'Russian TV and Radio Systems' (RTRS) and the Russian Ministry of Communication. The idea to re-erect the Radio Tower in a different place in Moscow (being in its nature an immoveable property), contradicts the purpose of its dedication as a 'monument' under the National heritage legislation, and it also endangers its internationally important heritage values.

We are concerned that the Ministry of Communication's proposed dismantling and removal of the tower will lead to a fatal loss of its authenticity and integrity. We believe that thorough investigation on the basis of international experience would lead to an elaboration of a full-scale restoration project, which will bring benefit to Russia and world culture.

In 2006, ICOMOS, Docomomo and UIA investigated this case and adopted the special '**Moscow Declaration on the Preservation of 20th Century Cultural Heritage**' at a meeting of international heritage experts and advisers in 2006 - the International Conference *Heritage at Risk – Preservation of 20th-Century Architecture and World Heritage* (Moscow), which was forwarded to Russian authorities for consideration and action.

In 2011, ICOMOS, the UNESCO adviser on cultural heritage under the World Heritage Convention, once again emphasized its concern by a special Resolution on '**Russian Architectural Avant-Garde**' which was unanimously adopted at the 17th ICOMOS General Assembly in Paris.

We therefore appeal directly to you again and ask for your intervention in order to prevent serious risk of damage to one of the outstanding heritage sites of Russia's heritage, the Shukhov Tower. There is an urgent need for a clear conservation-based strategy to be developed by Russian authorities to direct the future conservation and management of this uniquely 20th Century Russian contribution to global architectural heritage.

The International Scientific Committees for Twentieth Century Heritage and the Analysis and Restoration of Structures of Architectural Heritage of ICOMOS now urgently ask the Russian authorities to take direct steps to prevent further neglect and stagnation of this uniquely Russian heritage resource of the Twentieth Century.

Mr Putin, we ask that you:

- **Declare a moratorium** for any actions regarding the Shukhov Tower and to postpone signing of the Resolution of the Russian Government 'On preservation measures for further use of the Shukhov Tower, object of cultural heritage of Regional significance', 7 March 2014, which calls for its dismantling and searching for a place for its relocation, until 1 May, 2014;
- **Commission an expert study** of this steel hyperboloid construction on the basis of international conservation experience, having in mind the outstanding global value of the Shukhov Tower;
- **Await the outcomes of** this scientifically based action before taking any final decision;



- **Demonstrate leadership** in the field by commissioning the preparation of a standard Conservation Plan for the Shukhov Tower, using the international standard “**Approaches for the Conservation of the Twentieth Century Architectural Heritage**”(the Madrid Document) of ICOMOS ISC20C (copy attached) thereby applying international benchmark standards for conservation works;
- **Secure protection** of the Shukhov Tower by effective Federal heritage listing;
- **Review the conditions of the ownership** and supervision for both the Tower and a plot of land in order to secure museum and tourist functions for the site.

We note that the Shukhov Tower has been recommended for inclusion in Russia’s tentative World Heritage in ‘*Moscow Declaration on the Preservation of 20th Century Cultural Heritage*’, 2006.

Surely this place deserves the utmost care and attention from the Russian authorities?

We would be pleased to discuss these issues further, at your convenience.

Signed,

Sheridan Burke,
President ICOMOS
ISC Twentieth-Century Heritage

Stephen Kelley
President ICOMOS
ISCARSAH

Attached: Approaches for the Conservation of the Twentieth Century Architectural Heritage (The Madrid Document) ICOMOS ISC20C

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