Cairo: 2022 Culture Capital for the Arab Region in the Islamic World
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Based on the approved schedule of UNESCO’s Programme for Culture Capitals in the Islamic World for the period 2005-2025, the celebration of Cairo as the Arab Region’s Culture Capital in the Islamic World was scheduled for 2020, but has been postponed to 2022 due to the exceptional circumstances imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thanks to its rich cultural, historical, scientific and architectural heritage, its valuable antique, and the scientific, intellectual, creative and artistic contributions, Cairo is one of the most important cities in the Islamic world and in the entire world. The city has long been an international destination and a source of inspiration for several scholars and intellectuals from inside and outside the Islamic world. While the Nile is historically associated with Egypt, it is Cairo that represents the river’s beauty and splendor.

The celebration of this city coincides with the transformation in UNESCO’s “Programme for Culture Capitals in the Islamic World” as part of its new vision geared towards celebrating and promoting major cities in the Islamic world. Cairo has the largest population and area in the Arab region. It occupies the second largest population in Africa and the seventeenth in the world. Cairo was inscribed on the Islamic World Heritage List in 2019 and on the World Heritage List in 1979.

Moreover, the city enjoys a significant international and regional prominence. It hosts several organizations headquarters and regional offices, including the Arab League, the World
Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Basketball Federation (FIBA Africa). Furthermore, Cairo is built in a mixture of the colonial era’s modern architecture and the traditional architecture of different Islamic eras.

There are numerous features that have qualified Cairo to be celebrated as Culture Capital in the Islamic World par excellence, namely:

- **Its material and intellectual heritage worthy of valorization and promotion, mainly:** Giza, which is the only Great Wonder of the ancient world still standing. It contains many ancient and new monuments that make it an open museum for Pharaonic, Greek, Roman, Coptic and Islamic landmarks.

- **Its long-standing history dates back to the founding of the Pharaonic city of On or Heliopolis (now Ain Shams), which is one of the oldest cities in the ancient world. The history of current Cairo goes back to the establishment of the city of Fustat following the Islamic**
conquest of Egypt by Amr ibn al-Aas in 641 AD, then the establishment of the city of al-Askar by the Abbasids before Ahmed ibn Tulun established the city of Qata’a. As the Fatimids, who from Ifriqiya, currently Tunisia, entered to Egypt, the leader, Jawhar al-Siqilli, began building the new capital of the Fatimid state by order of the Fatimid Caliph al-Muizz Li-Din Allah in 969 AD, who named it “Cairo”. Cairo had different names in the past, such as the city of a thousand minarets, the guarded Egypt and Islamic Cairo (Al-Mu’izz’s Cairo). During the Islamic era, Cairo witnessed the finest architecture reflected in its castles, forts, walls, schools and mosques, which gave the city a splendid style that is still visible in its old neighborhoods.

Cairo is home to multiple cultural institutions, namely the National Cultural Center – Cairo Opera House, the National Center for Child Culture, Misr Public Library, the National Center for Translation, the Museum of Islamic Art, the Coptic Museum, the Abdeen Palace museum complex, and other cultural and art institutions.
Cairo brought notable contributions to various areas of culture through the works of its scientists, authors, intellectuals and artists, and has inspired several painters and creators throughout the ages.

Cairo also hosts the largest cultural events and festivals, such as the Cairo International Film Festival, exhibitions of traditional handicrafts, plastic and creative arts, musical and theatrical performances, book fairs and exhibitions of print publications, namely the annual Cairo International Book Fair, which attracts a large number of intellectuals, publishing houses and visitors.