



## Young Climate Action for World Heritage – Youth Summit 1.-3. November 2023 Potsdam

Opening and welcome – Prof. Dr. Marie-Theres Albert

Dear students, dear teachers, dear representatives of the World Heritage Sites, dear Prof. Rhode, Director of the Garden Department of **the Prussian Palaces and Gardens Foundation Berlin-Brandenburg**, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, as the Director of the **Institute Heritage Studies** at the **International Academy Berlin** it is my pleasure to welcome you to this wonderful event.

I would like to say thank you not only to you, but also to the **German Federal Foundation for the Environment** (Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt), which has provided substantial funding for this project. My thanks also go to the **German Commission for UNESCO**, which always has been and continues to be a great cooperation partner, as well as to Claudia Grünberg, and Jasmin Frischemeiner. Without their commitment this wonderful project would not have been possible. I would also like to thank the **Berlin Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing** for their great support in organising the Youth Summit here at the World Heritage Site “Palaces and Parks of Potsdam and Berlin” and for combining it with an “expert exchange” on World Heritage and climate change.

As you will be hearing a lot more about the details and successes of the project over the next two days, I will use this opportunity to provide you with some information about its conceptual and institutional background. In other words, I think it is time to tell you who we, the **Institute Heritage Studies** (IHS) and the **International Academy Berlin** (INA), actually are and what motivated us to develop and carry out this project.

Our flyer states: We are an institute which, as part of the International Academy Berlin, has made its innovative educational approach to its mission and has implemented this mission in various projects. The innovative educational approach is the "situational approach", which was developed by the founders of the INA, Jürgen Zimmer, Christa Preissing, and Angelika Krüger, among others. It is an approach based on processes of active participation of the learners and their teachers in the development of curricula.

In this approach, learning is no longer based solely on cognitive processes or an accompanying abstract acquisition of knowledge. At the same time, it is based on the perception and implementation of real life and the responsibility that learners must take for the preservation of their living environment. Today, more than ever, this concerns our



heritage in all its diversity. Because heritage shapes identities, it is therefore required from each and every one of us to take responsibility for its sustainable protection.

Dear Angelika, thank you for being here with us today and for motivating me to found the Institute Heritage Studies at the INA.

Today, more than ever, this means that teaching about the protection and sustainable use of World Heritage Sites in schools should no longer be based solely on curricular guidelines with a purely cognitive orientation. In times of climate change and all the other social and political changes, this approach means that the problems that arise at World Heritage Sites should be raised and addressed by the civil society itself, not least by the young generation. In order to do so, they need to be supported by teachers.

Teachers, in turn, need supporting staff and more flexibility in the curriculum. In line with our educational approach, we have implemented these principles in this project and we have also encouraged you all, as participants in this project, to learn more about heritage and to take responsibility for your heritage. We can already say that you have done a great job and have been very successful.

In accordance with our approach, you as students were introduced to the objectives and contents of the World Heritage Convention through processes of perception and learning taking place directly at the World Heritage Sites themselves. At the same time, you were challenged to recognise their significance. For example, you were asked to explore processes for sustainable development and, in particular, for identity building. With this approach, we were able to jointly implement our project goals, and in doing so, also implement our approach of experiential and responsible learning.

This concerns Article 28 of the World Heritage Convention, namely the communication of the significance of World Heritage through educational programmes. It also relates to the goals of the Agenda 2030, in particular Goal 4 "Quality Education", Goal 11 "Sustainable Cities and Communities", including the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage, and Goal 13 "Climate Action".

Last but not least, with the participation of international student groups from 5 different countries and the inclusion of transboundary World Heritage Sites, our project was and is international. Thus, it fulfilled the criteria of sustainability, not least through the implementation of cultural diversity, and cross-border contacts and communication.

I would like to conclude with this summary of our approach and look forward to the event.