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EDITORIAL

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is characterized by having rich archaeological and cultural heritage that dates back to various historical eras across the extension of human civilization, as seen in the monuments throughout the regions of the Kingdom. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is also rich in its diverse national and cultural heritage, spreading from the south to the north and from the east to the west, forming strikingly diverse areas distributed across desert, mountainous and coastal environments. This diverse national and cultural heritage establishes a cultural unity that has become a distinguishing characteristic of the Kingdom, and adds an archaeological and heritage wealth with unique characteristics, elements and culture.

The Arabian Peninsula has undoubtedly played an important role due to its central geographical location between the continents of the world. It has always been a connection point for neighboring civilizations in the East, West, North and South. Therefore, it has enjoyed a unique mixture of civilizations with significant turning points over time. The people of this region have had successive civilizational roles that need to be highlighted and documented.

A Royal Decree has been issued to transfer the responsibility of the national heritage activity in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Ministry of Culture, starting from the beginning of 2020. Before that, it was the responsibility of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage that offered a great deal in this field. This transfer represents a new shift, reflecting the great interest of the wise leadership in the cultural heritage the Kingdom possesses, represented in its archaeological and abundant cultural heritage. This transfer of responsibility also assigns the Ministry of Culture the major responsibility of managing this rich national heritage, with its long cultural history, and taking care of preserving, maintaining, documenting, and developing it. It also gives the Ministry of Culture the responsibility of highlighting and introducing it internally and externally. This transfer of responsibility reflects the unlimited support for the development of the cultural sector in the Kingdom.

It is hoped that the Ministry of Culture, with its promising vision, headed by his Highness Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Farhan Al- Saud, will adopt a national strategy for this purpose, with the participation of subject matter experts from prominent Saudis who have had achievements and works in the field of archaeological studies, research, excavations, as well as in preserving, developing



and promoting the Saudi national heritage. The participation of national specialists and expertise in the formulation of that strategy would provide perspectives that cover its various elements. Also, the leader of this strategy would have a comprehensive vision and productive proposals that would help in formulating an ambitious and promising strategy.

Taking care of the tangible and intangible human heritage in the Arabian Peninsula will lead to documenting the depth of its civilization and the cultural diversity that dominated the region. It would also preserve this rich and invaluable wealth against the influences of time that may lead to erosion or erasure, extinction and forgetfulness. Thriving nations are keen to take care of their heritage and make an intellectual effort in planning and framing to lay down plans for its protection, development, and employment in the service of the national cultural vision.

The relevant official entities need to promote the active participation of official institutions and non-governmental organizations as well as individuals to raise awareness of the importance of the national heritage. They should also stress the need to its preservation and development, and enhancing its appreciation and highlighting its function at the national and individual levels, to ensure the collaboration of all official, private, and individual efforts in this regard.

It is also hoped that the newly established Ministry of Culture, with its youth leadership, will seek to enhance the national heritage by adopting a comprehensive national strategy to take care of the national cultural heritage treasures and preserve them, including archaeological, heritage, and natural sites (museums, and the material and intangible components of heritage in the various human arts, human inventions in language and writing, social customs, and others).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the land of cultural and heritage treasures; it has hosted, throughout the history, numerous civilizations, rich with the legacies of their people who created and documented an enduring cultural heritage that we cherish. The Ministry of Culture is expected to spare no effort to serve the national heritage, promote the activities of the cultural sector and develop them to reflect the reality of our authentic history, and contribute to building future generations that cherish our heritage and open new and different outlets for the world to see our innovation and cultural treasures.

Work to bring about a positive and sustainable change in the field of national heritage requires the evaluation of the current status of our heritage, the identification of elements of strength and distinction, and the needs and difficulties facing this sector with its various material, human and intangible components. It also requires the formulation of a plan that includes the national goals to be pursued and timephased to facilitate their achievement, follow-up, and development in accordance with the requirements and opportunities that may emerge during the implementation of that plan.



This work initially involves the establishment of a database for the cultural sector, seeking to develop laws related to national heritage and supporting the national efforts made by public and private entities in the field of developing national heritage, encouraging work and raising awareness and preserving it from extinction. This also involves financing and investing in the national heritage, proposing laws and standards for the heritage sector, and encouraging individuals, institutions and companies to produce and develop the heritage sector content. This work further involves attention to the importance of qualifying and training national staff in the field of heritage industry in all its material and intangible components, and promoting the preservation of traditional heritage from extinction by training young men and women, each within the field they master, to preserve traditional artifacts and arts. They need to be equipped with the skills necessary to work in this field; they need to be motivated and supported, to ensure the establishment of a self-productive generation with the desire and skill to innovate and produce in the various areas of national heritage.

Above all, establishing community partnerships in the field of heritage preservation and development would create a broad community base that would seek self-development and investment in the national heritage industry, and create more job opportunities for the serious and ambitious Saudi young men and women. With the achievement of success in this field, it would make heritage a developing and attractive sector for investment opportunities, achieving ambitious growth that reflects positively on society economically, socially and culturally. In addition, communication and cooperation with regional and international entities would provide this sector with more experiences that can be invested and developed in line with the abundant assets of the national heritage. Furthermore, a new mechanism needs to be established for continuous evaluation and follow-up of work in this sector; members in charge of evaluation need to be open to workers in the various fields of antiquities and heritage in the country by maintaining communication, and holding events, activities and meetings that bring together workers and people interested in this sector, whether in forums, discussions, exhibitions, or festivals organized in various regions of the Kingdom.

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