

ICOMOS



International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage



International committee for
documentation and conservation
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the
modern movement

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Mr. Vladimir Putin
President of the Russian Federation
Ilyinka Street
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Mr. Dmitry Medvedev
Prime Minister of the Russian Federation
Government House
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Moscow 103274
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Mr. Sergei Sobyenin
Mayor of Moscow
13 Tverskaya Street
Moscow 125032
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2 April, 2013

Dear Sirs,

The leading International organizations for heritage protection of the 20th Century Heritage – the International Council on Monuments and Sites Twentieth Century International Scientific Committee (**ICOMOS ISC20C**), the International Working Party for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighborhoods of the Modern Movement (**Docomomo**) and the International Union of Architects (**UIA**) – wish to express their increasing concern regarding the alarming situation now facing the future of the Melnikov House in Moscow.

This globally known masterpiece of the Russian architectural Avant-garde built by Konstantin Melnikov in 1927-1929 is under threat of serious damage to its structural stability and historic fabric due to the on-going lack of conservation action and the immediate threat now posed by development adjacent, which endangers this internationally important heritage building.

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ICOMOS, Docomomo and UIA have previously investigated this case and adopted the special '**Resolution on Konstantin Melnikov's House and Collection**' 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 by a meeting of international heritage experts at the 17th ICOMOS General Assembly in Paris, and also forwarded, but without response.

We therefore now appeal directly to you for intervention. Both these international resolutions stress that the outstanding heritage significance of Melnikov's work is at serious risk of damage.

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 Russian contribution to global architectural heritage.

Urgent steps need to be undertaken to prevent negative development impacts in its vicinity and to improve the conservation situation for the house and studio of Melnikov.

Specifically, we are concerned that the demolition works which have been carried out in August 2012 in the near vicinity to the Melnikov House and construction works started in February 2013, pose a significant risk to the structural stability of the building. Realization of an architectural project of a new multifunctional centre at Arbat Street, 41 with deep underground parking will dramatically change the hydro-geology and drainage system of the Melnikov site. The situation is also exacerbated by the underlying geological structure of the land and the delicate nature of the construction.

This could lead to irreversible effects and finally to fatal damage of Melnikov's architectural masterpiece, a building which is internationally published and well-recognized as an outstanding item of Russia's architectural contribution to Twentieth Century architecture. ICOMOS Twentieth Century International Scientific Committee (ICOMOS ISC20C) is launching Heritage Alert action to prevent further destruction.

The International Scientific Committee for Twentieth Century Heritage of ICOMOS, Docomomo and the International Union of Architects now urgently ask you to take direct steps to prevent further neglect and stagnation of this uniquely Russian heritage resource of the Twentieth Century. We are calling for:

- A halt to the construction works started in February 2013 in vicinity to the Melnikov House (Arbat Street, 41) and to carry out urgent works for consolidation of a load-carrying framework and foundations of this world famous heritage resource;



- A detailed hydro geological research, a full structural appraisal and monitoring of the Melnikov House site and its surrounding area to establish and assess the detailed impacts of potential development and identify mitigation measures;
- The urgent review of the proposed multifunctional centre at Arbat Street, 41 to swiftly avoid by all possible means any adverse impact of the construction including underground levels which threaten the stability of the Melnikov house;
- The secure protection of the Melnikov House by effective Federal heritage listing;
- The preparation of a standard Conservation Plan for the Melnikov House, thereby applying international benchmark standards for conservation works; and
- A commitment to a strategy for establishing a Museum at the Melnikov House.

We would be pleased to discuss these issues further to support the future of this important masterpiece of Russian Avant-garde architecture.

Signed,

Sheridan Burke, President ICOMOS International Scientific Committee for Twentieth-Century Heritage

Ana Tostoes, Chair, Docomomo International

Albert Dubler, President, International Union of Architects

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