

Presentation by Ms Olga Titova,  
Deputy Director of  
the Kizhi Open-Air Museum  
(Bonn, 3 July 2015)

Dear colleagues,

It is my honor to welcome you on behalf of the Kizhi Museum.

The Kizhi Museum is the biggest open-air museum in Russia that preserves national culture, architecture and landscape.

There are more than 80 buildings on the museum territory, including old chapels, farmers' houses and household buildings.

The museum manages World Heritage Site – Kizhi Pogost of the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century.

25 years ago, the Kizhi pogost was inscribed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO by 3 criteria: (i), (iv) and (v).

First criterion determines the Kizhi pogost architectural ensemble as the eighth wonder of the world.

Perfectly proportionate buildings are constructed in ideal harmony with the landscape.

The Kizhi pogost was built and still stands on Kizhi Island, which is a part of the island archipelago in Lake Onega.

The architectural ensemble of the Kizhi pogost is a traditional church complex of the Russian North. It includes the summer church of the Transfiguration, the winter church of the Intercession and the bell-tower.

The complex is surrounded by the fence.

Inside, on the pogost territory there is an old cemetery.

Professionalism of carpenters who built the Pogost is expressed in their amazing ability to create complex architectural forms in perfect harmony with nature. And despite their big size the churches look light and airy.

In 2014 the Transfiguration church celebrated its 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The Church of the Transfiguration is a unique monument. There is nothing like it in the Russian or world wooden architecture.

Locals think it is a real wonder. They made up a legend that it had been built without any single nail by carpenter Nestor who worked alone and only used his axe.

The Kizhi architectural ensemble is the last one left in Russia that includes two wooden multi-domed churches.

The church of the Transfiguration is covered by 22 wooden domes. The church of the Intercession is decorated with a crown of 8 domes around 1 big dome.

The domes of the churches and the bell tower are covered with aspen shingles.

All domes are positioned in a special way to complement each other and to create beautiful views from all sides.

The fourth criterion determines the Kizhi architectural ensemble as a typical one for the Northwest of Russia.

The Kizhi pogost was not only a religious but also a social and administrative center of peasant life.

Religious services were held in the churches of the Kizhi pogost: in the Transfiguration church in summer time and in the Intercession church in winter.

Bell ringing, which can be heard from many kilometers away gathered local people for the service.

Services in the Intercession church are held again after the long break during the Soviet time.

Kizhi Island has always been both the spiritual center and the symbol of unity of a big village community.

The Kizhi Pogost was the main gathering place for peasants from surrounding areas. This was the place where people came to celebrate church holidays, weddings and christenings. Here they collectively made important decisions on day-to-day issues of nearby villages.

The main activities of the local people were agriculture, animal breeding and fishing.

The main mean of transportation in summer was the boat. Local people learned how to saw special boats, which were both steady and easy to maneuver.

They allowed locals navigating in rough Lake Onega waters.

The Kizhi Museum pays a lot of attention to preserving the ancient traditions. Museum specialists restore the technologies of shipbuilding, land cultivating and creating of traditional costumes and decorations.

The Kizhi pogost united the whole district as an administrative center.

Numerous villages were situated on picturesque shores of the surrounding islands. Ancient wooden houses and chapels are still preserved in local old villages.

Structure of the villages and the landscape reflecting the traditional agriculture system have been preserved to the modern day.

Considering the importance of the surrounding area for preservation of the WHS, a buffer zone was set up.

The buffer zone covers the most picturesque parts of the Kizhi archipelago, including Kizhi Island.

The fifth criterion determines the Kizhi architectural ensemble as an example of traditional wooden architecture of the Russian North and skills of local carpenters.

Apart from the architectural ensemble, the museum exhibition includes farmer houses and other buildings.

Beautiful examples of village architecture demonstrate skills of carpenters and patterns of everyday life of villagers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Both churches and houses are decorated with carved wooden elements. They combine symbols of pagan and orthodox cultures, which co-existed and complemented each other in the minds of peasants.

Today carpenters and restorers put a lot of effort into preservation of traditional crafts, tools and techniques. Using traditional methods, they make wooden elements for restoration of churches and houses by hand.

The Church of the Transfiguration is being restored with the use of traditional methods of harvesting, processing and preparation of wood.

#### Management of the World Heritage Site:

In order to ensure efficient management of the World Heritage Site according to the UNESCO recommendations the museum worked out a Management Plan.

The major principle in the Management Plan development was involvement of all stakeholders including local residents.

#### Conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the WHS:

In 2003, the Kizhi museum started restoration of the church of the Transfiguration.

The goal of the restoration is reconstruction of the architectural look of the monument and conservation of historic material to the utmost together with ensuring its stability and steadiness.

A special lifting technology is used for restoration. It was designed considering the complicated construction of the church. Each element that has been restored is thoroughly registered.

It was recommended by the experts to disseminate the unique experience of restoration of the Transfiguration church.

It could be a valuable helping hand in the conservation of wooden architecture monuments in Russia and abroad.

To this end, the Museum established training center for conservation of wooden architecture monuments.

This year in cooperation with Petrozavodsk State University the museum applied for establishing a UNESCO chair for study and conservation of wooden architecture.

Every year experts from ICOMOS and UNESCO visit Kizhi Island to monitor the progress of the restoration.

At present the Kizhi museum needs consultations regarding the project of reinforcement of the church structure. For this purpose, the museum invited the UNESCO experts in September this year to organize the following steps in accordance with their advice.

#### Sustainable development of the territory

The Kizhi pogost has always been the center of religious and social life of this area and the purpose of the museum is to keep and restore this role.

Therefore, in 2013 the Kizhi Museum elaborated the Development Concept. It suggests sustainable development of the area considering its historic and cultural potential. It is done in accordance with the UNESCO requirements.

Social and economic well-being of an area is a key condition for preservation of a world heritage site and historical authenticity.

Considering rich cultural heritage and beautiful nature, one of the few ways for the development of the area is promotion of different forms of cultural and environmental tourism.

For development of touristic services, the museum collaborates closely with local inhabitants, for example with the owners of local guesthouses, situated around Kizhi Island.

Kizhi is one of the most beautiful places of the Russian North. The unique nature of the island is one of its main treasures carefully preserved by the specialists of the Kizhi Museum.

Kizhi is a very popular museum not only for Russian visitors, but for foreign tourists as well.

In winter and in summer the museum offers sightseeing tours, theme excursions and educational programs for visitors of all ages from all over the world.

Traditionally all the issues related to construction or repairs of the churches were discussed at local residents meetings.

At present, this tradition has been preserved. Same as before headmen of local villages gather in the church to discuss community problems.

Also the Public Council has been established for discussion of the issues related to management, development and conservation of the World Heritage Site and the historic landscape.

Members of the Public Council are representatives of local communities, public organizations, authorities, church and business.

The Kizhi Museum is a modern and dynamically developing museum that seeks to comply with international law in the field of cultural heritage management and conservation.

Every effort of the museum is aimed at conservation of the Outstanding Universal Value and particular historic, cultural and natural environment of the site.

We express our gratitude to UNESCO and ICOMOS for active assistance in World Cultural Heritage conservation.

We invite you to visit the gem of the Russian North – the Kizhi Island!

Thank you for your attention!