Rethinking of the Associative Value of the World Cultural Heritage and
the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)

Yukio Nishimura, Dr. Eng.
Vice President, International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and
Professor, University of Tokyo

Since I am not an expert of the DMZ, I am not going to go into detail of the DMZ and its
heritage, however, I have been involved in the evaluation of all the World Cultural
Heritage nominations for eight years, I have a considerable experiences for the
requirements of the World Cultural Heritage inscription, I would like to discuss the
DMZ from that particular viewpoint.

As you know, ICOMOS is one of three advisory bodies for the UNESCO in terms of
World Heritage matters, that is clearly stipulates in the World Heritage Convention in
1972. All the nomination dossiers are forwarded to the ICOMOS for its evaluation,
and with the ICOMOS recommendations whether it should be accepted, referred back to
the State Party for further information, deferred, or rejected.

In the Article 24 of the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World
Heritage Convention (hereafter referred as the ‘Operational Guidelines’), stipulates
that nominated cultural heritage should be considered of ‘outstanding universal value’,
that is to meet one or more of the following criteria:

(i) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; or
(ii) exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within
a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology,
monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design; or
(iii) bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a
civilization which is living or which has disappeared; or
(iv) be an outstanding example of a type of a building or architectural or
technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history; or

(v) be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement or land-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change; or

(vi) be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literarily works of outstanding universal significance (the Committee considers that this criterion should justify inclusion in the List only in exceptional circumstances and in conjunction with other criteria cultural or natural).

It is obvious that the criterion (vi) is the only one which is not directly indicates material value of outstanding universal significance. It clearly stipulates the associative value of human history and human activities both positive and negative.

When we review the current World Heritage List, we can find a series of monuments and sites which have been inscribed in the List under the criterion (vi).