Heritage | UNESCO awaiting Beijing’s reply regarding unfinished building


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The added concerns over the unfinished building at Calçada do Gaio, which according to several local groups threaten the protection of the Guia Lighthouse, have been forwarded from UNESCO’s World Heritage Center (WHC) to the Chinese central government’s cultural department. The director of the WHC, Mechtild Rossler has told the Concern Group for the Protection of the Guia Lighthouse that the WHC is now awaiting a reply.
According to the reply to which the Times had access via the group, the topic was discussed among the UNESCO organization about two weeks ago. The reply states that the issue “is not only a question of visual integrity and the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the historic urban landscape, but – as you have pointed out – also the application of existing height restrictions for the buildings to be constructed in the area surrounding the Guia Lighthouse.”

The group has been actively contacting UNESCO in the past few weeks as well as other international cultural organizations to seek help in pushing the MSAR government to retract the decision to allow the building construction to resume. The group is trying to gather international support for the fulfillment of Executive Order 83/2008 that establishes the height cap for the surrounding area of the Guia Lighthouse.

In the letter, the Group stressed, “The violation of such height limit would damage the landscape (seriously) and the visual integrity of the world cultural heritage Guia Lighthouse and would destroy the Outstanding Universal Value of the property,” adding “such violation is an open attack on the mission of safeguarding Macau’s world heritage and should never be accepted.”

About three weeks ago, New Macau Association’s (ANM) leaders returned from a meeting with UNESCO officials in Paris urging the government to “halt the construction of a controversial residential project in the Historic Center of Macau or face ‘consequences’ from the international community.”

Scott Chiang, Jason Chao and Sulu Sou had met with Rossler to express their concerns over what they consider to be a violation of the heritage regulations designed to protect Macau’s historic center, and returned with the message, “if the Macau government fails to give a satisfactory response (to UNESCO enquiries), there will be consequences.”

Both groups have been expressing shared concerns over the residential project of over 81 meters high, which has been halted since 2008 due to surpassing the area’s height cap of 52.5 meters.

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