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**HERITAGE CITIES TO BOOST LOCAL CREATIVE INDUSTRIES THROUGH PROMOTION OF CULTURAL ASSETS AND WORLD HERITAGE SITE VALUES**

GEORGE TOWN: The World Heritage Sites of Melaka, George Town and Vigan of the Philippines are set to receive a boost in their local creative industries through a pilot project that aims to promote cultural assets over the region’s network of World Heritage Sites, museums and information centres.

The inception workshop implemented under this project, entitled ‘UNESCO Sub-Regional Inception Workshop Linking World Heritage Sites and Local Cultural Assets through Museums, Information Centres and Creative Industries’, is held from 29 to 31 October 2018 at Bayview Hotel Georgetown Penang. It is the first activity of the project that intends to gather all site implementing partners, involving the local government and museum authorities.

Jointly organised by George Town World Heritage Incorporated and UNESCO Office Jakarta in cooperation with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre - Asia and Pacific Unit, the workshop is funded by the Japanese Funds-in-Trust and supported by the Penang State Government.

George Town World Heritage Incorporated General Manager Dr Ang Ming Chee said cultural assets in heritage cities can be better appreciated and generate sustainable income for the local communities if strategies and incentives are provided.

“This inception workshop functions as a catalyst for ideas, we foresee the sharing and exchange of information, past experiences and knowledge among our participants. Innovation and improvement are much needed in our daily undertakings. Cultural assets possess a vast potential to be developed in the cultural industry.

“We understand that development and branding involve multiple complications, but we will uphold equitability throughout the process to explore the potential of local cultural assets, without compromising traditional assets only for commercial purposes,” she said.

Penang Tourism Development, Heritage, Culture and Arts Committee Chairman Yeoh Soon Hin officially opened the workshop on Monday, 29 October 2018. Also present were UNESCO Jakarta Cultural Unit Head Moe Chiba, UNESCO World Heritage Centre Asia and the Pacific Unit Programme Specialist Nao Hayashi, Consul-General of Japan in Penang Shinichiro Kanoya and Vigan City Mayor Juan Carlo S. Medina.

On top of the insightful sessions facilitated by the speakers, the participants also went on site visits within the George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site, which focused on exploring the heritage city’s cultural assets.

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**ABOUT GEORGE TOWN WORLD HERITAGE INCORPORATED**

George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) was established by the Penang State Government in April 2010 as the site manager of the George Town UNESCO World Heritage Site. GTWHI is tasked to manage, safeguard and promote the site’s Outstanding Universal Values in cooperation with the federal, state and local governments, as well as local communities, organisations and associations.

GTWHI develops and incorporates multidisciplinary knowledge in policy-making, educational, promotional, capacity building and mobilisation activities. The GTWHI team encounters daily challenges in conserving over 4,000 heritage buildings within the site, adaptive reuse of spaces and the safeguarding of living heritage, including those outside the World Heritage Site. GTWHI also works on cultural heritage promotion in schools, youth participation through volunteer activities, disaster risk reduction, regeneration of residency within George Town, paper and object conservation, first aid for cultural heritage in emergencies, and organising training workshops, among others.

These tasks are conducted through some 50 programmes and projects annually, with sponsorship from the Penang State Government, and in collaboration with UNESCO and its Category 2 Centres. Together with heritage professionals and the local communities who live in, work in and visit George Town, GTWHI will continue innovating pragmatic and holistic strategies to ensure George Town’s heritage is conserved and safeguarded for future generations.