The Othello Tower/Citadel is an important monument in the history of Famagusta, Cyprus and the Mediterranean. Its importance and a sense of age and mystery are evident when one walks through the portals of the citadel - with the Lion of Venice still presiding after hundreds of years.

The citadel consists of wall fortifications, connecting walls and four remaining towers (originally eight). These elements are in various states of decay from ruin to complete walls and rib vaulting. The monument comprises of two structures one inside the other. The outer Venetian fortifications that date from 1492 were constructed around the earlier Lusignan fortification from the 14th century.

The Othello Tower / Citadel formed the key defensive position for the city of Famagusta at the apex of the city walls and the protector between the port and the sea.

Othello Tower was selected as part of the priority intervention projects of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage.

Within the framework of the EU funded and UNDP implemented “Support to cultural heritage monuments of great importance for Cyprus” project, a study “Survey, Investigations, Assessment and Project Design” was carried out in 2012.

The aim of the Study, was first to identify the critical problems, research and understand the monument and then create the designs for:

- stabilizing the monument
- protecting the elements that are at most risk while observing internationally recognised conservation standards
- creating a safe environment for the community and visitors
- accommodating disabled persons with an access path and toilet facilities

The project is funded by the European Union and implemented by the UNDP in partnership with the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage.
The works carried out focused mainly on emergency masonry stabilisation works to walls, arches and other unstable sections. Areas where losses/collapses had occurred over the years were strengthened. A proper drainage system was constructed to canalise and take away water, which was one of the most damaging causes of deterioration for the Tower/Citadel. New roof layers were installed with compatible materials to avoid future rainwater infiltration. Visitors’ information features were also provided as well as accessibility at ground level and sanitation facilities for persons with disabilities.

The reopening of the Othello Tower/Citadel and completion of Phase 1 of the structural stabilisation and conservation works, was aptly celebrated by a theatre performance of the play which gave the structure its name – William Shakespeare’s Othello. The play was performed inside the castle itself by a bicomunal cast of both Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot actors.

One month after the conservation works were completed, the Technical Committee on Culture chose the Othello Tower/Citadel as the venue for their first bicomunal event. The attendance of both Leaders, Nicos Anastasiades and Mustafa Akıncı, highlighted the importance of the monument not only as a major part of the island’s cultural heritage but as part of the confidence-building measures and ongoing peace process.

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The Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage - The Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, established by the decision of the two Leaders, works in line and within the mutually agreed framework for the preservation of the island’s common heritage. The Committee upholds and promotes the view that the protection of cultural heritage is an integral part of the ongoing process of broadening the area of cooperation and confidence building between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, which can only be achieved through joint efforts. Through its work the Committee aims to achieve the best possible results for the stability, survival, cultural and social value and protection of selected Monuments. For this purpose the Committee set up the Advisory Board to act as its executive body to pursue actions for the actual implementation of designs for selected monuments, including research, study, survey and conservation. This framework allows for the practical aspects of preservation to be considered in a non-political manner so that practical measures can be taken to improve the situation on the ground.

**United Nations Development Programme – Partnership for the Future (UNDP-PFF) -** The Agreement on the establishment of the Advisory Board for the Preservation, Physical Protection and Restoration of the Immovable Cultural Heritage of Cyprus recognizes a special role to UNDP in Cyprus as a politically accepted implementation body by both communities. For this reason, UNDP-PFF was requested by the European Commission to become the lead coordinator under which the project would be implemented fostering dialogue, cooperation and confidence building between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots.

**European Union - Since 2012 approximately €11.7 Million** have been provided by the European Union through the Aid Programme for the Turkish Cypriot community to implement the priorities of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage for the preservation of the island-wide cultural heritage in Cyprus. The European Union is the largest contributor to the work of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage in Cyprus. For more information on the Aid Programme for the Turkish Cypriot community click here; or visit the EU Infopoint on Facebook.