

Media release – August 26, 2006

**Editors: Feature Backgrounder with
today's announcement**

**New world landscape architectural leader
seeking to protect and improve natural and
heritage values worldwide**

New Zealander Diane Menzies is the new world landscape architectural leader. So what does she plan during her two year tenure? Today we background Dr Menzies and her vision for shaping the world in the coming years.

Dr Menzies will become the new International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) president at their conference in Minneapolis, USA, in October.

“I love this profession and I want to maintain and increase the IFLA momentum for the benefit of the burgeoning and polluted human footprint on this planet and for the landscape architecture profession.

Dr Menzies was recently selected by delegates from 60 countries including PR China, Belgium, Uruguay, Argentina, Costa Rica, Korea, Peru, Serbia and many countries in Europe – a diversity of cultures and landscapes.

Sustainability, integrated water planning and community values – such as preventing urban violence - are three issues that she holds dear.

“International landscape architects can play a major role in our global campaign to beat urban violence.

“We know that urban design can beat crime in cities which are facing increasing violence and crime which can destroy their appeal.

“Cities have been seeking a solution to urban violence by focussing on prevention. We believe design by experts can beat the crime.”

Urban planners had become increasingly aware of the diminishing availability of space to ease fear of insecurity for young people in city centres and in the neighbourhoods of major cities in developing countries.

Also, there was evidence that youth at risk are finding themselves segregated from public urban spaces.

However, sustainable urban regeneration or urban renewal requires that young people as well as adults find cities liveable, lively and safe.

Studies have found major causes of inner city crime and delinquency are related to the physical urban environment, Dr Menzies said.

“Take the Colombian capital of Bogota. Their crime rates have dropped dramatically since 1998 after planners and landscape architects made widespread changes in the way people used public space and public street corridors.

“Eight years ago there were 84 homicides per 100,000 people; today the rate has dropped to 30. A drop in crime has left the city statistically safer than Caracas and Rio de Janeiro.”

Landscape planners around the world have a role in hazard planning and re-mediation of damaged landscapes and habitats such as in Sri Lanka after the 2004 tsunami, Dr Menzies said.

She will be discussing the charter concept with landscape planners in Siberia and China in the next two weeks.

A Siberian Landscape Charter is proposed, as a step towards a Global Landscape Charter, which the International Federation of Landscape Architects is initiating.

IFLA have put forward a proposal for a Global Landscape Convention. We are discussing this with representatives from the World Heritage Centre and the Council of Europe.

The proposal is to develop national and regional landscape charters, using a common approach as part of a Global Landscape Charter.

The landscape charters will provide a checklist so natural and heritage landscapes can be assessed, recognised, protected and enhanced.

This will enable communities to take an active part in landscape planning and management through the application of the values identified to places near them.

The charters may also be used to build a database of global knowledge on landscapes of significance.

Landscapes are valued throughout the world as part of people's heritage. Some of the techniques used, including mediation of disputes, may be adopted in Siberia for the development of sustainable landscapes. A Landscape Charter may also aid landscape protection in Siberia.

Dr Menzies said she aimed to make landscape architects more effective at the global level by opening doors of international decision makers.

“I want to see landscape as an important agenda item for the World Bank, UNESCO and governments around the world,” Dr Menzies said.

“If people understand how our landscapes function, and how our communities value the places they live in we will have a better chance of healthier environmental policies.

“The landscape architecture profession has given me the most satisfying career I can imagine. But I am convinced that landscape architects could be more effective in the world with even closer communication and more effective collaboration with the larger decision making organisations.”

Ends

Media advisory: For further information
contact Diane Menzies on 0064 275 322868 or Kip
Brook at Word of Mouth Media NZ 0064 275
033855 or 03 3745426
