

2 July 2009

First-class upgrades open to improve the Soli Mosaics for tourists and visitors. On July 1, 2009 the Supporting Activities that Value the Environment project (SAVE) hosted the grand opening of the new pedestrian walkway circling the Mosaics at Soli. The walkway is an important addition as it provides much needed protection for the very rare and fragile mosaics. An added benefit is that visitors actually get a better perspective of the famous 4th – 6th century mosaics. The elevated walkway provides a viewing platform for visitors with information panels explaining the significance of the site and the mosaics, which are some of the finest surviving mosaics on the island of this period. Prior to the erection of this walkway, visitor traffic was damaging the ancient mosaics and threatening an important part of Cyprus' cultural heritage.

As Mr. Ersan Saner reminded the crowd, "We are gathered here to celebrate the protection of a world heritage site. Our island has unique beauties and it is not hard to find many sites of this caliber around the island. But Soli is particularly significant for its outstanding mosaics and especially for its world-renowned Swan figure." Mr. Saner also took the time to "thank everyone who has made all this possible, especially the US government, the USAID and the SAVE Project for helping us protect a world heritage site."

U.S. Ambassador Frank C. Urbancic enjoyed the festivities. Additional remarks were also made by Mr. Alan Davis of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Mr. Fuat Azimli who was a valuable partner throughout the work on the walkway, prior to the ribbon-cutting.

Appreciating Cyprus' multicultural past is one way of ensuring a more peaceful future. With funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), it has been the privilege of SAVE to support the protection and preservation of cultural heritage in Cyprus since 2005. Like all U.S.-funded programs in Cyprus, SAVE is aimed at facilitating reunification of the island, including through better protection and management of the island's critical natural and cultural resources.

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