

## **Joint Statement by the Chairpersons of the Committees of the UNESCO Culture Conventions**

1. We, the current Chairpersons of the Intergovernmental Committees of the six UNESCO Culture Conventions, met in Bonn, Germany, on 29 June 2015, on the occasion of the 39<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee, to join forces with the Director-General of UNESCO in order to strengthen synergies among UNESCO's Culture Conventions and to ensure that these conventions reinforce each other and act as a unified corpus for the fulfillment of their complementary goals, reflecting a holistic vision.
2. This meeting took place in the context of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UNESCO, which provides a unique opportunity to reflect upon the future of the Organization's standard-setting action in the face of contemporary challenges and emerging needs. Moreover it is intended to provide further momentum to the international community's efforts to protect cultural diversity, safeguard cultural and natural heritage, and nurture creativity and humanism worldwide in pursuit of peace and mutual understanding. This is particularly relevant as the United Nations is advancing towards the adoption of the Post-2015 Agenda, in the implementation of which the links between culture, sustainable development and lasting peace should be recognized and promoted.
3. The strategic importance of embracing and building upon our cultural and natural heritage, in all its diversity and richness, for humanity as a whole, cannot be overemphasized. This heritage engenders and nourishes our human identity and potential, our cultural diversity and creative expression as fundamental human rights. Its full assimilation for scientific, cultural and educational purposes lies at the core of equitable and sustainable development, increases the shared knowledge of the historical achievements of humanity, enriches the life of all peoples and inspires dialogue, and mutual respect and appreciation among nations. This essential contribution to our collective well-being is especially necessary in the current context in which global challenges continue to mount and the consolidation of a humanist vision is crucial.
4. In recent decades, new approaches for a strengthened partnership to nurture and comprehend our shared heritage have evolved, creating the potential for enhanced forms of understanding and international cooperation. The successive elaboration of the six UNESCO culture conventions has played a key role in this regard. Each of these conventions has contributed to this process by addressing a different dimension of the complex task of protecting, safeguarding and understanding cultural and natural heritage, at all times and under any circumstances, with full respect for cultural diversity and creative expression and ensuring access to culture for all. By virtue of their complementarity, they constitute a robust standard-setting body to guide the cooperative action of the international community in implementing preventive and corrective measures in accordance with universally recognized and shared ethical

- principles and duties, and with the support of science, communication and education.
5. In this context, we underline the need for a renewed political will to support UNESCO's culture conventions as a whole in helping to achieve equitable and sustainable development and peace worldwide. In particular, we encourage the United Nations to ensure that the protection, safeguarding and understanding of cultural and natural heritage, cultural diversity and creative expression worldwide be recognized as a cross-cutting issue in the implementation of the interrelated goals of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.
  6. We draw attention to the urgent need to enhance the integrated interpretation and implementation of the set of UNESCO's Culture Conventions especially in the face of disturbing trends, such as the proliferation of hate crimes against cultural heritage, its intentional targeting and destruction, the pillaging and clandestine excavating of archaeological sites, the illicit trafficking of cultural objects and criminal and terrorist threats, all of which constitute further challenges to the protection of cultural and natural heritage worldwide. In particular, we underline the need to strengthen UNESCO's capacity to address the current conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and other regions.
  7. We invite all relevant actors to step up efforts to increase the effectiveness of the work of the UNESCO Cultural Conventions governing bodies and enhance their financial sustainability, as necessary conditions to ensuring the adequate implementation of the conventions. In particular, we call on stakeholders to provide the additional financial and human resources that are essential to optimize the integrated implementation of the conventions and maintain their credibility.
  8. We call for systematic efforts to continue appraising the scope and effectiveness of the set of UNESCO cultural conventions, with particular regard to new and emerging trends, and to reflect on possible modalities for improving their integrated interpretation, implementation and adequate follow-up. We recognize the increasing efforts deployed by the Secretariat and the governing bodies to enhance the synergies and mutual reinforcement among the six UNESCO culture conventions, and encourage further sustained efforts to achieve this goal, tapping into the full potential of the institutional innovation at UNESCO.
  9. Finally we recommend that the Chairpersons meet regularly to take stock of progress and define a common vision forward.