

**Second Ministerial Conference of the *CoMoCoSEE Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe - Enhancing Culture for Sustainable Development***  
**Istanbul, Turkey, 24-25 February 2016**

**Joint Declaration of the Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe on the "Protection and Sustainable Management of Cultural Heritage"**

**We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations participating in the present meeting of the Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe,**

**Gathered** today, on 25 February 2016, in Istanbul, Turkey, within the framework of the Turkish Presidency of the Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe,

**Referring to** the principles determined in the Charter of the Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe signed on 31 March 2005 in Copenhagen, Denmark, the Appendix and Second Appendix to the Charter approved respectively on 15 April 2011 in Bucharest, and on 28 June 2014 in Ohrid,

**Fully confirming** the contents, aims and principles of the Regional Strategy for Culture approved on 28 June 2014 in Ohrid,

**Reaffirming** our commitment to enhance regional and bilateral cooperation on culture, creativity and cultural heritage as a driving force for dialogue, good neighbourship, social cohesion and integration of the region, in the spirit of mutual respect and peaceful and sustainable development for the benefit of all,

**Also acknowledging** the important contribution of culture and cultural heritage to sustainable social and economic development of modern societies and to the quality of people's lives,

**Underlining** the necessity to ensure cohesion, integrity, and continuity in the endeavours of the CoMoCoSEE, as well as coordination and monitoring of operational activities to take further the implementation of the Ohrid Strategy,

**Expressing support** for the initiative "Unite4Heritage" spearheaded by UNESCO as the main international campaign in response to the unprecedented recent attacks on and the destruction and looting of cultural heritage sites,

**Thanking** the Council of Europe, the European Union, and UNESCO for their continuous support and valuable contribution to the endeavours of the CoMoCoSEE,

**Agree on the following:**

1. The CoMoCoSEE Member States shall work towards reinforcing coordination at all levels between the cultural and other sectorial policies, including tourism, that are relevant to enhance and promote the role of culture for development, in order to create greater synergies and develop an integrated approach towards the sustainable management and valorisation of culture intended as a driver for inclusive and equitable growth;
2. The CoMoCoSEE Member States shall encourage the exchange of knowhow and best practices applied in the sector of Cultural and Creative Industries;

3. Accordingly, efforts shall be made in order to promote cross sectoral and transversal capabilities in heritage management, including disaster risk reduction;
4. With the aim to further mainstream culture in development programmes, policies and strategies at all levels, the improvement and implementation of statistical tools to assess and monitor the impact of culture for development shall be supported;
5. The CoMoCoSEE Member States shall reinforce cooperation and develop a coordinated approach to support the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property in, from and through the region, in full compliance with the relevant international standards and resolutions;
6. In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals, the CoMoCoSEE Member States shall step up efforts to make best use of all relevant regional, cross-border and/or transnational EU financing programmes;
7. To this end, the CoMoCoSEE Member States shall also avail themselves, whenever possible and appropriate, of cooperation with UNESCO, Council of Europe and European Union; in this sense, and as a shared priority for future action, the CoMoCoSEE Member States support the idea to explore the possibility to develop sub-regional programmes on the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property, as well as on the sustainable valorisation of cultural and natural heritage, in cooperation with UNESCO;
8. Future actions for the implementation of the Ohrid Strategy shall also take stock, whenever relevant and appropriate, of the experience and achievements of previous processes originated within the framework of the CoMoCoSEE, including the Ljubljana Process and other regional initiatives;

9. The CoMoCoSEE Member States shall also explore all other possible fundraising opportunities as a way to advance the implementation of the Ohrid Strategy, including through joint financing and cooperation with the private sector;
10. The CoMoCoSEE Member States highlight the important role of their National Development Agencies and other relevant institutions, and the opportunities offered by international organizations and the private sector for possible joint projects on cultural heritage protection and rehabilitation in the region, in full respect of cultural diversity;
11. Finally, with the aim at ensuring continuity and institutional memory, and at facilitating the hand-over of responsibilities among rotating Presidencies, the functions and work of the so-called CoMoCoSEE Troika shall be reactivated in accordance with Article 15 of the CoMoCoSEE Charter. In addition, the most convenient options shall be explored and consequent action taken in order for the CoMoCoSEE official website to be re-activated and regularly updated. To these ends, the CoMoCoSEE Member States regard with favour the possibility for UNESCO, through the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, to provide continuative technical assistance to the CoMoCoSEE Troika, according to modalities to be elaborated within the CoMoCoSEE Committee of Officials.