



**INPUTS FOR A DEBATE ON, AND CONSTRUCTION OF
AN INTERNATIONAL NORMATIVE INSTRUMENT FOR
PRESERVATION AND PROMOTION OF MUSEUMS,
MUSEOLOGICAL HERITAGE AND COLLECTIONS**

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

July 2012

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1. How are *museums, museological heritage and collection* defined in this document?

The definitions have as their guiding instruments the concepts adopted by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the Recommendation for the Protection of Movable Cultural Property adopted at the 20th Meeting of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 11/28/1978, Brazilian Law No. 11,904 (Statute of Museums), from 01/14/2009, and theoretical studies conducted by researchers in the museum area.

- Museum: nonprofit organization that conserves, researches, communicates, interprets and exhibits, for purposes of preservation, studies, research, education, contemplation and tourism, sets and collections of historical, artistic, scientific and technical value or of any other cultural nature, open to the public, at the service of society and its development;
- Museological heritage: all cultural and natural properties which, upon being protected by museums, are transformed into tangible and intangible testimonies to man's trajectory over the territory, having, over such new arrangement, acquired a specific cultural reality; namely cultural property that went through the musealization process;
- Collection: cultural property of tangible and intangible nature, including natural property, maintained by individuals or organizations of public or private nature, bearing reference to the history, memory and identity of different individuals and social groups, which are not under custody of museums and whose cultural interest justifies their protection and promotion.

2. What role do museums play in the contemporary world?

The museum stands as a strategic instrument for the development of the community in which it is inserted, so as to ensure, throughout the specificity of its nature and its museological heritage, the exercise of citizenship.

As institutions dedicated to cultural investigation and interpretation, mapping, documentation, preservation and promotion, communication and display of evidence of man and nature, the museum encourages the appropriation of cultural property by

society and fosters the ability of the individual and the community to become aware of their cultural uniqueness, making them active agents in historic transformation process.

In this context, an expansion of the scope of work and intervention of museums can be seen, in tandem with the issues raised by society. This is a time of great inter-institutional and international articulation and of impressive growth in the number of museums - there are some 55,000 museums in the world, distributed in 202 countries, according to the 17th edition of *Museums of the World* (2010). There has also been an increase in the number of associations, museum boards and professionals, public and private entities, networks and specialized systems, public programs and policies for the area.

3. What is the importance of collections?

Regardless of the actions of museums in the field of promotion and protection of museological heritage, other social actors have as their custom to keep important testimonies of nature and human cultural diversity under their custody. While the cultural collections held in the custody of museums receive special attention due to the nature of these institutions, the same cannot be said of cultural property that is not under the direct custody of museums. Individually or together, important cultural and natural testimonies maintained by private owners (or by public entities whose main purpose is not preservation) constantly suffer under threat of deterioration by natural causes or by human action, and run the risk of being dispersed through illegal activities. It is therefore necessary to further acquire knowledge of natural and cultural references that have not been made into museums. The purpose is to effect measures for their promotion and protection without the need to integrate this heritage into museums, and thus ensure both the right to property and collective interest are preserved.

4. How are *preservation and promotion of museological heritage and collections* defined in this document?

Museological heritage and collections of cultural interest bear witness to the cultural beliefs, moral values, arts, sciences and other events, and shall be subject to permanent preservation and promotion, both by the supervisory authorities and by society in general. Preservation and promotion are regarded by UNESCO as inseparable actions, both aimed at safeguarding and valuing heritage with a view to ensuring universal access, regardless of political, religious or any other barriers.

In this sense, *preservation* and *promotion* are understood as follows:

- Preservation - means protecting museological heritage from diverse risks, such as destruction, deterioration and theft. More comprehensive than conservation, it also includes asset management, document control, environmental monitoring, financial and human resources, appropriate packaging and storage, and especially the establishment of policies that guarantee access to information and public awareness.
- Promotion - is the development of policies, programs and initiatives aimed at disseminating the revitalization, development and sustainability of museums and collections. Its premises are the democratization of access, strengthening of the image of museums in the everyday life of society, appreciation and dissemination of museological heritage, and the creation of incentive instruments for actions geared towards preservation, communication and research.

5. Why establish an international normative instrument for the preservation and promotion of museological heritage and collections?

International regulation is an instrument of strategic importance for the definition of standards and integration of procedures when different social actors are involved with the topic at hand. This is the case of museological heritage and collections, which, due to the specificity of their features, preserve, protect and promote the invaluable cultural, natural, historical and artistic assets of mankind.

A new international instrument will positively impact the development of programs that broaden the discussion about preservation and promotion of museological heritage and collections, and encourage the establishment of specific public policies for the matter. This instrument will also take heed of the conceptual and practical changes occurred in the field of Museology over the last forty years, as well as how to respond to the issues with which museums and collections deal in our day and age.

6. Why would UNESCO be the appropriate forum for proposing a legislative instrument?

In over sixty years of activities, UNESCO has already issued 35 Conventions, 32 Recommendations and 13 Declarations in the fields of education, science and culture. These documents have been essential for the implementation of public policies in different member states.

Establishing international standards for the treatment of the issues under their responsibility is one of the main tasks of the Organization, and a key element in achieving its purposes and functions, as expressed in Article I of its Constitution:

“(...)collaborate in the work of advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples, through all means of mass communication, and to that end recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image”

Given the above, we deem UNESCO to be the preferred forum for debate and proposal of actions related to museological heritage and collections. We see it as so not only for the fact that the theme is linked to the Organization's mandate, but also due to our wish that the results of this multilateral debate may inspire national entities towards the establishment of internal normative instruments that may ensure the development and strengthening of museological heritage and collections.

7. What is the importance of UNESCO for the area of cultural heritage?

The notion of heritage has acquired a broad and diversified meaning at UNESCO, today encompassing historical monuments, urban complexes, sacred places, movable objects, natural parks, landscapes modified by men, ecosystems and biological diversity, underwater treasures, prehistoric objects, architectural pieces and oral and intangible traditions.

Since its inception, the Organization acts on the cultural area as an important multilateral body dedicated to reflection and proposition of actions for this asset.

The result of this effort has generated a series of normative instruments of indicative, prescriptive or binding nature - charters, resolutions, declarations, recommendations and international conventions - which aim at the development of principles, the establishment of standards and procedures and incentive to public policy-making.

8. What is the UNESCO's contribution to museums, museological heritage and collections?

Throughout its history, UNESCO has directly or indirectly dealt with issues related to museums and collections, seeing such as pathways for economic, social, human and scientific development. Through actions focused on preservation, communication and research, museums - including their museological heritage - and collections have become recognized as privileged spaces for the representation and for multicultural dialogue.

However, there is no specific legal instrument which regulates and encourages the development of national policies on the matter and which establishes binding commitments from the international community to the preservation and promotion of museological heritage and collections.

9. Do the UNESCO normative documents include the specificities of museological heritage and collections?

Not entirely. The normative instruments established for cultural heritage (created in the 1950s) reflect a post-war concern, focusing specially on the protection of cultural property, especially in cases of armed conflict and in the struggle against illicit trafficking and trade. As of the 1970s, UNESCO intensifies the normalization of the heritage area, recognizing its typologies and characteristics and having protection as a core focus. In this sense, we highlight the following documents:

- Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954).
- Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations (1956).
- Recommendation on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1964).
- Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1964).
- Recommendation concerning the Protection, at National Level, of the Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972).
- Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972).
- Recommendation concerning the International Exchange of Cultural Property (1976).
- Recommendation for the Protection of Movable Cultural Property (1978).
- Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore (1989).
- Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001).
- Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003).
- Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).

It is necessary to reassess and expand the scope of the principles and regulations prescribed by the existing rules so as to contemplate, in a separate instrument, the specificities of museological heritage and collections, especially in times of peace.

10. What are the main threats to museological heritage and collections in the contemporary world?

In recent years, political instability and cultural and religious intolerance have caused a multitude of protection-related issues, exposing the vulnerability of museological heritage and collections. Other difficulties that are independent of the contexts described also compound to this scenario, such as those caused by extreme weather conditions or even the inadequate completion of everyday work on museological heritage and collections. Among these we highlight the deterioration resulting from poor monitoring of environmental conditions, lack of documentary control of collections, incorrect handling, packaging and storage, inappropriate use of preventive conservation and restoration techniques and methodologies, etc...

In this sense, preservation institutes have identified the ten most common risk agents when it comes to museological heritage and collections, which are:

- 1) physical forces,
- 2) robbery/theft or vandalism,
- 3) fire,
- 4) water,
- 5) pests,
- 6) pollutants,
- 7) light/ultraviolet and infrared radiation,
- 8) incorrect temperature,
- 9) incorrect relative humidity and
- 10) dissociation¹.

The classification of these agents is part of the risk management process that seeks to mitigate these difficulties.

Added to this in a broader context, it is observed that the discontinuity of public policies, low investment in public resources, human resources in insufficient number and insufficiently skilled, lack of planning and flawed administrative structures are factors that greatly undermine the fulfillment of the social role of museological heritage and collections.

11. Would a new instrument address the issue of repatriation of cultural property?

¹ Loss of the ability to retrieve or associate information concerning the museological heritage.

A new normative instrument, if implemented, would not overlap with existing international documents dealing with the repatriation of cultural property. The normative instructions and Convention of 1954, as well as the 1970 Convention, which together culminated in the creation of the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation, enacted under UNESCO in 1978, allied with the creation of the UNIDROIT Convention in 1995, already play key roles with regard to the repatriation, illicit trafficking, forgery of cultural property etc...

12. What preservation and promotion actions are necessary for museological heritage and for collections?

Museum heritage and collections play an important role in public policies focused on the right to memory, the consolidation of cultural identity and the strengthening of democracy.

Under the understanding that any and all public policy shall only be consolidated when appropriated by society, it becomes necessary to promote the valuation, preservation and dissemination of museological heritage and collections, seeing them as devices for social inclusion and citizenship.

Noteworthy among the main actions for preservation and promotion of museological heritage and collections that must be taken to achieve these goals are the following:

12.1. Management of museological heritage and collections

12.1.1 Creation and implementation of public policies for the management of museological heritage and collections with the aim of promoting development, strengthening, articulation, funding and promotion of museums and collections of public or private nature;

12.1.2 Establishment of national registries of museums and collections aimed at producing knowledge about the diversity of museological heritage and of professionals working in the sector;

12.1.3 Creation and improvement of legislation that establishes guidelines for the activities of museums in the country, especially with regard to policies focused on management, preservation, conservation, restoration, safety, research, dissemination and access, as well as on the use of public spaces, the right to image, marketing and on management and circulation of museological heritage and collections of public interest;

12.1.4 Integration of different government instances directly involved with the management of museological heritage;

12.1.5 Support to the development of strategic plans aimed at identifying the vocation of museums, of museological heritage and of collections, contemplating, if any, existing organization and prioritization of programs, projects and actions.

12.2. Democratization and access to museological heritage

12.2.1 Support for the establishment of information networks between museums and between professionals in order to facilitate research and professional development, as well as to democratize access to the knowledge produced;

12.2.2 Creation of mechanisms that favor the documentation, organization, conservation, restoration, computerization and making available of museological heritage and collections;

12.2.3 Support for actions that aim to democratize access to museological heritage and collections;

12.2.4 Creation of technical cooperation measures for dissemination of programs with general and specific audiences; such measures must cover the areas of management, preservation and documentation, including also the areas of research and publications.

12.3. Training and capacity building of professionals

12.3.1 Creation and implementation of training programs and training of professionals working with museological heritage and collections;

12.3.2 Implementation of training centers and mobile teams with various levels of specificity and mobility to work nation-wide;

12.3.3 Development of exchange programs between national and international cultural institutions with recognized and proven ability and willingness to work in the area of vocational training;

12.3.4 Support for meetings, seminars, conferences and other discussion fora for the dissemination of knowledge production in the area of museums and collections, social memory, museological heritage and Museology.

12.4. Modernization of infrastructure

12.4.1 Support to the modernization and implementation of maintenance, adaptation, sanitation, air conditioning, security and accessibility work in areas that harbor museological heritage;

12.4.2 Encouraging the development of programs, research projects and new technologies in the field of conservation, documentation and exhibition.

12.5. Promotion and development of museological heritage and collections

12.5.1 Minimum of 15% of national government budgets allocated to the field of culture invested in museological heritage and collections;

12.5.2 Creation of an international fund to support museums and collections with a view to strengthen those areas in developing countries that hold museological heritage under their custody;

12.5.3 Incentive to the creation of policies to encourage and further disseminate intellectual and scientific production related to museological heritage and collections;

12.5.4 Establishment of partnerships between public and private sectors to promote recovery and sustainability of museological heritage;

12.5.5 Development of mechanisms to strengthen the image of museological heritage in society through advertising and other media;

12.5.6 Incentive to the implementation of programs aimed at greater integration of museological heritage in contemporary social life through exhibitions, competitions, awards, entertainment, commemorative events, workshops and other activities of educational-cultural nature.

12.6. Preservation of museological heritage

12.6.1 Incentive to the creation and perfecting of normative instruments that guide and implement sanctions for the protection of museological heritage and collections;

12.6.2 Incentive to the implementation of policies for the preservation of museological heritage and collections;

12.6.3 Incentive to the development of plans and mechanisms for risk management, as well as integration and cooperation with public safety agencies;

12.6.4 Development and implementation of the inventory and cataloging of museological heritage that can facilitate sharing information at the international level;

12.6.5 Creation of technical cooperation measures between restoration and conservation laboratories of different types of collections;

12.6.6 Creation of tools for the registration and dissemination of information about missing cultural property.

12.7. Acquisition and management of museological heritage

12.7.1 Creation of a program with integrated policies for the exchange, acquisition, documentation, research, preservation, conservation, restoration and dissemination of museological heritage and collections;

12.7.2 Support to the establishment of democratic policies for acquisition of collections that take into account ethnic, cultural, social, ideological, gender, creed and sexual orientation diversity, among others;

12.7.3 Support the funding of activities geared toward the conservation and restoration of cultural property;

12.7.4 Support for national and international instances for the monitoring, control and struggle against the illicit trafficking of cultural property.

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