



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



The Slave Route

Meeting of the International Scientific Committee of The Slave Route Project

UNESCO, Paris

17 – 18 February 2009

FINAL REPORT

by

Mrs. Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya (Rapporteur)

I. OPENING SESSION

Mrs. Françoise Rivière, Assistant Director-General for Culture welcomed the panel which included Mr Olabiyi Babalola Joseph Yaï (President of the Executive Board of UNESCO), members of the International Scientific Committee (ISC) of the UNESCO Slave Route Project (SRP) and members of its Secretariat. She recalled that this was the second meeting of the Committee since its restructuring in 2006 and renewal of its members.

She thanked former members of the ISC for the quality of their contribution, with a special welcome for new members and reminded the Committee of the objectives of the SRP, since its launch, 15 years ago. She then stated the importance of its work for a better knowledge of the causes and consequences of the slave trade and slavery, for building mutual understanding in societies that are becoming more and more multicultural. She insisted that the SRP was also about intercultural dialogue, peace and collective memory of those who suffered and benefitted from the slave trade. Highlighting that the project was at a very decisive juncture, she stressed the importance of the ISC not only to help the project facing the challenges ahead, but also for their contribution at the regional and national level, in mobilizing local network and partnership, without which the main objectives of the project could not be met.

She also mentioned the request of the Executive Board to the Director-General for submitting document 180/EX14 to the ISC, in order to receive their feedback. Given its very limited finances, the comments of the ISC members were crucial to give it a strategic future. The Committee was reminded of the important role played by UNESCO at the Durban conference, in the recognition of the slave trade and slavery as a crime against humanity and was called upon to see a more concrete participation and implication in the review process to be held in Geneva from 20 to 24 April 2009.

She finally invited members of the ISC to make constructive comments to reinforce the Secretariat and enhance the interdisciplinary and intersectoral approach of the SRP.

Mr. Olabiyi Babalola Joseph Yaï, President of the Executive Board presented this meeting as a timely historical moment in the life of the SRP, occurring at the confluence of two major events in this 'Route'. The first, the death of Aimé Césaire, prominent figure of the African Diaspora and whose work was instrumental to this project and the second, the election of a Black-American as President of the USA, Barrack Hussein Obama.

Inviting members of the ISC to keep in mind these historical tracks during their works, he reiterated the high expectations placed by the Executive Board on the outcomes of this session of the ISC, in order to give a new breath to the SRP. He then asked for propositions to build a long term strategy indicating pertinent orientations, with innovative epistemological and methodological perspectives for the Project.

Insisting on scientific research, Mr Yaï said the need to investigate more in areas insufficiently covered, namely on the consequences of the slave trade and slavery in its psychological dimension, psychiatric effects and traumatism, visible

in our modern societies. He also suggested that the contribution of the African Diaspora be more documented upon, with a focus on the role of women.

Mr. Yai invited the ISC to make adequate recommendations to impulse intersectorial work within this unique project and to find radical solutions to energize its Secretariat. He finally laid emphasis on the importance of the ISC to ensure the vitality of this Project and called on the courage and perseverance of his member-colleagues to meet, in spite of the challenges ahead.

Professor Rex Nettleford (Outgoing President of the ISC), in his statement, echoed the previous speakers views and reiterated how important the SRP was for all humankind, not only those of African descent. He did not want the SRP to whither away. A lot of work has yet to be done on the transatlantic slave trade and plantation slavery. However, other geographical areas (Asia-Pacific region, Arab-Muslim world) are also important and the new members represent these areas.

Mrs. Katérina Stenou, Director of the Division of Cultural Policies and Intercultural Dialogue, recalled that the SRP has begun to extend the project to these new areas. However, she added that UNESCO was not trying to hyper-collateralize the SRP.

MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE
(BY ALPHABETICAL ORDER OF FIRST NAME)

1. Aisha Bilkhair Khalifa (United Arab Emirates)
2. Benigna Zimba (Mozambique)
3. David Richardson (United Kingdom)
4. Jocelyn Chan Low (Mauritius)
5. Jordi Tresserras Juan (Spain)
6. María Elisa Velásquez Gutiérrez (Mexico)
7. Marta Beatriz Goldberg (Argentina)
8. Michael Gomez (USA)
9. Michel Hector (Haiti)
10. Miguel Barnet (Cuba)
11. Nelly Schmidt (France)
12. Paul E. Lovejoy (Canada)
13. Per Hernaes (Norway)
14. Quince Duncan (Costa Rica)
15. Rex Nettleford (Jamaica)
16. Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya (Sri Lanka)
17. Simão Souindoula (Angola)
18. Ubiratan Castro Araujo (Brazil)
19. Wayne Dooling (South Africa)
20. Yaw Bredwa-Mensah (Ghana)

II. ELECTION OF THE BUREAU

In accordance with the statutes of the International Scientific Committee for The Slave Route Project, ISC adopted its rules and procedure. It appointed the Bureau whose composition was spread out between different parts of the world. The candidates were as follows:

1. President of the Committee:

Mr Michael Gomez (USA)

2. Vice-Presidents:

Mr Jordi Tresserras Juan (Spain)

Ms Maria Elisa Velásquez Gutiérrez (Mexico)

Mr Simão Souindoula (Angola)

3. Raporteurs:

Ms Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya (Sri Lanka)

Mr Quince Duncan (Costa Rica)

III. REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SLAVE ROUTE PROJECT (2007-08)

Mr. Ali Moussa-Iye, Chief of the Intercultural Dialogue Section, in charge of the Slave Route Project (SRP), Culture Sector, presented a **“Report on the activities of the SRP 2007-2008”**. He recalled that an external evaluation was carried out in 2005 and the ISC was reduced from 44 members in 2006 to 20, while broadening the representation of regions.

The SRP had encouraged the expansion of scientific research particularly in the Indian Ocean, Asia and the Arab-Muslim world to improve our understanding of the eastern slave trade by:

- (a) contributing to the work of TADIA (The African Diaspora in Asia) in 2006
- (b) supporting the establishment, in Turkey, of the Cultural Association for the Defence and Mutual Aid of Africans in November 2006
- (c) organizing a symposium in Rabat and Marrakesh (Morocco) in May 2007 and encouraging the establishment of a research network in the Arab Islamic world
- (d) producing an Atlas of interactions and of the African Diaspora which was launched in 2008, to draw up maps highlighting the African presence in the world, particularly in the Americas.

The SRP developed educational materials by:

- (a) continuing the Transatlantic Slave Trade (TST) programme, and elaborating educational material for schools in France, England, Caribbean and Africa
- (b) elaborating and publishing four educational materials for Central American countries
- (c) cooperating with the National Maritime Museum (London) to produce and disseminate educational material on the slave trade and slavery to schools.

The SRP inventorised sites and places of memory by launching four programmes. Two programmes concentrated on the South-West Indian Ocean islands (Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rodrigues and Seychelles) and the Caribbean. The third programme concerned centralising the results of inventories drawn up worldwide of the heritage relating to the slave trade. The fourth programme concerned an inventory of memorial sites in Benin, Togo and Ghana.

The SRP commemorated abolition of the slave trade in the: (a) UK (2007) and in USA (2008) by collaborating with the Museum of Docklands (UK), Museums libraries and archives council (2007), (b) the International Slavery Museum (Liverpool), the Zanzibar International Film Festival ZIFF, (c) the African Diaspora Heritage Trail (Bahamas), The Joseph Project (Ghana)

The SRP's awareness-raising activities included awarding the label "Slave Route-associated project" to 15 projects since 2006, enhancing audio-visual aids, realizing a documentary entitled "Slave Routes: A Global Vision", participating in the launching of "The Human Bondage Project" (South Africa Broadcasting), travelling exhibitions on the transatlantic slave trade and also supporting publications which contributed to raising the profile of the SRP.

The membership of half of the ISC had been renewed in order to provide new strategic guidelines in the light of the recommendations made by the Executive Board at its 180th session. The prospects for the SRP in 2009-2010 included networking of researchers, elaborating teaching aids, collecting oral traditions, inventory of places of memory, knowledge regarding cultural interactions and commemorations of the abolition of the slave trade and slavery.

The ISC was informed that:

- Proceedings of UNESCO conferences would be placed on the UNESCO website as a measure of reducing publication costs.
- The Secretariat had been reduced from 5 to 1.5 members of staff: Mr Moussa-Iye (full-time) and Mr Edmond Moukala (half-time). Updating the website of the SRP required extra staff at UNESCO. The Director-General had been informed of the staff shortage. The current team cannot carry the work forward. A Field Officer would be joining the SRP in Paris to work for one year.
- It was difficult to measure the impact of the SRP as it was a global project. The 100-page report produced after the External Evaluation of the project from 1994 to 2004, by a six member team had cost US\$500,000. UNESCO could not, therefore, undertake an evaluation every two years.

Iv. The New Strategy for The Slave Route Project

Mr Moussa-Iye presented the New Strategy for the SRP which had been the response to external assessment and recommendations made by the Executive Board. It was also a response, to some extent, of the concerns expressed by the Togo delegation to the Executive Board, as detailed in document 180 EX/14.

A. Strategic Choices of the Project

1. Objectives

The new strategy would be retaining the three objectives defined at the outset of the project:

- to break the silence surrounding the slave trade and slavery in the world through multidisciplinary scientific research
- to highlight the consequences of the slave trade and slavery on contemporary societies to ensure better understanding of multiple transformations and interactions among peoples and their cultures
- to help to establish a culture of peace, mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence among peoples by facilitating reflection on intercultural dialogue, cultural pluralism and on setting up new forms of citizenship in modern societies.

2. The Main Lines of Action

While maintaining the main lines of action set forth in the first phase of the SRP they would be reformulated:

- to deepen scientific research
- to develop curricula and educational material
- to promote the contribution of Africa and its Diaspora
- to promote living cultures, artistic and spiritual expressions arising from the slave trade and slavery
- to preserve archives and oral traditions
- to take an inventory and preserve tangible heritage, and sites of memory

B. New Directions of the Project

1. Extension of the geographical scope

In order to include the global dimension of the tragedy of the slave trade and slavery, it was decided to extend the Project from its transatlantic focus to:

- Arab-Muslim World
- Asia and Pacific
- Andean Americas

2. Expansion of the Project's themes to include:

- Psychological consequences of slavery
- Transfer of knowledge and know-how from Africa to the rest of the world
- Combating racism and discrimination

C. Calendar of Activities for 2009-2011

A calendar of activities was presented, covering the period 2009-2011 as follows:

1. Activities for 2009

The Scientific research would concentrate on:

- The psychological consequences of the slave trade and slavery

- The contribution of Africa in the construction of the world
- A network on slavery and the slave trade in the Arab-Muslim world
- Cuba meeting on the results of researches carried out in the framework of Afro-American religions network
- The African presence in the Rio del Plata
- Publication of a world inventory of main sites and places of memory
- Publication in book format of Joel Quirk's "Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery".

The ISC members were invited to comment on the Activities of Promotion:

- Restructuring and launching of the website of The Slave Route Project
- Finalizing translation of the documentary "Slave Routes: A Global Vision"
- Producing and distributing the documentary to different partners
- Participating in the event "Breaking the silence Beating the Drum" on 25th March 2009

2. Year 2010-2011 Activities

They are organized within the different domains of intervention of the Project.

Scientific Research would involve:

- Launching of research in the Pacific and Red Sea Regions
- Launching of research in the Andean Americas and Asia
- Finalizing the atlas of interactions of the African Diaspora
- Publication of a survey on the psychological consequences of the slave trade and slavery.

Pedagogic Initiatives would include:

- Drafting a strategic document for lobbying national authorities
- Preparing pedagogic materials based on results achieved by research in the Central African sub-region to the Horn of Africa and Andean America
- Preparing a toolkit of famous movies on the slave trade and slavery.

Promotion of the contribution of Africa and the African Diaspora through

- An online publication of the Atlas of interactions
- Organization of events at the African Union headquarters on the consequences of the slave trade and slavery.

Preservation of archives and oral traditions of the slave trade and slavery by

- launching of data collection on oral traditions in Southern Africa, Northern Africa and Asia.

Places of Memory:

- Launching of an inventory of memory of the slave trade and slavery in Europe, Southern Africa and Andean America.

V. PRESENTATIONS

During this session, the Secretariat as well as members of the ISC shared activities carried out or to be implemented.

1. Activities presented by the Secretariat of the SRP

This consisted of a selected but non exhaustive list of projects realized or to be implemented in close collaboration with members of the ISC. It included the followings:

a) UNESCO Documentary

The ISC could screen the documentary "***Slave Routes: A Global Vision***". The completeness, accuracy, depth, emphasis and representations were discussed. The cost involved in making the film and the delay in waiting for a more comprehensive edition were also considered. It was agreed therefore to consolidate fundamental recommendations for improving the film. It was also agreed to supplement the film with an educational Booklet aimed at discussing further issues and questions raised by the documentary. A working group was constituted to elaborate the content of this booklet, made up of David Richardson, Michel Hector, Nelly Schmidt, Quince Duncan and Paul E. Lovejoy. A working session of the group took place on the 19 February 2009 to initiate discussion on recommendations for improvement of the film and framework for the content of the booklet.

It was agreed that another film, focusing on the contributions of Africans in the Diaspora could be commissioned at a future date.

b) Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery

Mr. David Richardson presented a newly published survey; *Unfinished Business: A Comparative Survey of Historical and Contemporary Slavery*, a study realized by Mr. Joel Quirk and sponsored by the UNESCO Slave Route Project. He highlighted the main topics dealt with by this publication. He appreciated the capacity of the author to bring together a range of studies of different aspects of slavery, both past and present. He said this work provides an innovative platform for promoting dialogue about ways of addressing both contemporary slavery and the enduring legacies of historical slave systems. Mr Richardson considered this survey as a concrete research for providing adequate tools to policy makers and civil society organizations to take concrete actions against modern forms of slavery. He finally welcomed the display of this research work on the Project's website and appreciated the proposition by the UNESCO Bureau of Public Information (BPI) to make it available in book format.

c) Atlas of the Interaction of the African Presence

Mr. Edmond Moukala, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Slave Route Project, presented the project proposal whose ultimate objective is to develop an Atlas of interaction of African presence and its heritage, and namely:

- to provide an objective scientific and educational basis for the understanding of the continuity between the African and American and Caribbean cultures;
- to take into account the Intangible Heritage thrust that has happened on the Route over centuries and objectively highlight the diversified and rich culture generated by the Slave Trade and Slavery; and

- to nourish the debate on cultural pluralism and the building of new identities, citizenship and intercultural dialogue.

He also elaborated on the expected results from this Atlas of interactions, to be realized in the three specific phases of the project:

- a deep research on each of the topics to be developed by specialists and members of the Scientific Committee of the Slave Route Project, the outcome of which will be documented in a cartography style.
- the gathering of all results of such research within a publication entitled "*The Atlas of the African Presence*".
- distribution of the Atlas to national educational institutions as a pedagogical tool that should be progressively enriched with different fields or domains for university research studies and potentially serve as a basis for the establishment of itineraries in the context of the tourism of Memory, in cooperation with the WTO and WHC for eventual nomination to the World Heritage List.

Mr Moukala identified the Atlas structure, designed upon four main topics, on the basis of which a working group was set-up:

- i) Language and expressions would be dealt with by Simão Souindoula,
- ii) Cultural expressions - Intangible Heritage by Rex Nettleford
- iii) Religion and spirituality by Miguel Barnet
- iv) Sites of Memory and World Heritage site by Jordi Tresserras.

d) Participation to specific events ahead

This mainly consisted of discussing the project's involvement to commemoration activities (25 March and 23 August), participation at the international, regional and national , for example Durban Review Conference, Regional meeting in Cuba and Uruguay.

2. Activities presented by the members of the ISC

Members of the ISC were invited to present their activities related to the Slave Route Project. Many activities presented related to research work carried by the academics as researchers or supervisors of studies in this domain. Several activities were presented.

- In presenting the project of a Slavery Museum of Mozambique to which she calls for assistance from the Project, **Mrs Zimba** expressed few frustrations witnessed during the visit of the Director-General of UNESCO to Mozambique, which could have helped sensitizing on the project.
- **Mr Souindoula** presented the work done in Angola, in cooperation with the national television, for the production of series of a documentaries dealing with the history of the slave trade and slavery. He illustrated, images from the documentary entitled "*Benguela, Uma Historia de Escravatura*". He also indicated the work carried out to appreciate the interaction generated by the slave trade in several domains, highlighting for example the African influences in Caribbean and Americas with regard to architecture, languages, hydroponic beliefs and arts. He also announced the preparation of three documentaries with national television on these issues. He proposed to convince Angola to host the meeting of the ISC in 2011.

- **Mr Lovejoy** presented his activities in the framework of the Harriet Tubman Institute for Research of the Global Migrations of African Peoples in York University, Toronto, Canada, part of an international network of research centres committed to overcoming injustice and inequity as a result of slavery. He informed the committee of a number of conferences to be organized within the framework of the Institute. He stressed the fact that a wide range of activities, conferences or meetings are taking place around the world on themes relevant to the Project and which need to be properly advertised on its website for members of the committee to be regularly updated.
- **Mr Barnet** indicated the strong commitment of the Cuban National Commission and work achieved with the UNESCO Havana office related to this topic. He recalled on the launching of an interactive website providing information on "Places of memories on the Slave Route in the Latin Americas", involving four countries: Aruba, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Haiti. He said the project aimed to identify, protect and appreciate the values of this legacy and the cultural manifestations associated with the bearer communities. The project is also designed to empower this legacy as a source for the sustainable development of these communities. Mr Barnet also shared with the ISC the importance of networking in this region, with the concrete case of the work achieved within the Regional Network of Institutions for Research on Afro-American Religions, generating a fruitful cooperation between the UNESCO Regional Office in Latin America, National Commission in Cuba as well as NGOs such as Fundación Fernando Ortiz, among others. He announced a meeting on this topic, in June 2009, as a follow-up to activities organized in 2008. He also announced the upcoming inauguration of the Slavery Museum of Cuba, in June 2009 and requested the participation of the SRP in this important event.
- **Mr Hector** mentioned network activities in the Caribbean region and announced the organization of two events in Haiti, one in June 2009 and the other in August 2009, on the issue of African religions and the preservation of sites of memory. It was agreed to have a discussion with Mr Barnet, in order to agree the schedule for their activities in the region.
- **Mr Duncan** presented activities carried out in Central America, in cooperation with the UNESCO office in Montevideo. He focussed on the elaboration of pedagogic materials designed for Central America and presented the four volumes realized, elaborating on the slave trade and slavery in the Central American context, with insistence on the interactions generated therefore. The four-volume series edited in Spanish include: 1) *Africanos y fromestizos en la historia de Centroamérica*, 2) *Esclavitud, Resistencia y cultura*, 3) *Africa en tiempos de la esclavitud* and 4) *Las voces de los esclavizados, los sonidos de la libertad*. He also announced the finalization of the fifth volume.
- **Mr Nettleford** presented the activities organized within the framework of the African Diaspora Heritage Trail, mentioning the tenure of its 4th International Conference in Bermuda in 2008 and announcing the upcoming 5th Edition on the theme "*An African Homecoming: Exploring Origins of the Diaspora and Transforming Cultural Heritage Assets into Tourism Destinations*" scheduled from 25 to 30 October 2009 in Tanzania.

Given the tied agenda of the ISC, not all members could discuss this point. It was agreed that each member of the ISC should prepare and send to the

Secretariat a document briefly stating activities carried, with a highlight on those to be realized soon within their respective country/region in line with the work of the Project. Such activities could then be featured on the project's website.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. On the New Strategy

The ISC commended the efforts made by the Project and appreciated the variety of activities undertaken over the last two years, despite limited human and financial resources. After a thorough examination, in particular alongside the decision 180EX/14, the Committee endorsed the new Strategy with the following recommendations:

- The new strategy should be framed as an inclusive document, reconciling the ambitious vision of the Project and the need for a realistic implementation. It should integrate both the global perspective of the Project and its specific regional and national focus, for the document to become a strong lobbying tool in the hands of members of the ISC, as well as for national stakeholders.
- The new strategy should become a strategic document for engaging direct dialogue at international, regional or national level in order to increase support.
- Amendment of the actual version of the strategy document should be considered, in order to include specific comments and suggestions made by members of the ISC to change certain wording and complement the list of activities to be undertaken for 2009-2011;

The Committee made a strong appeal the UNESCO to provide more financial and human resources to the Secretariat of the Project, without which it could not properly implement its new strategy for the revitalization of The Slave Route Project as required by Member States;

- The Committee highlighted that this strategy should be implemented in partnership with concerned stakeholders at regional and national level, in particular with the National Committees for the Slave Route Project where they exist.

2. On the work of the ISC

The ISC discussed the ways and means to improve the work and contribution of the Committee during its mandate. It explored possibilities to enhance communication between members of the ISC and with the Secretariat of the Project, and to strengthen collaboration with the Project's partners. The Committee agreed on a distribution of tasks and commitments among its members to facilitate the implementation of the new Project's strategy. The Committee made the following recommendations:

- The ISC agreed to create a listserv (Forum) for the 20-member committee to facilitate communication. The creation of regional networks of the ISC is also envisaged to face communication problems among members;

- A better communication on the project's activities was firmly required. The ISC recommended that more resources be devoted to publicising achievements of the Project on its website, integrating the language dimension to reach different audiences. More particularly, it requested to create in the project's website a web page on the work and activities of the ISC;
- The ISC insisted on the need that accurate information on the project's activities be made accessible both to the Committee and to the larger public. It therefore recommended a permanent members of staff for the management and regular updating of the website, stressing the need to feature on this site the great range of issues and activities organized worldwide on topics covered by the project;
- To facilitate the work of the ISC members in the field, it was recommended that, alongside their activities and projects being an integral part of the new strategy, UNESCO provides members of the Committee with an official letter that could support their advocacy activities and cooperation with UNESCO field offices and National Commissions to UNESCO;
- They required having at least one annual meeting in order to achieve a proper follow-up, with a meeting of the Bureau right after each session of the ISC;
- With regard to the development of partnership, the role of the ISC was stressed upon. Orientation towards bilateral cooperation, as well as private sponsorship was proposed to enhance mobilisation of funds. It was also stressed, the necessity to better use the Project's label to support ISC members' initiatives, in search for partnership.
- The ISC made strong appeal to Member States in order to strengthen/rejuvenate their National Committees for the Slave Route Project where they exist and to create such a body in concerned countries where they do not exist. It highlighted that the role of the National Committee is to encourage research, raise awareness and promote debate at the national level with the aim of building a sustained approach to understanding the impact of the slave trade and slavery.

VIII. CLOSING SESSION

The closing session of the ISC took place on the 18 February 2009 with the participation of the Director General and of the President of the Executive Board, Mr Olabiyi Babalola Joseph Yaï.

Michael Gomez, the new Chairman of the SRP, presented a summary report of the deliberations of the ISC. In appreciating the whole work achieved during these two days session, he finally mentioned the high expectations placed in UNESCO for providing the Project with the necessary human and financial resources for implementing this new strategy, a condition to revitalize the Project

In his closing speech, the Director General complemented the ISC and its chairman for their work, hoping that the renewed ISC will bring a fresh boost of expertise, experience and energy to revitalize the Project. He welcomed the new strategy designed, noting that its recommendations are in line with the

Executive Board's proposals contained in decision 180EX/14. He adhered to the new trends in dissemination of the results achieved, historical research in new geographic areas, the appeal for a more regional and local focus as well as the plea for more financial resources. He assured members of the Committee that he will report their recommendations to the 181st session of the Executive Board. The Director General concluded by reiterating a call on the strategic role of the ISC members in advocating, networking, fundraising and partnership mobilization in their respective countries and regions.