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EXPERT MEETING ON THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

11 - 14 July 2012

FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED

Introduction

Members of the international heritage community have acknowledged the lack of adequate human, technical, and financial resources to protect museums and collections from a variety of threats. More generally, they stress the urgent need to (1) ensure technical and human resources that are essential to the conservation and security of museums and their collections, (2) adapt to new technology and modernize museum systems to reduce negative environmental impacts and foster a professional, effective and sustainable workplace in close collaboration with diverse communities and (3) equip museums with adequate financial resources so they may carry out their work in preserving and disseminating natural and cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible.

Social participation and education in museums could be expanded as means for cross-cultural dialogue, peace building and understanding, raising awareness about environmental, social, health and economic issues. Museums and collections have the potential to be better valued, appreciated and utilised. Thus, museums, stakeholders and community leaders need the political support and funding to initiate, create mechanisms and implement social participation and education programmes dealing with the above issues.

In this regard, it is necessary to recognise the specific role of museums in the conservation, the protection, and the promotion of cultural heritage and its related knowledge. Consequently, the reinforcement of tangible resources is required to support the global museum community in better accomplishing its mission.

Therefore, in assessing the range of possible modalities for the protection and promotion of museums and collections both in times of war and in times of peace on the basis of the 1954 Hague Convention *for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* and its two Protocols, and the 1970 UNESCO Convention *on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*, as well as other relevant international legal instruments, the UNESCO Expert Meeting on the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 11 to 14 July, 2012, herein submits its findings to the Executive Board for examination during its 190th session through the UNESCO Secretariat.

This assessment included examination of concepts and proposals related to the issue of the protection and promotion of museums and collections.

With regards to concepts, this document refers to the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* that provides definitions of a museum, a museum professional and cultural heritage¹:

Museum: “A museum is a non-profit making permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, the tangible and intangible evidence of people and their environment”.

In addition, museums also emerged in different parts of the world as forms and processes of memory work, cultural exchange and social reconstruction that have opened new possibilities and frontiers for museum work of collecting conservation and education.

Museum professional: “Museum professionals consist of the personnel (whether paid or unpaid) of museums or institutions², who have received specialised training, or possess an equivalent practical experience in any field relevant to the management and operations of a museum, and independent

¹ It should be noted that the terms “museum” and “museum professional” are interim definitions for use in interpreting the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums (revised in 2004). The definitions of “museum” and “professional museum workers” used in the organisation’s Statutes remain in force for ICOM members until the revision of that document has been completed.

² As defined in Article 2, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the ICOM Statutes.

persons respecting the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* and working for museums or institutions as defined in the Statute quoted above, but not persons promoting or dealing with commercial products and equipment required for museums and museum services”.

Cultural heritage: “Any thing or concept considered of aesthetic, historical, scientific or spiritual significance”.

Preamble

Acknowledging the changing role of museums in the contemporary world,

Noting the increasing number and types of new museums being created around the world,

Taking into account global environmental, educational, social and economic concerns,

Recognising an increase in human-made and natural disasters putting heritage at risk,

Taking into consideration the alarming threat represented by illicit trafficking in cultural property

Recommendations

In view of the elements mentioned above, the participants in this UNESCO Expert Meeting on the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections have identified the following needs that should be addressed through a Recommendation of the UNESCO General Conference to its Member States in order to meet the challenges for the protection and promotion of museums and collections, and recommend:

1. Recognition of the relevance of museums, publicly advocate and raise-awareness on the importance of museums as:
 - a. Agents of social change
 - b. Forums for cultural diversity, peace and community development
 - c. Centers of formal and informal education
 - d. Economic drivers (generating employment, tourism, etc.)
 - e. Entities that add value

2. Ratification of existing international legal instruments³ addressing the protection and promotion of museums and collections, ensuring the activation and implementation of the specific provisions concerning museums and collections in those instruments, and develop national legislation and policies to implement them.

3. Development, adoption and strengthening of policies for museums, addressing issues that include:
 - a. Sustainable development (environmental, economic, cultural and social)
 - b. Social transformation and community engagement
 - c. Human resources (capacity-building, succession planning, new roles, etc.)
 - d. Use of information technology (accessibility, dissemination, registries of museums, inventories of collections, etc.)
 - e. Risk mitigation and security measures (theft, emergency preparedness and response plans, illicit traffic in cultural objects, etc.)

4. Fostering and development of international cooperation mechanisms for the protection and promotion of museums and collections, in order to:
 - a. Share knowledge and information on good professional practices and standards
 - b. Encourage cross sectorial collaboration
 - c. Facilitate professional exchange within academic and museum institutions
 - d. Promote international exhibition exchange and facilitate collection mobility

³. Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954), and 1954 and 1999 Protocols

- Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970)
- Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)
- 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)
- UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects (1995)
- Recommendation on International Principles Applicable to Archaeological Excavations (1956)
- Recommendation concerning the Most Effective Means of Rendering Museums Accessible to Everyone (1960)
- Recommendation 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)
- 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)
- Blue Shield Seoul Declaration on the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Emergency Situation (2011)

- e. Use and strengthen existing international, as well as regional and national bodies and networks (ICOM, Blue Shield, intergovernmental and/or regional associations, professional associations, and learning and training centers, vocational training, institutional development and institutional infrastructure)
5. Ensuring sufficient/appropriate resources for museums by:
- a. Dedicating a portion of the national budget to all types of recognized museums
 - b. Creating systems of trust and cooperation between governments and museums
 - c. Developing public-private partnerships to support museums and collections
 - d. Mobilising international funding when needs exceed national capacities
 - e. Supporting international agencies working for the protection and promotion of museums and collections.