

Opening Session Talking Points –Christian Manhart

Madam Hollanda, Minister of Culture of Brazil,

Mr Kalili, Secretary of Culture of the City of Rio de Janeiro

Madam Cummins, Chairperson of UNESCO's Executive Board,

Mr Nascimento Junior, President of the Brazilian Institute of Museums,

Dear colleagues from ICOM, Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is an honour and a pleasure to participate at the opening session of this UNESCO international experts meeting on the protection and promotion of museums and collections.
- First of all, on behalf of the Director-General of UNESCO, Mrs. Irina Bokova, I would like to thank the Government of Brazil and IBRAM, the Brazilian Institute of Museums, for the perfect organization of this event and for their generous financial contribution to make this meeting possible.
- We realize that you were invited to this meeting on short notice, and we really wish to thank all of you for making the time in your busy schedules to come to Brazil to participate in our meeting.
- The irony of the situation of museums today is that on the one hand, the social role of museums is becoming more and more important in recent years, while on the other, we note increasing destruction of cultural heritage or its misuse for political reasons – in particular in conflict zones.
- The Director-General of UNESCO therefore invited you all to accomplish a very specific and important task: UNESCO needs your expert advice on all possible modalities for the protection and promotion of museums and collections in times of war and in times of peace.
- We need to discuss whether another UNESCO international normative instrument is necessary for the protection and promotion of museums and collections. Which form this could take: convention, recommendation, declaration, or whether other means would be suitable.

- At this point, I would like to emphasize that each of us has to keep in mind during the four working group sessions, that each time we make a recommendation for a specific action we shall not omit to also offer suggestions for their feasibility, their means of implementation and funding options, as well as their sustainability.
- The outcome of our discussions will be presented in an assessment report, which the Director-General will submit to the UNESCO Executive Board, one of the governing bodies of UNESCO, at its 190th session in October 2012.
- But before we look towards the future, I think it's important to look at what has already been accomplished in the past:
- We need to base our analysis on the existing UNESCO Conventions and Recommendations in the field of Culture, and in particular the 1954 *Convention for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict* and the 1970 *Convention on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property*, both of which my colleague Edouard Planche will tell you more about later this morning.
- I wish to emphasize that the 1954 and 1970 Conventions are essential international instruments which must be reinforced. The issues these Conventions deal with are mostly multilateral, meaning that the role of UNESCO in promoting cooperation between countries is irreplaceable.
- In addition UNESCO's Member States have previously issued three recommendations that are also relevant for our debates. Recommendations are intended to encourage UNESCO Member States to adopt a particular approach but are, contrary to Conventions, not legally binding.
- In 1960, the UNESCO **Recommendation concerning the most effective means of rendering museums accessible to everyone** encouraged UNESCO Member States to take all appropriate steps to ensure that the museums on their territory are accessible to all without regard to economic or social status. This

recommendation directly addresses the second working group on the role of museums in the contemporary world as well as the fourth working group on social participation and education.

- In 1976, UNESCO's Member States issued the **Recommendation concerning the International Exchange of Cultural Property**, which intends facilitating the circulation of cultural property among cultural institutions in different countries
- And the 1978 UNESCO **Recommendation for the Protection of Movable Cultural Property**, which encouraged UNESCO Member States to take all necessary steps, in conformity with their legislation and constitutional system, to protect movable cultural property.
- Although these are Recommendations from the 60s and 70s, they have not lost their pertinence to museums in the contemporary world.
- These Recommendation are available on our website for this meeting.

Much of the work UNESCO's Museums Section undertakes, accompanies Member States in the protection and promotion of their museums and collections at all levels—from advising on policies and procedures, building capacities of museums to carry-out inventories, ensuring proper storage and preventive conservation as well as improving security. There are times when we repair roofs, restore objects and offer emergency assistance following wars and natural disasters—such as the international safeguarding campaigns UNESCO launched for the national museums of Iraq and Afghanistan following wars in those countries or for the cultural heritage of Haiti following the devastating earthquake of 2010, or more recently our focus has turned towards Museum of Civilizations in the Ivory Coast and the museums, manuscripts and cultural heritage of Mali.

- Conservation and protection of collections is indeed a priority for UNESCO, but more and more, we are enhancing the social and educational roles of museums.
- We use museum education for HIV-AIDS awareness education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

- We are assisting South Sudan with their dream to build their first National Museum, which they hope will contribute to affirming the national identity of South Sudan and promote peace-building and tolerance.
- We are rehabilitating the Islamic Museum next to the Al Aqsa Mosque on the Haram al Sharif in Jerusalem, and creating the new Egyptian Civilization Museum in Cairo and using it as platform for democracy building in the country.
- Most of all, and in line with UNESCO's mandate, we are helping UNESCO Member States use museums for peace building and the promotion of cultural diversity.
- The very first lines of UNESCO's constitution state "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." It is our hope that through the protection and promotion of museums and collections, we can promote peace around the world.

Thank you very much.

