



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Memory of
the World Programme

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H.E. Mr Ferit Hoxha

H.E. Mr Mounir Anastas

Co-Chairpersons, Open Ended Working Group on the Memory of the World Programme

Your Excellencies,

On behalf of my colleagues, the members of the Memory of the World International Advisory Committee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak with the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) on April 1, 2019. All of us very much appreciate the time and thoughtful consideration being devoted to the preservation of humanity's documentary heritage. The 2015 *Recommendation Concerning the Preservation of, and Access to Documentary Heritage Including in Digital Form* provided an authoritative statement of the value of this fragile aspect of world heritage:

Documents produced and preserved over time, in all their analogue and digital forms through time and space, constitute the primary means of knowledge creation and expression, having an impact on all areas of humanity's civilization and its further progress.

Sustainable knowledge, the focus of libraries and archives, is vital to the achievement and assessment of all the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and must be of interest and concern across all sectors of UNESCO.

The Review of the Memory of the World Program

The International Advisory Committee (IAC) initiated the review and consultation in October 2015. Our 15 recommendations were submitted to the Director-General at the end of June 2017. (202 EX/15) These addressed the key issues raised in the 45 submissions received (the 27 submissions from UNESCO national commissions and Memory of the World (MoW) national committees reflected broad consultation). We found that:

- 78% of respondents felt that MoW was not meeting its potential and had lost sight of its intent, echoing all previous evaluations and reports (1997, 2005, 2012)
- Some observe that MoW is not known amongst the institutions it is meant to assist
- MoW is considered "unsustainable" at current resource levels as noted in 2012 (190 EX/15) and represents a high risk to UNESCO
- Considerable concern for the preservation of digital documentary heritage

- Popularity of the Register (nominations increased in number by 50%, from 88 (2015) to 132 (2017); and substantially in complexity) has overwhelmed the other essential aspects of the MoW programme: documentary materials at risk, public awareness, education, research on new technologies, partnerships.

We recommended *inter alia* that the real purpose of the MoW in safeguarding documentary heritage, especially documents at risk be restored and brought back into balance with the Register, an awareness raising tool, and

- That UNESCO encourage and advance awareness, research and standards to highlight and respond to the many threats to our documentary heritage, especially in the myriad of digital forms.
- That the MoW program work in harmony and close collaboration with other UNESCO world heritage programs and engage with partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- That to enable use and achieve the stated goal of increasing awareness, the MOW web site as the public face of the program be redesigned and substantially enhanced.

These recommendations for action remain relevant and urgent. We urge the OEWG to review the submissions received in our consultation and our recommendations on how the MoW Program might have a meaningful impact on the preservation of and access to documentary heritage in all its complex forms.

Governance

We understand that the OEWG is discussing various options and approaches for the governance of the MoW Program. We fully support transparent processes in the selection of experts to advise on ALL aspects of a comprehensive program addressing the needs of documentary heritage. We also support establishing a suitable balance between expert input and that of the representatives of Member States.

We are deeply concerned that your discussion of potential governance models appears to be driven by issues from only one aspect of a program for documentary heritage, the Register; and dominated by issues arising from a small portion of the register nominations considered over 20+ years of experience. This perspective is woefully narrow.

We expect that your discussions have advanced on the many options and we can only reiterate the criteria for evaluating possible governance models put forward by the President of the International Council on Archives, David Fricker:

Will the proposed governance structure accomplish the following:

- Provide the missing legal basis for the MOW Program and encourage regional and national MoW committees
- Ensure sustainable funding and staff support
- Raise awareness within UNESCO and amongst all Member States of the vital importance of our documentary heritage
- Ensure meaningful engagement with the expert Advisory Committee, other UNESCO world heritage programs, partners, relevant NGOs and private sector
- Restore program balance between:
 - Priority 1: Safeguarding documentary heritage in all its complexity and diversity
 - Priority 2: the awareness-raising tools:--the international, regional and national registers

International Register

The draft of the OEWG recommendations shared with the International Advisory Committee has now likely been superseded by your continuing discussion. The Secretariat has the detailed comments from several IAC members on that draft for your consideration. In the interests of brevity, we advance some key points regarding the nomination process:

Any person or organization may initiate a nomination, however nominations will not be accepted without the prior written consent of the owner and the written support of the most relevant UNESCO authority; for example the UNESCO National commission or relevant government body. For nominations by or relating to international organizations, nominations may go directly to the UNESCO secretariat.

In order to be considered, nominations of documentary heritage which is owned privately need to provide a demonstrable and irrevocable commitment for long-term preservation and public access.

Nominations concerning shared heritage events or relations between or amongst Member States provide an opportunity to reflect on these matters, to explore the documentary evidence and to build understanding and peace. The onus should be on the nominating Member State to secure the agreement of all Member States affected. Such nominations should preferably be joint nominations advanced by all the concerned Member States.

Nominations related to shared heritage and differing perspectives on past events which have been and continue to be points of serious dispute between Member States should not be accepted for evaluation. If such cases are advanced without clear consensus, they should immediately be referred back to the concerned Member States to begin a process of mediation,

further research and diplomatic discussion, in an effort to achieve agreement on a joint nomination.

Nominations of documentary heritage which is or will likely soon be introduced as evidence in the International Court of Justice or other recognized UN tribunal will not be considered. Nominations of documentary heritage which are deemed by the Secretariat in consultation with the International Advisory Committee to be contrary to the UNESCO mission of building peace will not be considered.

All nominations that have met the requirements for consideration will be posted at the close of nominations on an open web site for comment. All Member States, national commissions, regional and national MoW committees will be notified and invited to comment by a fixed date on matters of relevance to them. Comments on authenticity, ownership, completeness, state of preservation and access may be submitted by anyone. These comments will be received by the Secretariat and taken into account by the Register Sub-Committee and the IAC in the assessment process.

Statutes The Statutes provide the mandate and structure for the MoW Program. The draft Statutes submitted with our 2017 Report proposed (Article 1) a comprehensive agenda for a UNESCO program to address documentary heritage. While processes and governing structures may change, these principles remain vital.

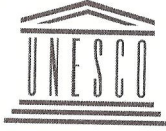
We would add that elements of the Statutes and Guidelines for the Geoparks program could usefully be adapted for the MoW.

Guidelines & Code of Ethics

The Guidelines and Code of Ethics are intended to implement the Statutes. They should be amended once UNESCO has decided on the goals and mandate defined by the Statutes and on resources allocated to the MoW Program. If we may differ from our predecessors on the IAC, we would urge that the Guidelines be simplified to become a brief (10 page max) user-friendly guide to accessing the MoW program. To encourage wider awareness of the program the simplified Guidelines should be translated into the UN languages.

Further Meetings?

We found our discussion with the OEWG informative and productive. We realize that the OEWG continues its consideration of both guiding principles and detailed processes. As you move toward conclusions, please let us know how best we can assist.



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The Memory of the World Programme has been under review since October, 2015. Member States have been formally consulted twice. The Memory of the World, a brilliant and proud concept is losing its luster. It is time for action.

Respectfully submitted,

Abdulla M. Alraisi
Chairman, UNESCO Memory of the World Program