

**International Committee on the Underwater Cultural Heritage (ICOMOS<sup>1</sup>-ICUCH<sup>2</sup>)  
2018 Report of activities in support of the  
2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage**

---

The following report provides an insight into ICOMOS-ICUCH's activities that directly or indirectly supported the 2001 Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001 Convention) during 2018. Not included are those initiatives carried out by individual ICUCH members in the course of their customary professional roles, which include several members who are currently involved in their own country's ongoing process of ratifying the 2001 Convention.

**1. Project proposal to recover cultural material from the wreck of the *San Jose* located in the Republic of Colombia's territorial waters**

Letters from ICUCH and ICOMOS' Secretary General raising concerns about the planned recovery of UCH from the wreck were sent to Colombia's Ministry of Culture, the Permanent Delegation to UNESCO, copied to ICOMOS-Colombia's National Committee.

The letters supported the project goals aimed at benefitting the Colombian public, notably the increased knowledge from academic research, improved deep water remote sensing technologies, and the sustainable economic benefits from tourism.

Despite these positives, ICUCH had several major concerns, specifically:

- That the proposal to reimburse the contractor using cultural material declared under Colombian law to be *bienes no patrimoniales* (not cultural goods) was considered contrary to the provisions of the Sofia Charter on the Protection and Management of Underwater Cultural Heritage (Sofia Charter 1996) and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. 2001 Convention Article 2.7 & Rule 2.
- That the absence of a detailed Project Design as structured by Rule 10 of the 2001 Convention made it impossible to assess the scientific methodology and anticipated research outcomes from the project.
- That the use of cultural material to reimburse the contractor's expenses to minimise the financial risk to the Colombian State was considered short sighted and would potentially dilute the long-term economic and social benefits derived from the proposed museum.

The project is currently suspended pending reappraisal.

---

<sup>1</sup> International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is a Paris based non-governmental organisation with a worldwide membership of >10,000, with >120 National Committees. ICOMOS works for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places.

<sup>2</sup> ICUCH is an ICOMOS International Scientific Committee formed of 60 expert members representing more than 40 countries.

## 2. Comment on International Congress of Maritime Museums (ICMM) – Draft Code of Ethics

In response to the invitation from ICMM to comment on its draft Code of Ethics, ICUCH expressed the view that it was very important that ICMM developed clear ethical guidance for its members. To this effect, ICUCH supported the draft's aims that:

- Discouraged its members from involvement in 'illegal, unprofessional, or unethical recovery of cultural material' or the 'purchase, and acceptance by way of gift or exhibiting such material or not knowingly collaborating in illegal or unethical practices that impact on cultural heritage'.
- ICMM member museums 'will act as repositories for the curation and preservation of objects recovered in a legal, professional and ethical manner'.
- ICMM member museums 'will act as repositories for the archive of excavation data and other information generated by archaeological projects carried out in a professional and ethical manner', and
- ICMM will create an 'Archaeological Committee of professional maritime archaeologists and museum persons to review individual cases referred to it by member museums in order to provide guidance to ICMM's Executive Committee'.

ICUCH drew attention to text that was a concern, specifically ambiguous language with respect to whether member museums could act as a depository of last resort, which could be interpreted as providing a safety net for cultural material recovered in a manner that did not meet international best practice or ethical standards.

## 3. Support - Turkey

ICUCH supported Kemer Marine Sciences Week which took place from 15-18 November 2018 (Antalya, Turkey). The events included:

- The 11th International Symposium on Underwater Research which aimed to 'foster interaction among all concerned academicians, practitioners, and researchers from different disciplines working on underwater sciences and research. Furthermore, it is anticipated to provide a platform for exchange of scientific and technical information and experiences among participants.'
- Training on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage for CMAS-TSSF (Turkey Diving Federation) Diving Instructors, which is aimed at raising awareness of the importance of Turkey's UCH and reduce ongoing looting.

## 4. First meeting of UNESCO's accredited NGOs - UNESCO-Paris, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2018<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this inaugural meeting was to understand the respective strengths of the NGOs and identify common objectives which could form the basis for future collaborative action in support of the 2001 Convention.

---

<sup>3</sup> The comments in this report are a precis of the minutes resulting from the meeting which are currently being compiled and should soon be available.

As a first step those NGOs<sup>4</sup> at the meeting presented a summary of their respective organisations' capacities. These were subdivided in to:

- scope of geographic activity (local, national, and international)
- education (school, college, university, profession, avocational, public),
- training/capacity building,
- research,
- public engagement
- fieldwork capabilities (professional dive team, volunteers, terrestrial/educational team), and
- advocacy.

The primary aim of the NGOs would be to:

- Develop a more collaborative approach to support the 2001 Convention and its Secretariat.

Further goals are to:

- Define the NGOs objectives.
- Create a database listing the organisation's skills that will characterise expertise and capacities within the framework of the sub-headings outlined above.
- Undertake a high-level strategic approach to help promote new ratifications of the Convention.
- Request an overview of the UN programme, goals and areas associated with UCH, and the development of the ocean, seas, and maritime coasts.
- Link the NGOs objectives to SDG14 and the Decade of Ocean Science.
- Develop a list of expertise that would be made available to the 2001 Secretariat and the Scientific and Technical Advisory Body (STAB).

Next meeting: To coincide with the forthcoming meetings in Brest and Paris, June 2019.

## 5. Publications

### 5a. Heritage at Risk: Solutions.

In 2006 ICOMOS published 'Heritage at Risk' featuring UCH. At that time only twelve States had ratified the 2001 Convention. In the intervening twenty years the discipline has matured and the scope of activity has evolved. There are now sixty signatory States to the 2001 Convention with several others actively working toward ratification. The emphasis has shifted away from large-scale recovery projects to a greater focus on active preservation *in situ*, limited intrusive activities and management of UCH, along with new technologies emerging such as 3D Photogrammetry that has added a new dimension to public access to UCH.

---

<sup>4</sup> NGOs in attendance: ICOMOS-International Committee of the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (ICUCH), Maritime Archaeology Trust (MAT), Centre for International Heritage Activities (CIE), Maritime Archaeology Sea Trust (MAST), Institute of Nautical Archaeology (INA), Joint Nautical Archaeology Policy Committee (JNAPC), Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeology (AIMA), Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS), Confédération mondiale des activités subaquatiques (CMAS), Advisory Council on Underwater Archaeology, (ACUA) and Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA).

To reflect these changes in the scope of underwater heritage ICUCH is producing a second volume comprising articles that will highlight current issues, but also exemplify solutions. The volume will feature examples preservation *in situ*, legal perspectives, public engagement, and professional training initiatives.

#### **5.b UNITWIN-ICUCH Diving Safety**

ICUCH is collaborating with the UNITWIN network to produce an introductory guide to safe diving standards which supports Rule 10.k and 28 of the 2001 Convention. Rule 10.k states that ‘The project design should include a ‘safety policy’ with Rule 28, providing additional clarification: ‘A safety policy shall be prepared that is adequate to ensure the safety and health of the project team and third parties and that is in conformity with any applicable statutory and professional requirements.’

It is anticipated that this project will be concluded in 2019.

#### **6. ICUCH’s main goals for 2019 & 2020**

ICUCH will continue to work with ICOMOS’ internal working groups to ensure that UCH is fully integrated into the organisation’s recommendations relating to the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, (including IOC’s Decade of Ocean Science), and Climate Change.

In parallel, ICUCH will collaborate with the 2001 Secretariat and accredited NGOs with aim of achieving similar goals.

**Christopher J. Underwood PhD. MA. BEd. ICOMOS.**

**President ICUCH**

**1<sup>st</sup> February 2019**