

Thirteenth Meeting of the International Advisory Committee (IAC) of the Memory of the World Programme

**UNESCO Headquarters, Paris (Bonvin Building, Room XVI)
24 to 27 October 2017**

Report from RSC

Report of the UNESCO Memory of the World Register Subcommittee (RSC)

September 2015 – August 2017

Membership

In the reporting period the RSC consisted of the following members:

Mr Rujaya Abhakorn (Thailand)

Mrs Frédérique Bazzoni (France), representing ICA

Mrs Lourdes Bianco (Venezuela)

Mr Jan Bos (Netherlands), chair, representing IFLA

Mr Joachim Gierlichs (Qatar)

Mr Elyor Karimov (Uzbekistan)

Mrs Dominique Saintville (France), representing CCAAA

Mrs Joie Springer (Barbados), former MoW senior programme officer

Mrs Roslyn Russell (Australia), rapporteur

Mrs Saintville is a new member. After the IAC meeting in 2015 Mr Ray Edmondson left the RSC. We are very grateful for the excellent work he has done serving on the RSC.

Assessment of nominations

The main task of the RSC is the assessment of submitted nominations, resulting in recommendations to the IAC. In this term, after a formal check by the Secretariat, the RSC received 125 nominations for assessments. The nominations were distributed among the RSC members. The members assessed the nominations individually, often after consulting other experts, and expressed their evaluations. They also took into account the comments that were received from others in some cases.

From 26 to 28 February 2017 the full RSC gathered in Paris for a three day meeting to discuss the evaluations and to come to interim RSC recommendations. (One member was unable to attend the meeting in person, but gave input by telephone and email.) The Secretariat communicated the interim recommendations to the nominators, which in most cases resulted in additional information or adapted nominations.

On 1 June 2017 a three hour RSC telephone meeting was held to consider the revisions and comments from the nominators and to reach the RSC's final evaluations and recommendations.

The final result was 90 recommended for inscription on the international register; 3 provisional, subject to minor modifications; the remainder (32) were not recommended for inscription due to unconvincing arguments or inadequate match against, or misunderstanding of, the criteria. All RSC recommendations will be discussed at the IAC meeting in October.

Other business

The RSC addressed several other issues at its meetings:

ADG Mr Frank LaRue was present at the beginning of the meeting in February. He welcomed the RSC members and expressed his appreciation for their work, in particular in handling the large increase in nominations.

Mr LaRue also spoke about the ongoing MoW review process which was initiated after the IAC meeting in Abu Dhabi to enable MoW to respond to changes introduced with the

Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form (adopted at the General Conference of UNESCO on 17 November 2015) and the Programme's exponential growth since 2002. He mentioned the preparatory work as well as the upcoming meeting in Berlin and expectations. He encouraged the RSC members to give input on the revision of the *General Guidelines*, based on their extensive experiences.

Within the framework of the revision of the *General Guidelines* the nomination form for the International Register is also being updated. During the meeting RSC members commented on the new draft. It was unanimously agreed that only the new form should be accepted for future nominations.

Several RSC members reported that they had been contacted by people lobbying in favor or against some of the nominations. It was stressed again that the confidentiality and impartiality of the assessment process is essential for the integrity and professionalism of the MoW programme. Moreover, the RSC only evaluates whether the nominated documents meet the criteria. It does not deal with the interpretation of history, nor with political sensitivities.

The RSC meeting observed that sometimes referees had not been informed that their names had been provided in the nomination forms, and consequently a few were not prepared to comment. It was also suggested that more realistic categories of persons be proposed as referees instead of, for example, Presidents or more eminent personalities who might not be able to respond to in-depth questions.

It was also observed that certain nominations had not involved the custodian of the nominated documents. This had been quite problematic in the current round.

A plea was issued for more precise identity or title of what is nominated, and that experts should use the correct information as far as possible under the right sections, irrespective of where this was placed on the form.

The RSC noted that the nominations were not visible on the MoW website. While this probably resulted in less direct lobbying, it conversely meant that IAC members were unable to start work on examining the nominations.

Other activities

Three RSC members, Roslyn Russell, Joie Springer and Jan Bos, are members of the working group for the revision of the Guidelines.

Several RSC members conducted MoW workshops, gave presentations, organized exhibitions and attended openings of knowledge centers in different parts of the world. They also participated in experts' meetings on the MoW Recommendation, on the PERSIST project and on other MoW matters.

Both the chair and individual members of the RSC were regularly consulted by UNESCO staff on occurring issues.

The RSC is very grateful to the MoW Secretariat for their continuous support.

Jan Bos, 6 September 2017