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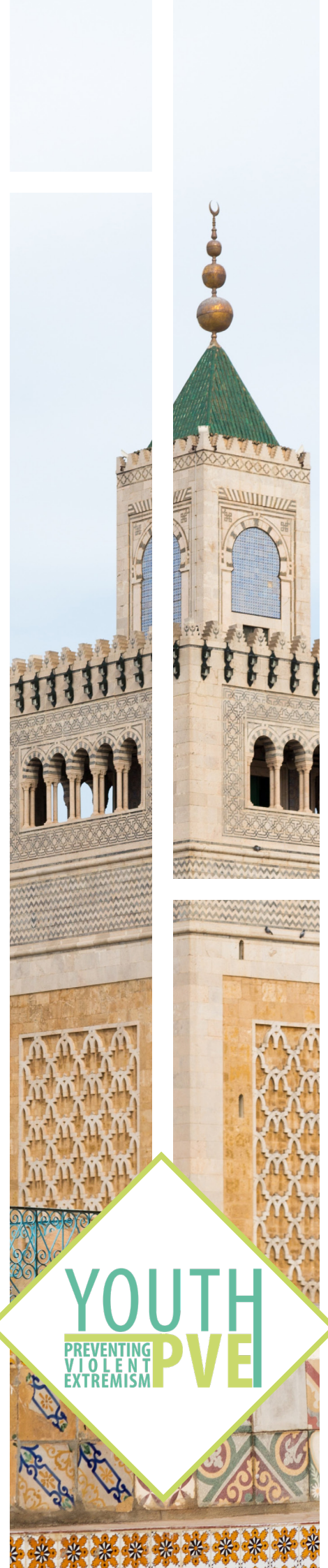
ARAB WORLD HERITAGE YOUNG PROFESSIONALS FORUM



**EMPOWERING YOUTH TO
BUILD PEACE THROUGH
THE PROTECTION OF
HERITAGE**

2-6 December 2019

Tunis, Tunisia



**YOUTH
PREVENTING
VIOLENT
EXTREMISM** PVE

Co-funded by: **Canada**

Editorial

The way youth resilience manifests itself is highly dependent on social, economic and political environments. When young people are provided with opportunities for participation, they are more likely to capitalize on their resilience constructively, thus becoming one of the world's most valuable assets in peacebuilding. Though extreme violence is threatening the security and fundamental rights of citizens all over the world, and undermining the attempts of many countries to achieve sustainable peace, young people are uniquely positioned to understand the challenges of their communities, be innovative in identifying solutions, and become agents of change. That is why, the **UNESCO-UNOCT Project "Preventing Violent Extremism through Youth Empowerment in Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia,"** co-funded by Canada, aims at enhancing local youth-driven initiatives through an inclusive and participatory approach across education, culture, and communication and information to prevent violent extremism. To date, over 5,000 young people have been reached by creating bridges between youth-led organizations, universities and national stakeholders, fostering inclusive dialogues, and encouraging meaningful youth participation in peacebuilding.

Heritage, understood in its diversity encompasses assets inherited from the past that we wish to transmit to future generations because of their social value and the way in which they embody identity and belonging. These assets can be used for promoting social stability, peacebuilding, recovery from crisis situations, and sustainable development. In particular, culture and heritage have been a driving force for development, throughout history.

It is with this understanding, that the **Arab World Heritage Young Professionals Forum - Empowering youth to build peace through the protection and preservation of heritage,** was organized by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, under the World Heritage Education Programme, within the framework of the UNESCO-UNOCT project. Recognizing that culture is a unifying force that can nurture a sense of belonging, foster mutual understanding, encourage intercultural dialogue, and open spaces for critical thinking, this Forum aimed to engage young people across the Arab region in their critical roles as global citizens for peacebuilding through the protection, preservation and promotion of World Heritage. Mobilizing young people, who are key actors in the protection and preservation of heritage is essential to building inclusive, sustainable and peaceful societies. Active participation in cultural life also provides young people with opportunities to broaden their horizons by highlighting shared histories and experiences, and strengthening their ability to resolve conflicts peacefully.

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Highlights

32 participants, from 17 countries of the Arab region



5 International Experts



3 Site Visits



6 Creative Communication Plans



1 Innovative Action Plan



“Youth for Peace, Youth for Heritage!”

Thirty-two young professionals from 17 countries of the Arab States region gathered in Tunis, Tunisia from 2 to 6 December 2019 to participate in the Arab World Heritage Young Professionals Forum, to engage in their critical roles as global citizens towards peacebuilding through the protection, preservation and promotion of World Heritage.

These participants brought with them a diverse range of academic and professional backgrounds related to heritage and peacebuilding. Over five days they explored the concepts of violent extremism and its manifestation at heritage sites, followed by the processes of recovery and reconciliation, and the pivotal role that youth and the society as a whole can play in this process. As young professionals in the field they found a common vision for a future of peace in the region and discussed how culture can be leveraged to contribute to this future.



Opening Ceremony in the presence of Dr Mohamed Ould Amar, Director-General of ALECSO; H. E. Ms Éleine Ayotte, Ambassador of Canada to UNESCO; Dr Mechtild Rössler, Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre; Mr Adel Elsayed Sparr, Head of the Youth Engagement Unit, UNOCT/UNCCT and H. E. Mr Mohamed Zinelabidine, Minister of Cultural Affairs of Tunisia ©UNESCO

Understanding violent extremism

As nations across the world grapple to arrive at a common description of violent extremism, the participants explored their own understanding of the term through the lens of their individual social contexts. They further studied the manifestation of violent extremism through the channels of hate speech, fake news and online extremism, among others.



Participants of the Forum discussing the factors leading to violent extremism ©UNESCO

Heritage under threat and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) at heritage sites

The first-hand accounts on the loss of heritage to conflict and war, provided by the experts, struck a deep and personal chord with the participants and brought the realities of damage and destruction to the fore. It set the stage for the discussions that followed, and allowed the participants to understand the mechanisms and the push-and-pull factors that lead violent extremists to attack expressions of cultural identity.

Two visits to heritage sites in Tunisia that were under attack from extremist groups in the recent past, and the ways in which the communities addressed these attacks, helped bring in the local context. This led the participants to further reflect upon the methods of reconciliation and reconstruction they would opt for in similar situations. Moving forward, they gained an overview of UNESCO's action to support its Member States in the protection of heritage from violent extremism, and in mitigating its impact.



Ms Fatma Jabberi Farroukh, Chief Architect at l'Institut National du Patrimoine, provided the participants with a background on the attacks that took place at the Mausoleum of Sidi Bou Said ©UNESCO

Communicating about heritage for peace

Through three distinct case studies related to heritage sites the participants discovered the compelling Emotion Design Approach, which finds a way to draw a personal connection among the community, generations of their shared stories, and their heritage. Through this approach, the participants were able to leverage the powerful and unifying force of heritage in PVE and in facilitating peacebuilding and reconciliation, which resulted in innovative communication plans for each of their case studies.



Participants brainstorming on the Emotion Design Approach ©UNESCO

To develop these plans, they broadened their scope of understanding of the challenges faced not just by heritage that is currently affected by conflict, but also by heritage that might have been under threat in the past or could potentially be in harm's way in the future. They then worked together to find solutions for each of these scenarios. They developed projects that could possibly be implemented at or in relation to these sites, that ranged from educational and entertaining video games to week-long culture festivals.

Following the development of the communication plans, the participants met with Tunisian civil society organizations working in heritage and peacebuilding and presented their work. This also opened opportunities for networking and possible new collaborations.



Participants presenting their Communication Plans to the other groups as well as the civil society organizations ©UNESCO

The bond between heritage, peace and youth



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“ Heritage is the most fascinating storyteller. It genuinely recounts local cultures and stories in one universal language, and hence leads all humans to overcome their differences and better understand each other. ”

- Nassima, Morocco





Participant Nassima Chahboun shares her views on the undeniable link between heritage and peacebuilding ©UNESCO

The varied subjects and formats covered during the Forum allowed for rich and extensive interactions between participants and experts, and the diversity of their professional and sociocultural backgrounds fostered cohesion and wider cultural understanding. The Forum was also the first initiative of its kind within the World Heritage Education Programme to address the link between heritage and peacebuilding, and their positive impact on one another.

Elie Saad, a participant, firmly believes that “society’s growth and development can only be achieved by consolidating the base upon which it was built, and heritage is that base”. Hala Al Sadi agrees, stating “cultural heritage is the glue that brings together communities, and in being so, it fosters a space of inclusion which is a pillar towards the prevention of violent extremism”. The participants agreed unequivocally that youth has a key role to play in the process, especially in undertaking preventive actions within heritage protection and preservation and mobilizing of communities. In addition to building a peer network of like-minded individuals committed to this common goal, the young professionals were enthusiastic about applying the knowledge and skills acquired during the Forum in their respective communities and countries. As expressed by Noor Alkamoosi, “to sustain the heritage management system, it is necessary to involve young people because they are the present who will preserve the past and build the future”.

Consolidating their learnings from the Forum and from each other, the young professionals developed an Action Plan including a set of recommendations for multiple stakeholders in the Arab States region, to build peace in the region through the protection, preservation and promotion of World Heritage.



Participant outlining the subjects for the Action Plan ©UNESCO

About the Forum

The Arab World Heritage Young Professionals Forum took place in Tunis, Tunisia, from 2 to 6 December 2019. It was organized by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre under the World Heritage Education (WHE) Programme, within the framework of the UNESCO-UNOCT project on the Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) through Youth Empowerment in Jordan, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia, co-funded by Canada. The Forum was organized in collaboration with the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), and l’Institut national du patrimoine (INP).



DISCOVER MORE...

The Action Plan

Read the **Action Plan** prepared by the young participants [here](#).

The Forum in Action

Watch the **video of the forum** [here](#).

Watch **participants' testimonials on heritage and peace** [here](#).

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What do we do?

- More information on the **World Heritage Education Programme** [here](#).
- More information on the Project "**Prevention of Violent Extremism through Youth Empowerment in Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia**" [here](#).

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