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Press release

The International Council of Museums supports museums in Bosnia-Herzegovina

More than sixteen years after the war and the signing of the Dayton Agreement, Sarajevo is in a paradoxical situation. The city welcomed more tourists than ever in 2011 and is applying to be the European Capital of Culture in 2014; nevertheless, political and economic difficulties threaten museum-affiliated institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Some of them have already been forced to shut down: the National Gallery and the History Museum, two major institutions located in Sarajevo's city centre, respectively closed in September 2011 and in January 2012, and the prestigious National Museum of Bosnia-Herzegovina is set to close down as well, as employees have not been paid for 6 months.

This situation seems to be the result of an administrative organisational problem, as no specifications on the institutional functioning of culture have been clearly defined in the wake of the Dayton Agreement. Based on the country's recent history and the dialogue between cultures that it seeks to promote, it is inconceivable that the lack of organisation of cultural administration within the government leads to the shuttering of long-established cultural institutions – all the more so as the population has voiced its desire for these places of memory and culture to remain open through protests and public appeals.

In view of this situation, after issuing a series of alerts and mobilising the international museums community, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) has addressed its support to local museum professionals, and remains vigilant within the country with the help of its national representatives in Bosnia-Herzegovina and its South-East Europe Regional Alliance. In addition, an ICOM declaration has been sent to Bosnia-Herzegovina's leaders and representatives in the culture field, in order to draw their attention to this precarious situation. With regard to the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*, it is the responsibility of supervision authorities to protect and promote heritage, and to ensure resources necessary for the achievement of this mission.

According to ICOM Director General, Julien Anfruns, “political leaders of the country, but also the international community – represented by signatory countries of the Dayton Agreement – must quickly foster the relevant organisation of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s historical and cultural heritage administration.” ICOM supports the implementation of actions favouring the reopening of museums and the strengthening of their budgetary situation by the country’s institutions and those professionals who keep these museums alive.

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ICOM in short

Created in 1946, ICOM (International Council of Museums) is an international non-governmental organisation maintaining formal relations with UNESCO. Within the United Nations, ICOM has a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. ICOM is the only international organisation representing museums and museum professionals on a global level.

ICOM is:

- A diplomatic forum made up of representatives from 137 countries and territories
- Standards of excellence for museums including ethics (*ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums*)
- A unique international network of more than 30,000 museum professionals around the world
- A think-tank composed by 31 International Committees which represent museums' specialties
- Missions of international public service notably in the fight against illicit traffic of cultural property and emergency programmes in case of natural disasters or armed conflicts.

For all questions concerning the world museum community and for interview requests with ICOM's Director General, please contact the press office:

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