RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY ICOM'S 22ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Vienna, Austria
2007

ICOM'S 22ND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Resolution No. 1: Protection and Promotion of Universal Heritage with Respect for Cultural and Natural Diversity

ICOM's General Assembly held in Vienna, Austria, on 24 August 2007 promotes the protection of and wider access to Universal Heritage as encompassing natural and cultural, tangible and intangible, movable and immovable heritage, regardless of national boundaries or particular interests andwith respect for diversity (as per Resolution No. 1 of 19th General Assembly of ICOM, Melbourne, Australia, 1998 and Resolution No. 1 of the 21st General Assembly of ICOM, Seoul, Korea, 2004) ,

1.1 Policy Framework

ICOM considers the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO) as the framework for promoting cultural diversity and universal heritage through strategic partnerships.

The ICOM General Assembly recommends

• that National Committees exert influence on their respective governments to become State Parties to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (Paris, 20 October 2005); as well as

• enhanced partnerships with other organisations and concrete joint committee actions within ICOM in this context.

1.2 Building Partnerships

In order to strengthen and expand its global network with existing and new strategic partners, the ICOM General Assembly recommends

• the establishment of more functional collaboration with intergovernmental organisations (e.g. UNESCO, ICCROM, INTERPOL, WIPO), international non-governmental organisations (e.g. ICOMOS, IFLA, ICA, WCO, WFFM), national heritage organisations, including associations of museums, galleries, archives and libraries, as well as teaching and research institutions of higher education and their

associations (e.g. IAU); and

• the participation in programmes that demonstrate the contemporary value of historic rights issues such as the UNESCO –Slave Route Project; or the mutual reinforcement of capacities such as the International Bar Association (IBA)–Mediation Programme.

Resolution No. 2: Accessibility of Information and Communication

2.1 Improve Communication

In furthering its universal vision and commitment to the preservation, continuation, and engagement with cultural diversity as the shared heritage of humanity, ICOM facilitates heritage action plans based on intercultural dialogue focusing on tangible and intangible heritage across its committees.

The ICOM General Assembly resolves

• to develop better tools for more effective and regular communication throughout its membership and partner networks;

• to improve multilingual communication tools to reflect the diversity of its members and partners;

• to use the three languages of ICOM (French, English, and Spanish) on an equal basis; and

• to reinforce close cooperation with regional alliances to provide access to the main statements, policies, and documentation of ICOM in different languages (e.g. Arabic or Swahili).

2.2 Improve ICOM's Documentation

The ICOM General Assembly resolves

• to develop a platform for online information (including publications) to provide its committees with a tool to reach out to its members and other interested entities; and

• to re-conceptualise the role of the UNESCO-ICOM Museum Information Centre as a digital archival resource for ICOM and for the general public

Resolution No. 3: Informing Museums on Intellectual Property Issues

Museums are, together with other cultural institutions, both owners and managers of intellectual property. ICOM recognizes that traditional knowledge, traditional cultural expressions and related fields are in many cases under very serious threats around the world. Therefore, the close relationship and cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) with regard to all aspects of intellectual property,

and in particular copyright, is essential.

The ICOM General Assembly focuses on awareness-raising for the global heritage community with regard to intellectual property, including the full recognition of the rights of indigenous people and existing communities related to the heritage. It is essential to make the resources available to enable due diligence for new acquisitions, and provenance research, thereby contributing to the ethical dissemination of knowledge and appreciation of the value of heritage.

ICOM recognizes that sharing and providing access to online resources are never substitutes for the physical repatriation of objects.

The ICOM General Assembly resolves

• to support the efforts of WIPO and other relevant organizations to develop and implement a new WIPO Convention and other Conventions aiming to ensure the protection of the collective moral rights of the originators, inheritors, transmitters, and performers of the world's traditional cultural expressions, and traditional knowledge.

Resolution No. 4: Preventing Illicit Traffic and Promoting the Physical Return, Repatriation and Restitution of Cultural Property

4.1 As museums engage with the legacies of the past events and practices, ICOM considers that the fight against the increasing illicit traffic of cultural and natural heritage properties should be a priority in all countries.

The ICOM General Assembly therefore

• recommends the development of new and innovative methods to promote and facilitate return, repatriation, and restitution; and

• urges ICOM members to support and initiate actions leading to physical repatriation, wherever applicable.

4.2 ICOM notes that many claims and disputes concerning the ownership of museum collections, and legal claims against museums are leading to litigation that can be both lengthy and very costly.

The ICOM General Assembly

• welcomes the decision of the Executive Council to adopt the active promotion of mediation in preference to legal actions, and to establish an ICOM panel of suitable, qualified, experienced, trained, and independent mediators, available to assist the parties in dispute resolution; and

• recommends the use of the mediation process as a first recourse as suggested in the policy statement by Alissandra Cummins: "Promoting the use of Mediation in Resolution of Disputes over the Ownership of Objects in Museum Collections" (January 2006).

Resolution No. 5: Disaster and Emergency Planning

ICOM notes with deep concern that

1. the number of cases have increased, in which cultural goods are stolen as the result of armed robbery, in the presence of visitors and staff; and

2. disasters have occurred, which include the damage to and loss of objects of collections, as a result of research or exhibition outside of the country of origin (which can also be damaging to both the tangible and intangible heritage); and

3. that global environmental changes have increased the frequency of natural disasters affecting museums and universal heritage (e.g. the recent earthquake in Pisco-Paracas in Peru, or Hurricane Dean in the Caribbean and Central America).

ICOM considers that in the context of the on-going challenges of universal heritage protection before, during, and after natural and manmade disasters, including unlawful acts, armed conflict, and rapid over-development, ICOM must consolidate its efforts at raising awareness about risk management and mitigating the consequences of disasters.

5.1 The ICOM General Assembly

• resolves to consolidate its resources and expertise to develop an integrated emergency approach for:

– advocacy with governments, intergovernmental organisations, and non-governmental organisations for cooperation and coordination;
– project development targeting specific needs such as preventive measures for cultural heritage organisations or reconstruction efforts; and
– capacity building based on practical skills and competencies.

• resolves to support new developments and activities of Blue Shield.

5.2 The ICOM General Assembly recognizes the need

• to utilise the ICOM museums network to encourage governments to tighten the norms and legal provisions for the protection of Universal Heritage.

• to ensure the implementation of paragraphs 1.5, 1.6, and 1.7 of the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums in order to define minimum standards of security and safety, and to enhance awareness of museum staff for the protection of universal heritage; and

• to formulate an international memorandum on the implementation of the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, First Protocol (The Hague,1954) and Second Protocol (The Hague,1999).

<u>5.3 The ICOM General Assembly encourages its National Committees</u>

• to advocate with their governments the establishment and implementation of national programmes for the protection of cultural goods; and

• to advise strongly their governments to adopt and apply heritage property protection laws in accordance with international instruments and standards; and

• to support the museum community in its willingness to counter the present threats to museum visitors, staff, and collections.

<u>5.4 The General Assembly appeals to all ICOM's members and partners</u>

• to remain conscious of the worsening destructive situation in Iraq, as well as countries in similar situations, and to support actively the protection of its cultural heritage, the reconstruction of its museums and sites, as well as the repatriation (with interim transfer to a place of safety outside the country) of its looted, stolen, and illegally exported objects.

Resolution 6: Promoting Sustainable Development

ICOM recognizes the potential for conflict between economic and political interests and the continuing development of peoples, communities and their cultures as well as the protection of natural resources.

<u>6.1 The ICOM General Assembly launches an appeal</u>

• to support all initiatives and steps to ensure social, financial, and intellectual autonomy for museums; and

• to make museums more attractive for the general public by transforming them into educational venues for enjoyment, experiencing, and learning about culture and nature, while at the same time taking into account the importance of safeguarding heritage for future generations.

<u>6.2 ICOM recognizes the increasing dangers to universal heritage posed by infrastructural mega-projects. Even where such projects may contribute to economic growth and may benefit the people of the region, nevertheless, they often have a very destructive effect on the cultural heritage and the traditions of the people living there.</u>

The ICOM General Assembly recommends to its members in this context

• to contribute to raising awareness in relation to these dangers at all levels in all countries, regarding any and all such projects, and for example, at this time, the Ilisu/High Dam Project in Turkey.

The ICOM General Assembly appeals to its members and partners in relevant and intergovernmental organisations

• to urge the responsible authorities of Turkey to reconsider their activities

and timeframe in the scope of the planned project on the Tigris River in order to ensure better protection of the heritage in the affected region, the populations living in the area and the ancient city of Hasankeyf; and, in particular;

• requests its members of the countries involved with this project (especially in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Turkey) to appeal to their authorities and private entities located in these and other countries that support and contribute to the project to consider the universal heritage implications of their actions.

Resolution No. 7: Championing Higher Standards and Professional Development

Considering the challenges museum professionals and volunteers are facing (e.g. on the political, financial, and structural levels) in the rapidly changing environment of the 21st century, the ICOM General Assembly resolves:

• to address, develop, and enhance more effectively the education and training of museum professionals and volunteers, and to develop capacities to meet the needs of museums and the communities they serve;

• to implement the above through ICOM's operational mechanisms with special reference to developing countries, in particular through regional alliances and multilingual delivery platforms; and

• to partner with existing museum and heritage studies programs in universities and research institutions, as well as international and national NGO's.

Resolution 8: Improving the Consultative and Decision Making Process

8.1 In view of the rapid growth in the membership of ICOM, and considering that the Advisory Committee is the representative body of ICOM with National and International Committees, Affiliated Organisations, and Regional Alliances, the ICOM General Assembly urges

• the Executive Council and the Advisory Committee to continue the reform, including the revision of ICOM's Statutes and Operating Policies, to enhance the substantive role of the Advisory Committee by utilizing the more efficient means available in our contemporary information society; and, that the results of such reform be discussed among both Executive Council and the Advisory Committee and made available for review and acceptance by the members of the Advisory Committee.

8.2 The General Conference is ICOM's major event and a unique knowledge-sharing experience. It is a networking opportunity that consumes considerable time and money for all members.

The ICOM General Assembly recommends :

• that ICOM improve the organisation, structure, and content of the General Assembly and the General Conference to gain in effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance to ICOM members worldwide, and to call on all ICOM bodies to designate representatives to work on better means to do so;

• to encourage governments responsible for museum personnel to support full participation of their staff who are members of ICOM in ICOM meetings and the General Conference as this participation should be recognised as a professional activity with benefits for museum development in their respective countries, regions and internationally;

• that the Executive Council provide information on the activities of the Executive Council and the Secretariat, to the Advisory Committee for review on a regular basis and for consideration in advance of meetings; and

• that ICOM and the host countries organising General Conferences and other constituent meetings make every effort to harness new technologies in order to best engage with and ensure the more democratic involvement of our global membership and better functioning of our Organisation.