19/10/2015

"Ensuring lasting protection against destruction and deterioration for the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of humanity "

Preparatory meeting in Geneva

Summary of the working paper

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[Full text of the working paper](#)

1) What is heritage?

Many Conventions define its scope:

- 1954: Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, The Hague

- 1970: Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, Paris – 129 Member States

- 1972: Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, Paris – 190 Member States

- 2001: Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage, Paris

- 2003: Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Paris – 163 State Members

2) Identifying challenges

1- MASS TOURISM

Challenge: The World Heritage is subject to global consumption, which leads to questioning the sustainability of tourist flows.

Key examples: Angkor; Machu Picchu; Sistine Chapel; Egyptian tombs; Mount Everest; Virunga Park

Recommendations:

* Create a Tourist Chart common to States Parties listing the rules and principles that tourists tacitly commit to respect once they have their admission tickets. All tourism stakeholders will have an obligation to distribute it to their customers;

* Control tourist flows: Establish daily and hourly visitors' quotas for the busiest sites. A badge for a particular time slot would be given to each visitor. When badges ran out, the following visitors would have to wait for the next time slot;

* Set up protection zones around sites: particularly fragile pieces of heritage must be protected from tourist influx by such zones;

* Implement entry prices for certain sites (lower for residents) as in Rwanda;

* Language training of guards so that they can easily communicate with anyone who might go against the prescribed rules.

2- ARMED CONFLICTS AND TERRORISM

Challenge: During an armed conflict, destruction of cultural heritage can be part of collateral damage, but often constitutes a carefully thought-out strategy. A striking example is the intentional destruction of heritage by IS. Armed conflicts and terrorism imply wilful destruction and vandalism.

Key examples: Libya (desecrated graves); Afghanistan (Buddha's); Syria and Iraq (Islamic State)

Recommendations:

* Speed up the ratification of The Hague Convention and its Protocols in order to act quickly and effectively in times of conflict. Provide for sanctions for non-compliance with its provisions;

* Systematically prosecute in case of damage or destruction of the World Heritage and effectively make intentional destruction a war crime under Article 8 section 2 of the Rome Statue. In this regard, the States Parties to the 1972 Convention should support synergies with the 1954 Convention, especially through the enhanced protection mechanism provided for by the Second Protocol.[1]

* Focus on museum staff training so that they are fully aware, as they are of the risk of fire for example, of items to save first, and how (stipulate safe locations where items can be stored on national territory, or that of another State);

* Ensure the texts of Conventions on protection of cultural property are distributed (training, awareness), as part of military training programs for military and civil education programs for the population, particularly for staff assigned to the Protection of Cultural Property;

* Develop a preventive approach: develop "plans B" for movable heritage, such as an inventory of all national heritage in a broad sense, or microfilm the whole of the heritage, as done by Switzerland.

* Systematically include the protection of cultural and historical sites in peace-keeping operations and military instructions of the States' armed forces. In that respect, an international force specialized in international humanitarian law and the protection of cultural heritage could be set up in the various relevant regional and international bodies in tandem with a similar force at national level.

3- LOOTING AND ILLICIT TRAFFICKING

Challenge: Looting can have multiple causes: heritage abandoned following heavy instabilities, poor population, greed, which greatly threatens heritage finding itself at the centre of illicit trafficking.

Key examples: Virunga Park; Baghdad Museum; Libya; Syria; France, Mali; Tanzania; Nepal; Colosseum

Recommendations:

* Conduct an accurate inventory (with photographs) of items in museums, movable buildings and archaeological sites;

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[1]http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/pdf/Modif_WHformat_techsummary_fr.pdf

* Carry out regular studies based on this inventory and complaints filed for looting;

* Set up a National Body to fight against trafficking in cultural property;

* Encourage the creation of specialised services within the police and custom forces to fight against the theft of works of art and suppress illicit traffic;

* Ensure effective monitoring of sites;

* Encourage ratification of the 1970 Convention and UNIDROIT;

* Monitor suspicious Internet sales by introducing a liability shift to the hosting website, as done in Switzerland;

4- POPULATION GROWTH AND URBANISATION

Challenge: To meet the demands of mass tourism and/or rapid population growth, urbanisation policies distort part of the heritage by taking it out of its context.

Key examples: Mexico; Virunga Park, Cairo, Siem Reap

Recommendation:

* On reviewing urban projects, pay attention to their impact on heritage enhancement.

5- LACK OF AWARENESS

Challenge: Knowing what cultural heritage represents would lead to less vandalism and more respect for the Others' cultural property. Similarly, increased awareness would also enable better conservation and the use of more appropriate techniques in the development of Heritage.

Recommendations:

* Include heritage awareness in school curricula across the board. This could be done in literature, history, geography and biology curricula.[2]

* Include awareness of respect for cultural property in military training programs.

* Promote public awareness events such as "Heritage Days".

* Promote citizen participation in heritage management process (Faro Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society)

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[2] http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CLT/images/9_COM_Decisions_EN.pdf
(p.10-11)

6- RESTORATION

Challenge: Restorations are a real challenge in the face of heritage deterioration: techniques used, value of heritage to be preserved, reconciliation factor, significant cost.

Key examples: Old Town in Warsaw; China (Lijiang canals); Myanmar (Bagan site); Spain (Ecce Homo).

Recommendations:

* Prioritise regular maintenance of heritage;

* Ensure transmission of know-how in the context of restoration;

* In case of restoration, encourage the systematic use of both national and international expert networks so that they can assess the best techniques to be used for an inclusive, participatory and multidisciplinary process.

7- GLOBALISATION

Challenge: Heritage is becoming a consumption tool and the increased tourist services' response is harming the local culture which is at the very root of the value of this heritage.

Recommendation :

* To be determined

8- CLIMATE CHANGE

Challenge: The impact of climate change on tangible and intangible cultural heritage is largely neglected though numerous.

Recommendations:

* A quantitative and proactive, rather than subjective and qualitative, approach;

* Consultations with experts in anticipation of climate change;

* Encourage a comprehensive approach of Heritage by considering it in its global environment;

* National assessment of World Heritage List of potentially endangered sites by climate change in order to take action to limit the risks.

9- <u>LACK OF OR INSUFFICIENT REGISTRATION BY SOME COUNTRIES</u>

Challenge: Much of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage has not been reported by countries, thus preventing its protection.

Recommendations:

* Develop incentives in some countries to achieve a certain balance between geographical areas at the level of the World Heritage List;

* Ratify the Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention and suggest including important items on the list of cultural property under enhanced protection;

* If necessary, develop an exchange of good practice between States so that they can help each other in identifying various forms of potential heritage on their territory.

3) Conclusion

<u>Nine challenges – one goal</u>

The nine challenges discussed above may well be distinct, but their accumulation has a multiplier effect on the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity. Most of these challenges do require quick action, precisely because they are growing more significant and substantial over time.

With increased mobility and the development of certain sites, tourists continue to rush towards globally coveted heritage. Demographic forecasts indicate an increased pressure on cities and therefore on urbanisation projects.

Terrorism and intentional destruction of heritage are growing to an unprecedented scale. Societies develop and in doing so, cause a standardisation of lifestyles. Issues such as looting and illicit trafficking are all the more critical in that they partially feed terrorism due to their financial gains. The role of UNESCO, as seen earlier, is crucial but requires a deepening towards stricter standards that are more focused on risk prevention.

All regions of the world should be represented. Common to all these issues is that they affect – albeit heterogeneously and in various forms – all countries and continents. Therefore, global challenges must call for global solutions. The purpose of this note is to raise awareness of the fact that we all share the responsibility to act, by impacting our own levels of government, on the basis of a common thought process based on the premise that safeguarding heritage means protecting our identity and our history.