



***Statement by ICOMOS-ICORP and Yildiz Technical University of Istanbul from the International Symposium on Cultural Heritage Protection in Times of Risk: Challenges and Opportunities, 15 - 17 November, 2012 at Yildiz Technical University, Istanbul, Turkey.***

This Statement is made on the 40th Anniversary of the adoption of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention on 16 November, 1972.

Understanding that past civilizations have formed the foundations of today's societies and that our cultural heritage will continue to shape and inform communities into the future, and

Recognizing that cultural heritage is constantly at risk from natural and human-induced disasters, including armed conflict, some of which are not always predictable, The Istanbul Statement recommends that all risk preparedness, disaster response and recovery strategies should address cultural heritage in parallel with practical humanitarian needs, as disaster recovery is also a wider and longer-term social process. Specifically the Istanbul Statement recommends that:

- While recognizing the sovereignty of nations, disaster response should be impartial and not be politicized and should respect human rights.
- All protective and legal measures introduced by international conventions should be used to protect cultural heritage better in times of armed conflict.
- The importance of cultural identity in post-disaster recovery is emphasized to lessen the loss of cultural knowledge and memory due to the displacement of communities by disasters.
- The importance of a community's understanding of its heritage and its ability to form a critical component of disaster response and recovery should be embraced, and should form a critical part of collaboration, decision-making, training and local capacity and resilience building, which will strengthen the overall effort resulting in longer-term benefits.
- Cultural heritage should be embedded into all the wider disaster preparation and response protocols and procedures through wider collaboration and co-operation between the heritage, emergency response and communications sectors; all levels of government, IGOs and NGOs and the military.
- Each sector should educate the other and should establish networks and forums to develop a mutual understanding of the importance of cultural heritage buildings, structures, sites,

objects, collections, customs and traditional techniques which are at risk. They should develop joint priorities, protocols, approaches and methodologies to add value to the long-term economic and social benefit of communities.

- Disaster risk management education, including international training courses supported by academic and specialist organizations, should be available to all actors, ranging from communities to decision-makers from the heritage, disaster management and humanitarian sectors.
- Post-disaster response should require immediate safeguarding of cultural heritage, promptly followed by documentation of damage so as to facilitate later recovery in accord with accepted conservation practice. This should include also salvage and storage procedures and facilities; and should recognize the value of traditional systems and materials, including both tangible and intangible aspects, and should record them.
- Recognizing the inevitability of loss, together with the increasing ability of science and technology to enable conservation and rehabilitation of cultural heritage; laws requiring mandatory demolition of damaged buildings, structures and the clearing of sites are inappropriate without a full assessment of structural adequacy and cultural significance having been undertaken.
- For sustainable management of slow risks to cultural heritage, continuous maintenance, monitoring and assessment are essential.
- Finally, this Statement further recognizes the important roles which heritage IGOs and NGOs are able to play in times of disasters, in particular UNESCO and national committees of the Blue Shield. In this regard, ICOMOS, in particular ICORP, is encouraged to be pro-active in assisting in the establishment and formal recognition of national Blue Shield committees in disaster response protocols.

This symposium also expresses concern at the potential threats which pose a risk to the ecological environment and cultural landscape of Istanbul, particularly along the coastline of the Bosphorus Sea caused by commercial shipping and the transport of hazardous materials.

This symposium also encourages ongoing efforts and co-operation with international heritage bodies, such as ICOMOS, in developing principles for the protection and conservation of heritage in Turkey.

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