

Report on Round Table on Cultural Heritage at Risk

held at ICOMOS headquarters, Paris 8 and 9 October 1993

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This is a report of a Round Table of experts which followed a first meeting of representatives of both governmental and non-governmental organisations held in October 1992 at the initiative of ICOMOS in collaboration with UNESCO. It was part of actions launched by these organisations to assess the tools available to improve preparedness for disasters of natural or human origin and to reduce their impact on cultural heritage. This process aims at improving or, where necessary, complementing the existing tools including the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the event of Armed Conflict ('The Hague Convention', 1954), the Convention on Means to Prohibit and Prevent the Illicit Transfer of Cultural Property (1970), and the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (the 'World Heritage Convention', 1972).

The report is followed by an analysis of findings from the post-war reconstruction operations at Basrah and Fao in Iraq, and by a report on the methods of surveying Dubrovnik's architectural heritage.

1. Objectives

The objectives adopted by the Round Table were of two kinds:

- Those meant to feed into the reflections of UNESCO in preparation for discussions to be held at the 142nd session of the Executive Council (October 1993) and at the 27th session of the General Assembly (November 1993).
- Those meant to formulate a programme of concrete strategies and actions to be undertaken by the participating governmental and non-governmental organisations.

b. Participants

The Round Table gathered the following individuals:

Mrs. Jamila Binous
Association pour la sauvegarde de la Medina (Tunis)

Prof. Patrick Boylan
Head of Arts Policy & Management Dept., City University (London)

Mr. Dinu Bumbaru (Rapporteur)
Héritage Montreal & Secretary of ICOMOS Canada

Mr. Maurice Carbonnell
Former President, ICOMOS Intl Committee of Architectural Photogrammetry (CIPA)

Mr. Étienne Clément
Division of Physical Heritage — UNESCO

Mrs. Éliane Des Portes
Secretary General — ICOM

Mrs. Regina Durighello
World Heritage Assistant. ICOMOS

Mr. Bernd Von Droste
Director, World Heritage Centre — UNESCO

Mrs. Arlene Fleming
Cultural Resource Management Consultant (Virginia USA)

Mr. Meno Heling
Meno Heling Culturele Markering (Amsterdam)

Mr. Jan Hladik
Division of Physical Heritage — UNESCO

Mrs. Gisèle Hyvert
Division of Physical Heritage — UNESCO

Dr. Jukka Jokileitto
ICCROM & President of ICOMOS Intl. Committee on Training (CIF)

Mr. Daniel Lefèvre
Architecte en chef des Monuments historiques (Paris)

Dr. Tomislav Marasovic
President of ICOMOS Croatia

Mr. Leo Van Nispen (Chairman of the round table)
Director of ICOMOS

Mrs. Ann Raidi
Former Director of the Division of Physical Heritage at UNESCO

Res. Lt - Colonel P.M.C. Scheers
Section of Protection of Cultural Heritage, Natl. Territorial Command (NL)

Mr. Herb Stovel
*Former Secretary General of ICOMOS and
chairman of the previous round tables*

Prof. Peter Waldhäusl
IPRS (Vienna) & ICOMOS — CIPA

Mr. Said/Zulficar
*Secretary, World Decade of Cultural Development —
UNESCO*

2. Conceptual framework

Experts participating in this Round Table agreed on broad orientations to guide their work. Some of them are specific to Conventions and other particular tools. Others relate to the fundamental objectives of these discussions — cultural heritage and its better integration in the behaviour of societies, whether they are in emergency situations or normal conditions, and in on-going reflections on their development.

On that latter point, it was noted that conservation, beyond physical intervention, remains fundamentally a discipline whose object is the transmission of cultural values carried by objects, monuments and sites and, generally speaking the built environment. In broad terms, conservation aims at reducing the loss and decay of the heritage suffered through processes whose origins lie just as much in nature as in human activities like armed conflicts.

a. Exceptional circumstances

Within the context of this definition of conservation, disasters of natural or human origin can be considered as extreme forms of decay of the cultural heritage. The difference is in the cataclysmic character which causes rapid destruction of the heritage.

Beyond their physical impact on heritage, these situations have important effects on individual and collective behaviour, tending to reduce rationality by various degrees according to the situation. This is particularly true with armed conflicts where moral and social order is strongly affected.

An appropriate response to such situations depends on information gathered and planning undertaken prior to the disaster. It requires improved preparedness and preventive actions to reduce the impact of those factors and to develop appropriate institutional and community behaviour. Such improvements can ensure an improved efficiency among involved parties during and after an emergency situation or a disaster.

The experts underscored the statement that relief for cultural heritage should be perceived as an integral part of the notion of humanitarian aid even if this has traditionally been associated with medical aid or food supply.

b. The Hague Convention (1954)

Presentations by Prof. Boylan and Mr. Clément assisted the experts to understand the extent of current evaluation of the Convention. Despite doubts raised on its efficiency of expression and primarily on its implementation, the Hague Convention led to important achievements from UNESCO's

perspective. It was noted that it acts as an important catalyst and reference.

Stressing the interest of the orientations taken in the conclusions of the Boylan Report the experts concluded that the full potential of the Convention had yet to be reached. Acknowledging the value of the Convention as a tool, the experts agreed that the Round Table should reflect on ways to improve the implementation of the spirit of the Convention and greatly encouraged UNESCO to stimulate its implementation while acting, in collaboration with NGO's to improve it with the benefit of recent experiences, in particular the increased use of military force in roles other than armed conflict *per se* like UN Peacekeeping or humanitarian relief operations.

c. Other conventions

The Convention on Illicit Transfer of Cultural Properties (1970) was briefly mentioned in some case studies but the Round Table did not study its implications with respect to the main objectives of the meeting.

As well, the terms of the World Heritage Convention (1972) were not discussed in specified forms. Nevertheless, the experts identified sites registered on the World Heritage List or proposed for registration, as providing opportunities for developing and implementing preparedness measures as components of their management and conservation plans.

3. Priorities

The experts identified the development of improved preparedness for emergency situations as a general priority. In that respect, an examination of the tools to be developed to achieve this goal was carried on in the light of the various presentations.

These improvements require changes in community behaviour favourable to the conservation of cultural heritage — in normal as well as exceptional circumstances and independent of the origin of the disaster (natural or human). In addition, the Round Table noted that, even if its reflections were focused on cultural heritage, there is a great need to coordinate action with organisations in the field of natural heritage, if for no other reason than to understand the models developed in that field.

The Round Table examined various tools including the means of identification of risks and threats; the documentation of cultural properties for preventive measures and the production of technical instructions to be executed in emergency situations, in the form of manuals and guidelines. Finally the presentation of crisis scenarios for the Medina of Tunis encouraged other such simulations for other sites.

Discussions at the Round Table may be summarized under three broad headings with respect to the definition of the approach required and the type of actions required.

a. Education

(Education and training of both the public and the various authorities)

All the presentations and briefs submitted by experts to

the Round Table made this issue a priority both to ensure proper integration of conservation of cultural heritage in the normal concerns of societies, and to spur all authorities to improve preparedness. These latter comprise the general public as well as the civil and governmental authorities and organisations specifically mandated to intervene directly or indirectly on cultural properties in emergency situations. Among those organisations, experts identified specifically civil defense as significant and, to an even greater degree, the military personnel who are to act in national or international missions, in particular within UN Peacekeeping activities.

In the development of educational and training activities on preparedness, the experts felt that the distinction between preparing for disasters of natural or human origin should be replaced by a concern for preparedness in general, in order to avoid hesitations and psychological impact which comes to a population preparing, for example, to go to war.

b. Documentation

(Preparation of qualified inventories on cultural properties; instructions for measures to take before, during and after a disaster in order to preserve heritage significance; documentation of risks)

The presentations of Mr. Lèfevre complemented by those of Mrs. Binous on the Medina of Tunis and Prof. Waldhäusl on the use of photogrammetry and of 'amateur' technology for documentation (see annexes) were received with great interest as providing a basis for the preparation of guidelines for creating, conserving diffusing and using such documentation before and in time of emergency.

The Round Table proposed to make the guidelines more explicit following the principle that conservation actions — whether taken as preparation or as response to a disaster — should be based on all the elements that contribute and define the cultural value of a heritage property. This could mean that inventories take in to account factors other than strictly architectural or historical ones.

Preparation of these guidelines should be done in cooperation with the governmental and non-governmental organisations and distributed to governments, institutions and any other competent organisations. Such guidelines could serve as a base for the improvement of the Hague Convention which lacks sufficiently precise instructions about documentation for sites to be protected.

Documentation also requires a proper assessment of threats in order to plan general procedures and specific measures for each property, to train professionals, managers and local authorities as well as to inform the public. The expertise necessary for this task could be assembled from local or national institutions responsible for heritage conservation or from international networks. In the latter case, concerted action by UNESCO and NGOs could lead to the creation of a bank of experts and the ability to manage their participation in such international situations.

c. Coordination

(Coordination amongst institutions and authorities acting directly or indirectly on cultural properties in

case of emergency to ensure better achievement of conservation objectives)

This coordination should first be achieved at the local level within a broader regional, national or international reference framework. The experts identified the need to produce and efficiently diffuse reference manuals that treated emergency situations in the continuum of other forms of decay of heritage while ensuring the integration of a conservation concern in interventions for which this is not the prime purpose, like UN Peacekeeping missions or humanitarian relief operations.

Armed forces are one of the institutions. It is noted that, under the terms of the Hague Convention, that contracting parties are to nominate military personnel responsible for archives and issues related to monuments. The Round Table suggested that this measure be fully implemented to enable and facilitate the delivery of information on monuments to the military. To do so, the suggestion was made to designate liaison officers with whom the conservation authorities could work.

On the other hand, the experts noted the importance of better and more active collaboration with organisations already active in the field of disaster preparedness and response, in particular humanitarian relief organisations. Among those, various components of the UN system were identified as examples, as well as private and national governmental organisations active in the field of tourism or nature conservation as shown in Mrs. Fleming's presentation.

On the matter of natural heritage the round table noted the importance of developing greater conciliation between the natural and cultural heritage fields especially since more and more sites combine both natural and cultural elements as the basis for defining their heritage value.

4. Tools and Resources

In a strategic perspective aimed at implementation, the Round Table first identified the need to better coordinate the actions of existing organisations (governmental or NGOs) and the possibility of a specifically mandated, independent organisation to improve preparedness and responsive actions to emergency situations. This coordination should extend to components of the UN system, to military and humanitarian organisations which do not necessarily have direct responsibility for cultural heritage but play important roles in exceptional circumstances.

a. Human resources

Following the presentation of Mrs. Hyvert on the creation of a corps of specialists (see annex), the Round Table adopted the principle of establishing and maintaining a list of specialists available to participate on missions for the development or implementation of preparedness measures or to help sites in response to disasters.

The Round Table nevertheless remained conscious of the ethical questions raised by such a list and, in particular, by its *a priori* qualification of specialists without any confirmation of their actual level of commitment. In that respect, the experts suggest that the responsibility of

establishing such as list, of defining selection criteria and rules of ethics for professionals be given to a joint committee of representatives of NGOs active in the conservation field and UNESCO.

b. Manuals and Guidelines

The reports from Mr. Stovel and Dr. Jokilehto on documents, manuals and training, identified needs to be fulfilled in those fields and proposed a generic model (see annex). A great number of manuals already exist but very few appear helpful in today's context for preparation of preparedness manuals.

Most manuals deal with traditional definitions and perceptions of humanitarian aid (rescue of people, medical supply, emergency housing) or with specialized definitions of cultural heritage (museums and similar institutions, isolated monuments rather than the cultural environments whose importance is now widely acknowledged). Most existing inventories were planned to answer fundamental research objectives rather than help in emergency situations. Finally, existing documents are seldom accessible or adaptable.

These observations suggest the need for a global document that would introduce the concepts of conservation of cultural heritage in emergency situations — from the preventive measures of a preparedness programme to the immediate or long-term actions to be taken in the case of such situations. The Round Table agreed on the need to produce such a tool, best described by the term 'manual'.

This manual must allow both for regular updating and for adaptation to specific conditions of each site and organisations that will implement it. It should also include a guide to existing similar documentation in the field. Database technology could provide means for the updating.

c. Structures

It was suggested that the scale of the need to both reduce the impact of and to respond to emergencies, whether through existing Conventions and their regulations, or addressed at the broader level of conservation principles required the presence of a permanent mechanism.

The Round Table identified the need to set up an international, neutral, non-governmental organisation specifically dedicated to the protection of cultural heritage put at risk by emergency situations of natural or human origin on the model of a fund.

The presentation by Mr. Heling (see annex) brought useful information to this section of the Round Table. Inspired by the model of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), such a fund should enjoy a broad base, independence and financial resources that would enable it to complement the actions of governmental organisations (UNESCO, the Council of Europe, other intergovernmental networks in Asia or North America), or non-governmental organisations like ICOMOS or ICOM.

Such a fund should possess an infrastructure sufficient to carry on large-scale preventive actions as well as specific eventual operations in response to emergency situations in

coordination with other cultural heritage or associated field groups, with maximum efficiency.

The structure, the objectives and the goals of the fund should also address the question of a possible host-country through, among other factors, a legal assessment of various options. To continue this reflection, a task force was created of experts acting as individuals. This task force will look at the desired relationship among partners in this process. The coordination of this task force will be ensured by Leo Van Nispen.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

a. General considerations:

Preparedness should be developed within the broader context of cultural heritage at risk. It was also felt necessary to develop a general approach to prevention and preparedness in all emergencies, whether of natural or human origin.

These actions must be carried out in relationships established with all authorities. It is imperative to develop a relationship with the military personnel who would be called into action in emergency situations. It is necessary to develop a common language to make it possible to communicate concerns about conservation of cultural heritage in exceptional circumstances to these parties.

A first step would be to encourage UNESCO and the UN to continue their efforts to stimulate preventive activities before a situation of emergency arises. Such preventive activities could be developed and carried out jointly by UNESCO and NGOs to reduce the risks for cultural heritage in 'hot spots'.

Actions for UNESCO: UNESCO could participate in UN Peacekeeping mission with 'liaison' officers and experts in the conservation of cultural heritage. In that perspective, it would be necessary to reinforce existing mechanisms within UNESCO to ensure a proper coordination and to support other organisations involved in this kind of action.

b. About the Hague Convention (1954):

Even if this Convention does not pretend to provide answers for all problems of conservation of cultural heritage in exceptional circumstances, the Hague Convention constitutes an important tool and a catalyst for the development and implementation of a wider action on preparedness. In parallel to its reviewing, particularly regarding its provisions on the essential documentation of sites, its promotion and its implementation should become the object of priority actions by UNESCO.

Dissemination: The provisions of the Convention should be widely distributed to military personnel and particularly to UN Peacekeepers for integration in their training programmes.

Promotion: UNESCO should launch and support a campaign to stimulate adhesion of countries to the Convention in order to better sustain its credibility, its recognition and its universal character.

Monitoring: UNESCO should continue to encourage

countries which have already adhered to the Convention to encourage them to submit reports on the implementation of the Convention's terms, and to adopt protection measures in accordance with the Convention.

c. About documentation:

Guidelines should be prepared to ensure the documentation of cultural properties as a part of preventive measures. This documentation is important for the production of general instruments for governments or international organisations, for the implementation of the Hague Convention and for the preparation of specific instructions for each site or property.

While it might be prepared to respond to the specific needs of disaster preparedness, this documentation should be integrated in the normal conservation instruments used for urban ensembles, buildings or objects. The following recommendations provide a basis for the development of such guidelines.

Contact: Aside from basic information identifying the cultural property and what defines its heritage value, the documentation should provide an emergency plan identifying the risks and potential threats, their potential effects, access roads, risk zones, resources and the responsibility of the authorities in case of emergency.

Development: The process of developing this documentation provides an opportunity to sensitize and educate responsible authorities, military personnel and managers in charge of security and emergency measures.

Definition of emergency measures and instructions could be achieved through simulations and on site exercises carried out with the participation of both conservation specialists and authorities responsible in case of emergency.

Dissemination: The distribution of this documentation should discriminate between scientific and strategic information. Nevertheless, it remains important that civil or military authorities in charge of responding to exceptional circumstances maintain a basic information on cultural heritage, if only to implement the terms of the Hague Convention.

Management and updating: New technologies in the field of information should be exploited to store, organize and update base documentation. The monitoring of sites is essential to carry on that work and the updating of base documentation.

d. About training:

The training of specialists, administrative personnel and the public is a priority. It is important to integrate conservation into existing training programmes on emergency measures, in particular those developed within relief organisations active in providing humanitarian aid.

NGOs and UNESCO should combine their efforts to develop specific training programmes for local and national

authorities, for military personnel and for other target-groups. In this context registered or proposed World Heritage Sites were identified as opportunities to develop training and education programmes and models.

Military groups, in particular the UN Peacekeepers, should be given basic training in conservation of cultural heritage. In complementary fashion, military personnel should provide basic training to conservation specialists to be called in the context of emergencies.

e. About manuals and guidelines:

The production of such instruments is necessary to reinforce existing documents and to articulate these in the context of the specific needs of cultural heritage at risk and of improved preparedness measures. Such instruments provide valuable opportunities to support integration of conservation concerns in the treatment of heritage in exceptional circumstances.

These instruments should serve the purpose of training specialists as well as educating the general public, and should lead to the production of site-specific documents and instruction. Their diffusion to conservation professionals, to military personnel, to economic development agencies and to human rights, humanitarian relief and environmental groups, as well as the media, should be seen as a priority.

f. About the creation of a corps of specialists:

A centralised database of experts in the conservation of cultural heritage in emergency situations should be created and used. Such a database should discriminate between strategic and scientific expertise.

Its management should be the responsibility of a joint committee of UNESCO and NGOs in cultural heritage conservation so as to ensure proper professional standards and ethics.

g. About the need for an international fund:

The Round Table concluded that achieving these goals requires resources that would be supplied by the creation of an independent and neutral, non-governmental fund for the protection of cultural heritage at risk. This fund could use the example of the WWF and ensure its own funding through a specific fund-raising strategy.

Activities: The activities of this fund would complement, support and reinforce those of governmental organisations in the field.

In parallel, such a fund could finance the publication of a yearly or bi-annual report on the stage of heritage in the World on the model of what is currently done by a number of governmental or non-governmental organizations and associations in other fields.

Follow-up: To achieve a better examination of the concept of such a World Fund for Cultural Heritage at Risk, a task force was created. Its coordination will be ensured by the Director of ICOMOS.