



International Committee of the Blue Shield

The Radenci Declaration on the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Emergencies and Exceptional Situations

On the initiative of the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) with the participation and support of UNESCO, a seminar was held in Radenci, Slovenia, from 12 to 16 November 1998. Representatives of UNESCO, and of the four non-governmental organisations that constitute the ICBS: the International Council on Archives (ICA), the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) took part, together with delegates from cultural heritage organisations in the following countries: Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, France, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden.

The participants, noting the great loss of cultural heritage in recent years due to armed conflicts and natural disasters and international efforts made to prevent such losses, examined experiences of mitigation and response in different countries and contexts, agreed on the following principles:

1/ Cultural heritage embraces both moveable and immovable property. Its loss is a concern to all and its protection, safeguard and respect -in normal and exceptional situations- must be included in policies and programmes at international, national, regional and local levels.

2/ All institutions caring for the cultural heritage, and all authorities responsible for it, should integrate risk preparedness and management within their operations to avoid loss or damage in both normal and exceptional times.

3/ The goal is to avoid loss or damage to cultural heritage in the event of emergencies by improving prevention, preparedness, response and recovery measures. It is achieved by developing, implementing and monitoring strategies which:

- Assess and reduce risk
- Improve response capacity
- Ensure co-operation of all relevant parties in local, national and international emergency management.

Such strategies can be achieved by tactics in the form of general policies and programmes aiming at:

- Linking parties to form durable networks;
- Establishing and updating emergency plans with clear needs and priorities;
- Drawing up programmes for dissemination of information to the general public and to decision makers;
- Training personnel and developing their skills.

Specifically, means such as the following can be adapted and implemented to achieve the main goal and realise the main strategies:

- Ensuring appropriate funding and other resources;
- Establishing collaborative agreements with related institutions covering such areas as personnel, specialised equipment, temporary refuges;
- Developing good working relationships with emergency services;
- Producing information, such as manuals of emergency procedures and inventories of internal and external resources;
- Carrying out regular training sessions including exercises and drills of emergency procedures in association with partners;
- Setting up joint liaison committees with partners;
- Ensuring adequate inventories and documentation of the institution's holdings, including remote back up copies;
- Providing adequate safety and specialised emergency equipment and supplies;
- Promoting the adoption and implementation of international conventions on cultural heritage;
- Developing the skills of people intervening in response to disasters by producing training materials and tools;
- Developing voluntary support networks, drawing upon diverse competencies.

4/ With regard to the particular case of armed conflicts, the participants recognised the value of the basic principles of safeguard and respect for cultural heritage as embodied in The Hague Convention of 1954 and other conventions for the protection of cultural heritage adopted under the auspices of UNESCO, including precautionary measures such as the preparation of inventories, development and implementation of appropriate technical measures, and the adoption of national legislation and policies.

The participants, encouraged by the examples of participating countries and others such as Sri Lanka further agreed to continue to share experiences and to co-operate in the context of the International Committee of the Blue Shield to develop national, regional and local initiatives to avoid loss of cultural heritage.

Adopted in Radenci, Slovenia, on 16 November 1998.