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Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
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联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

## INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF EXPERTS ON THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF LIBYA

Friday 21 October 2011

UNESCO HEADQUARTERS, PARIS

### RECOMMENDATIONS

*The experts invited by the Director-General of UNESCO, Mrs Irina Bokova, to participate in their professional capacity in the consultative meeting convened on 21 October 2011 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, and committed to inform their respective institutions and scientific network on the results of the meeting, agreed on the following recommendations:*

**Expressing** their concern given that the cultural heritage of Libya is very fragile and at risk in the aftermath of the conflict and during the transition period, in particular due to risks such as looting of cultural property and illegal demolitions and constructions in heritage places;

**Having recognized** the role of UNESCO as the UN agency whose mandate is, among others, to protect cultural heritage, and emphasizing the need for immediate international coordination;

**Recommend** that UNESCO be part of the wider UN architecture in Libya and in this context that it be entrusted with the role of supporting the Libyan authorities in developing an emergency strategy and Plan of action for the cultural heritage of Libya, focusing on enhancing the capacity of relevant national institutions;

**Invite** the UNESCO Director-General to establish an International Scientific Advisory Committee on cultural heritage of Libya, whose mandate would be to support the Libyan authorities in implementing their recovery programmes, associating institutions with previous expertise in the area and in heritage preservation;

#### I. ELEMENTS FOR A STRATEGY

The experts agreed that a strategy for assisting the Libyan authorities in ensuring the conservation and management of their cultural heritage should be based on two immediate priorities:

- 1) Securing heritage sites, historic areas and cultural institutions as soon as possible by establishing appropriate control measures;

- 2) Strengthening the Libyan legal and institutional framework for heritage protection and management.

In parallel with efforts to achieve these two critical aims, the experts suggested to launch, at the earliest possible stage, some concrete pilot initiatives for the rehabilitation of heritage properties or institutions, so as to give visibility to the goals of the strategy and to increase awareness and support of the national and local public. In a longer-term perspective, moreover, the experts concurred on the importance of ensuring that future policies in Libya will give adequate consideration to the integration of the social and economic dimensions in heritage programmes, in order to ensure their sustainability.

To attain these objectives, which are essential for the long-term preservation of the country's cultural heritage, the experts recommended that a combination of technical assistance, capacity-development and awareness-raising initiatives be implemented, in close cooperation with the Libyan Department of Antiquities, including its subsidiary Historic Cities Office, and other relevant Libyan institutions.

These are presented here below, according to their degree of urgency.

## **II. IMMEDIATE AND SHORT TERM ACTIONS**

### **a) Security measures**

The experts recommend that the Libyan authorities take the following immediate measures to ensure the protection of Libyan cultural heritage, museums, libraries and archives, storage facilities, standing monuments and major sites, notably the World Heritage sites:

- To enforce regulations in archaeological sites and historic areas and landscapes in order to ensure their safeguarding and avoid erosion of the qualities and values of these sites;
- To establish temporary buffer zones around sites and historic areas where no constructions would be allowed and prevent illegal demolishing and building activities in the larger setting (archaeological sites and historic cities) by strengthening the capacity of local authorities in enforcing controls;
- To set up a cultural heritage police which should benefit from specific training and operational means to ensure effective prevention of illicit excavation, looting, theft and illicit export of cultural property;
- To update catalogues and national inventories of cultural objects (on the basis of comparative inventories), according to international standards;
- To collect information on missing cultural objects from catalogues, archives, inventories, and disseminating it among concerned institutions (INTERPOL, etc.) and auction houses with a view to stopping their further illicit circulation and favouring their return.

## **b) Fact finding mission**

The experts recommend that UNESCO will organize and dispatch as soon as possible a high-level fact-finding mission, as a first step for the preparation of a Plan of action. It would consist of UNESCO/ICCROM/ICOMOS/ICOM/ICA-IFLA/World Bank to address issues related to sites and historic buildings, museums, intangible cultural heritage, artefacts storages, archives, cultural institutions, social and economic issues. The organization of this mission shall draw upon the wealth of knowledge and updated information provided by the Libyan Department of Antiquities and by international institutions. The mission shall aim at:

- Advocating with the Libyan authorities, at the highest possible level, to ensure the importance of giving culture and heritage an adequate place in the future constitution and among the country's immediate priorities in the context of the recovery process, starting by the strengthening of the relevant national institutions capacity and the identification of the necessary budgetary allocations;
- Assessing and documenting the present state of movable and immovable cultural heritage, and identifying priority needs and opportunities concerning museums, libraries and archives, archaeological sites and historic buildings and monuments;
- Assessing the extent of illicit excavations and other possible threats to archaeological sites which lead to traffic in antiquities;
- Assessing and evaluating institutional frameworks, current needs of the personnel involved and the training requirements;
- Defining priorities and target emergency situations in cooperation with national professional personnel, to prepare and plan for the management and conservation of collections, monuments and sites.

## **c) Preliminary Plan of Action**

- To raise public awareness, notably through media, TV and education campaigns, on the importance of the protection of cultural heritage;
- To identify and conduct emergency trainings in key areas of need for the Department of Antiquities at senior and technical levels;
- To identify and implement, as soon as possible, a pilot rehabilitation project, preferably in a museum, which could be undertaken through twinning with other international museums, possibly from the region, providing both funding and technical expertise;
- To continue at a larger scale the updating of inventories of cultural property, movable and immovable;
- Foreign archaeological and scientific missions should be invited to return to Libya as soon as possible, but in a well-coordinated manner. They should, not resume archaeological excavations and research initiatives, but concentrate on assisting their Libyan counterparts to securing the sites, drawing an assessment of site conditions, producing inventories and cartographic documentation. In general, they should offer targeted training opportunities to contribute to the strengthening of the management capacity of the Libyan authorities.

### **III. MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS**

The experts recommend that the following actions (amongst many others which will notably be identified during the fact finding mission) will be taken:

- Develop and carry out capacity development and training activities at all levels;
- Prepare management plans for World Heritage sites, beginning with the site of Cyrene as a pilot project for training and development of tools to be then replicated in other sites;
- Conduct an assessment of available financial resources and develop a strategy for fund-raising;
- Develop awareness campaigns at different levels (civil society, youth and women, new media networks, local communities living close to the sites, etc.).

#### **a) Legal and institutional framework**

The experts recommend that the legal and institutional framework related to the protection and management of cultural heritage be strengthened through the following steps:

- Assess the legal instruments related to the protection of cultural heritage protection in view of the constitutional reform process, identify the gaps, and in particular consider expanding the current focus limited to antiquities and archaeology to other categories of sites, including historic cities, traditional human settlements and landscapes;
- Maintain, strengthen and efficiently implement the existing Libyan legislation on the protection of cultural heritage in order to better safeguard the sites and to fight against illicit traffic of such property removed from museums, libraries, archives, collections, archaeological sites and historic or traditional buildings;
- Reinforce the existing institutions responsible for cultural heritage, and in particular the Department of Antiquities, in all fields, notably through capacity-development and training programmes at all levels of management, in Libya and abroad.

#### **b) Coordination mechanism**

The experts recommend that coordination mechanisms be set up as soon as possible, in particular:

- To establish a Scientific Advisory Committee under UNESCO auspices, whose mandate would be to advise on the implementation of the Action Plan (with a flexible status, i.e. different from the existing International Coordination Committees);
- To create a web page devoted to the issue in order to consolidate the network of involved partners which would serve as an exchange tool among all those concerned, facilitate the coordination of efforts and avoid duplication;
- To organize, preferably in Libya, an international conference for the rehabilitation of the cultural heritage of Libya, to present the Action Plan, establish partnerships and raise funds.