

WARSAW DECLARATION

'Culture - Memory - Identities'

Losses of documentary heritage through natural and man-made disasters have made many societies all over the world particularly sensitive to the value of this particular type of heritage as well as to the need to ensure its safety. The importance of protecting documentary heritage from risks and threats was the direct stimulus for creating the Memory of the World Programme (MoW) in 1992 and inaugurating its operation in 1993 in Pułtusk, in Poland.

1. Documentary heritage, in all its diversity, is an important part of the heritage of humankind, as a record of information, as a collection of sources of history and artistic expression, and as an important part of recorded collective memory including orally transmitted tradition. Documentary heritage is of particular importance, as it allows the memory of different cultures and communities to be maintained and remains a lasting source for the history of societies and nations as well as for civilization change. Documentary heritage is of particular importance for social cohesion, as it constitutes the necessary basis for dialogue, building respect and mutual understanding in relations between different civilizations, societies and social groups. It contributes in an important manner to understanding and recognition of the value of cultural diversity.

2. Memory recorded in the documentary heritage is an irreplaceable way of transmitting tradition and historical awareness, which are important components in processes of identity affirmation, as well as for mutual understanding and dialogue between various social groups held together by community bonds.

3. The Memory of the World Registers have popularized knowledge about documentary heritage in all its cultural and semantic diversity and in all its forms, thus encouraging better understanding of other societies and cultures. By listing significant items, MoW Registers help to reduce risks and threats to documentary heritage and promote the need for continued protection, as well as an appreciation of its social value. The Registers encompass documentary records from all continents, from many communities, preserved in diverse formats.

4. The Memory of the World Programme is increasing awareness of the need to preserve, disseminate and facilitate access to items, fonds and collections of documentary heritage. Assistance in consolidating dispersed collections, support for scientific research and emergency support in case of holdings at risk should be given special consideration.

5. The documentary heritage of humankind is not sufficiently preserved owing to the absence of proper care, impact of natural and man-made disasters or lack of social and political stability. This should be the stimulus for further developing the Memory of the World Programme and its activities with the aim of:

- further strengthening the role of the Memory of the World as the main UNESCO programme in the domains of preservation, accessibility and promotion of documentary heritage in all forms;
- achieving the same status for documentary heritage as is already enjoyed by other elements of the heritage of humankind;
- encouraging UNESCO Member States to reinforce and further enhance the level of their commitment to the protection and promotion of documentary heritage;
- encouraging UNESCO Member States to enter into, and strengthen, bilateral and regional cooperation within the framework of the Memory of the World Programme;
- encouraging NGOs (CCAAA, ICA, ICOM, IFLA) to play a full part in the Memory of the World Programme because they may offer an important source of expertise and cultural diversity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fourth International UNESCO Memory of the World Conference, with some seventy one (71) countries represented from all regions, advocates the continued expansion of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme by:

- working to increase public understanding of the role of the Programme, particularly in relation to other UNESCO heritage protection initiatives such as the World Heritage and the Intangible Heritage Conventions, so that the Programme's mission and role in documentary heritage protection may be better understood and promoted;
- working towards the promotion and extension of the Programme in cultural and geographical areas that are under-represented in the International Register of UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme;
- further recognizing the importance of transmitting the value of documentary heritage to the younger generation by, for example, establishing Memory of the World Studies in universities and other institutions of higher education;
- supporting training programmes to facilitate the process of nominating to a UNESCO Memory of the World Register as well as fostering other capacity-building initiatives;
- identifying opportunities for transnational and transcontinental partnerships in preservation initiatives, so that the available expertise may be best utilised in situations where the lack of resources, both human and financial, threatens to endanger documentary heritage;
- seeking further opportunities for developing cooperation between the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme and the World Digital Library, and other projects and organizations concerned with documentary heritage, so that strong networks may be established, assistance be provided, and the worldwide profile of the Programme be raised;
- recognizing that, while great advances have been made in cross-sectoral cooperation within the Programme, further opportunities for cooperation should be explored and greater collaboration be pursued, including in the area of joint nominations;
- seeking financial and other support from private sector bodies for the operations of the Programme, particularly from those working within the area of documentary heritage and the digitization of information, and

- examining ways and means strengthening the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme in order to make it more sustainable;

Urges all Member States to:

- recognize the role and value of documentary heritage of all kinds in the formation of cultural, national and other identities;
- encourage the creation of Memory of the World Committees, where these do not exist, in cooperation with National Commissions for UNESCO;
- provide governmental support for the work of the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme within individual Member States, and to support the work of the Programme within UNESCO;
- examine ways and means of strengthening the Memory of the World Programme; and
- work towards strengthening the links between the Memory of the World Registers and the World Digital Library, and other similar initiatives;

Urges the Director-General of UNESCO to:

- acknowledge that the increasing profile and success of the Memory of the World Programme has led to a significantly higher workload for the MoW Secretariat;
- provide sufficient resources to the Secretariat to allow the work of the Programme to be carried out effectively;
- contribute to the preservation of the digital memory of humanity through awareness-raising initiatives and furthering promotion of the UNESCO Charter for the Preservation of Digital Heritage;
- encourage the participation of international and regional NGOs, all Member States and IGOs;

Encourages participating NGOs (CCAAA, ICA, ICOM, IFLA) to:

- increase their efforts to raise the profile of MoW in their global networks;
- identify suitable experts to participate in the operation of the Programme at all levels;
- organize training in the application process, especially in regions currently under-represented in the MoW Registers.

Drafted on the occasion of the Fourth International UNESCO Memory of the World Conference (Warsaw, 18-21 May 2011) which brought together experts from 71 countries from all parts of the world.