



Africa Regional Meeting on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage Yenagoa, Nigeria 11th -12th November, 2013

UNESCO and the Nigerian Ministry of Tourism, Culture and National Orientation organized the African Regional Meeting on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage in Yenagoa, Nigeria on 11th -12th November, 2013.

This experts' meeting, attended by 17 countries' representatives and international underwater cultural heritage experts, addressed current issues regarding the protection and research of underwater cultural heritage, and evaluated its potentials for development, education, and tourism in the African sub-regions. Participating were the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Nigeria as well as UNESCO Offices in Abuja and Windhoek.

Experts attending the meeting decided to adopt the following Action Plan with the objective of mapping the lines of action necessary to create the setting for better safeguarding and management of underwater cultural heritage and fully appreciate its developmental potentials.

Action Plan

Taking into account the current situation and the initiatives undertaken in Africa in the past period regarding the underwater cultural heritage safeguarding and management in the framework of the UNESCO 2001 Convention;

The experts attending the African Regional Meeting on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage held in Yenagoa, Nigeria on 11th-12th November, 2013, wish to:

1. Strongly encourage countries:
 - a. to ratify the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage and encourage the full implementation of the Convention by countries, which are already States Parties to the Convention;
 - b. adapt their national laws to reflect the provisions of the UNESCO 2001 Convention;
 - c. record and document underwater cultural heritage through surveying and mapping, and developing a uniform and systematic approach to an underwater cultural heritage database;
 - d. build capacity in underwater archaeology or get reliable, scientific and ethical advice;

- e. Strengthen public education on underwater cultural heritage and build on it as a means to strengthen local, national and regional identity; and to
 - f. Prevent the pillage of their underwater cultural heritage, especially by the implementation of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, in countries that have already ratified the Convention.
2. Welcome the decision of the Nigerian authorities to establish an underwater cultural heritage center in Yenagoa aimed at the safeguarding of this heritage and at the training of experts in conformity with the provisions of the 2001 Convention.
 3. Strongly encourage sub-regional economic organizations, such as CAAS, EAC, ECOWAS, SADC and indeed AU, to recognize the need for cooperation and to ensure the region's commitment towards the implementation of the 2001 Convention.
4. Calls on
 - a. The UNESCO Secretariat to help African States to reinforce the application of the 2001 Convention, by producing explanative documents, supporting capacity-building and offering technical assistance;
 - b. The UNESCO Secretariat to raise awareness within the African countries of the relevance and benefits of ratifying the 2001 Convention;
 - c. The participating States to organize capacity building programmes, both formal and informal, for African experts;
 - d. Government agencies to create appropriate employment positions for underwater heritage experts;
 - e. Government agencies to survey, map and inventorize underwater cultural heritage and to protect it legally through the application of the 2001 Convention and the harmonization of national laws.
 5. Welcomes the offer made by Kenya in collaboration with UNESCO to host the next Regional Meeting on Underwater Cultural Heritage and underline that this meeting shall offer the opportunity to review, in a very practical manner, aspects of the implementation of the 2001 Convention and the implementation of the action areas recommended in this Action Plan;