



International seminar on “Heritage, identity and culture: management of sites and places of memory related to the slave trade and slavery”

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Concept paper

The conservation and enhancement of the heritage related to the slave trade and slavery, now recognized as a crime against humanity, has become an important issue in the countries and regions that were affected by this tragedy. The role that this heritage could play in fulfilling the duty to remember, educating young people, reflecting on national identities and promoting social cohesion has made it necessary to inventory, conserve and restore the sites and places where these tragic events took place. As a result, a few decades ago, some countries began to introduce routes of memory, in order to inscribe this devastating period of history in their national geography and collective memory. These initiatives drew inspiration from the holistic approach developed by UNESCO through its various conventions on the natural and cultural heritage (adopted in 1972, 2003 and 2005) which developed a set of essential principles for the protection and promotion of the tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage, the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions and the development of cultural industries in all their forms.

These initiatives are also a response to the expectations of the peoples most affected, who wish to reclaim the sites and places related to this memory, to contribute towards transforming them into routes of memory and to participate in their management. In addition, these activities realize some of the goals of UNESCO's Slave Route project and the Palmares Cultural Foundation, which seek to promote for educational purposes the tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage connected with this tragedy, notably through the listing, conservation and restoration of the sites and places in question. This seminar meets the recommendations of the Ibero-American Summit held in Salvador de Bahia in November 2011 and is part of the preparation of the action plan for international decade for people of African descent (2013-2022) which is to be proclaimed by the United Nations.

After several decades of reflection on the subject and experience on the ground, it is necessary to assess the efforts and initiatives that have been undertaken in different regions of the world. In particular, there is a need to identify good practices and build on achievements in order to strengthen the capacities of those wishing to develop “memory tourism” along these routes.

The international seminar aims then to address these concerns. It brings together professionals working to preserve and promote sites of memory related to slavery, decision-makers involved in developing public policy on the subject and researchers who have studied the issue, to discuss their experiences and share their expertise. The main objectives are to

analyze good practices in the field, identify new approaches and set clear courses of action for the development of a guide and training modules to facilitate the establishment of routes of memory, thereby strengthening the capacities of the managers in charge of these routes. The seminar provides a useful opportunity for these managers to meet and discuss possible cooperation.

The meeting brings together participants from different regions of the world (Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and Europe) to present and compare experiences and expertise gained in this area in different countries and to come up with innovative approaches to managing routes of memory that will benefit the local people concerned. This will be achieved in the following way.

- Creation of a conceptual and methodological guide for cultural managers to facilitate the development of “community-based memory tourism” around the sites, places, monuments, museums, and so on related to this tragedy.
- Development and dissemination of training modules for the retraining of memory tourism professionals, in order to make better use of the natural and cultural heritage connected with this tragedy through sustainable tourism development.
- Creation of an international network of managers of sites of memory, allowing them to continue the process of reflection, to work with one another and to contribute towards implementing the recommendations from the seminar.
- Promotion of inclusive development projects which are adapted to the specific characteristics of the sites and places of memory concerned and help local stakeholders to familiarize themselves with the new participative model of site management.
- Development of teaching materials for educating the general public, and women and young people, in particular, so as to improve their knowledge of their traditions and cultural wealth through the human, cultural and heritage values of the sites and through capacity building within grassroots communities to ensure the transmission of knowledge and skills derived from the slave trade and slavery.

To this end, the following themes are addressed during the discussions:

- cultural tourism and sustainable development;
- “memory tourism”: specific features and new approaches;
- memory, identity and international and national reconciliation;
- role of community museums.