UNESCO Slave Route Project: Resistance, Liberty, Heritage

Meeting of the international Scientific Committee (ISC)

Le Meridien Hotel, Pointe aux Piments (Republic of Mauritius),
27 - 29 November 2017

FINAL REPORT

by:
Ms Sonjah N. Stanley Niaah (Jamaica) and Charles S.C. Akibode (Cabo Verde): Rapporteurs
MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE OF THE SLAVE ROUTE PROJECT: RESISTANCE, LIBERTY, FREEDOM

Members Present:

Mr Ali Moussa Iye, Chief, History and Memory for Dialogue section, UNESCO
Prof. Nelly R. Schmidt, France (President of Committee)

1. Mr Milton Guran (Milton Roberto Ribeiro Monteiro) Brazil
2. Mr Charles S. C. Akibode Cabo Verde
3. Assoc Prof. Michele A. Johnson Canada
4. Dr Rina Cáceres Gómez Costa Rica
5. Dr Samuel Régulus Haïti
6. Dr Sonjah N. Stanley Niaah Jamaica
7. Prof. Chapurukha Kusimba Kenya
8. Assoc Prof. Vijaya Teelock Mauritius
9. Mr Abubakar Babajo Sani Nigeria
10. Dr Ignacio Telesca Paraguay
11. Mr Doudou N. Diene Senegal
12. Prof. Abdi M. Kusow Somalia
13. Prof. Alex van Stipriaan Luïsciús The Netherlands
14. Prof. Salah Trabelsi Tunisia
15. Prof Jane L. Landers United States of America

Absent

1. Dr Joel Quirk Australia
2. Sir Hilary McDonald Beckles Barbados
3. Prof. Ana Lucia Araujo Brazil
4. Dr Gerardo Maloney Panama
5. Prof. Aurelia Martin Casares Spain
DAY 1: November 27, 2017

Welcome to Committee Members and Guests
Mr Ali Moussa-lye welcomed Members of the Committee and guests.

Introduction of the Committee Members
Members of the Committee were invited to introduce themselves to the meeting.

1. Organization of the work of the Scientific Committee

1.1 Presentation of the members of the Committee

New members were introduced to the meeting and reported on the work conducted in line with objectives of the SRP.

1.2 Presentation of the statutes of the Committee and the rules of procedure

   a) The Committee is to advise UNESCO on matters of multidisciplinary work and partnerships that may include matters of slavery, cultural institution and promotion of activities etcetera.

   b) Committee members’ terms of service is renewed biennially and serve for two terms. During this time members are to be ambassadors of the project and inform partners of existent projects and work of the project.

   c) The Committee members should seek to set up a national committee in their own country, having the same mandate as the ISC; this is a parallel role to the ISC. This creates national consensus with representatives of academic, and national government and civil society to achieve national, and by extension, international objectives and work.

   d) There are currently 19 national committees of which some are dormant, and others have disappeared. A few are in the process of being revived. However, the relevant authorities have to be sensitized to set up committees.

Recommendation:

Mr Doudou Diene stated that the ISC/SRP must have international impact. He stated that the situation in Libya demonstrated clearly the fact that slavery is today still a problem, with contemporary iterations and the continuity of the issue from past to present. He noted that the ISC/SRP has a responsibility to build awareness and consensus for action. Based on the foregoing, it was decided that the ISC would issue a statement from Mauritius regarding Libya. This statement would also refer to the statement on reparations from the Cape Verde meeting. It was also recommended that the meeting take into account the developments in Latin America, including Mexico and Peru where Haitian migrants for example are also abused.
1.3 Election of the new Bureau of the Committee:

Five new members were presented to the Committee including the designation of a new president. The Bureau now consists of the following members:

- **President** Associate Prof. Vijaya Teelock – Mauritius
- **Vice-President** Dr Rina Cáceres Gómez – Costa Rica
- **Vice-President** Mr Milton Guran – Brazil
- **Vice-President** Prof. Salah Trabelsi – Tunisia
- **Rapporteur** Mr Charles S. C. Akibode – Cabo Verde
- **Rapporteur** Dr Sonjah Stanley Niaah – Jamaica

The incoming Chair - Vijaya Teelock - assumed duties and proceeded to chair the remainder of the meeting.

2. **Presentation of the activities of the Slave Route Project (November 2015 – 2017) - Ali Moussa Iye**

2.1 **Financial aspects**

Ali Moussa-Iye reported that the SRP had suffered from budget constrictions. In addition, UNESCO was facing an unprecedented financial crisis. Extra-budgetary funds for projects such as ‘General History of Africa’ were very low. However, there was positive response regarding in-kind support, which resulted, for example, in the staging of the meeting in Mauritius and support to other meetings of the Committee of the SRP. In 2018/19, focus would be placed on addressing limited resources by identifying sponsors/foundations and accessing government financing.

2.2 **Activities of the Slave Route Project**

Ali Moussa Iye stated that he had observed that there was new dynamism emerging as a result of the International Decade for People of African Descent (IDPAD), and the SRP should actively engage with it and give advice where necessary. Attention should also be given to the local municipal council and civil society. Within the context of the Decade, there were examples of positive developments in the form of film projects such as "The Birth of a Nation" directed by Nate Parker and "Twelve Years a Slave" by Solomon Northup.

Members of the ISC were then offered copies of the 10-year agenda for the Decade to be used to plan for activities at the national level around significant dates, and to allow the SRP to contribute to the spread of activities in major languages across the world. The *Guide for Managers of the Sites of Memory*, a compilation of the experiences of site managers over 10 years of work was almost complete. Ali Moussa Iye indicated that the guide would be launched during the meeting and an online version of the guide would be forthcoming.

Many other activities need to be initiated in the context of the International Decade and it was noted that a representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – Mr Mactar Ndoye, with oversight for the activities of the Decade was present in the Statutory Meeting.
2.2.1 Activities and publications

The following activities were initiated or completed:

a) ‘Legacies of Slavery: A Handbook for Managers of Sites and Itineraries of Memory’ was almost complete.
b) The label ‘Site of Memory associated to the Slave Route’ of UNESCO was awarded to the sites of Valongo, November 2013 (Brazil); Cartagena, May 2016 (Colombia) and Guadeloupe, December 2014;
c) International Conference on the International Decade for People of African Descent was held in September 2016;
d) Preparation of a collective Book ‘Slave Trade, Slavery and Abolitions: Plural Perspectives’ was in progress;
e) International Coalition of artists for The General History of Africa (October 2014);
f) International Conference on the psychological consequences of slavery held in Martinique, October 2016;
g) American universities such as Georgetown proposed to establish scholarships for Afro-descendants and to change the names of buildings. Georgetown University was interested in collaborating with UNESCO to define guidelines for teaching slavery in schools;
h) An international seminar on ‘New approaches in Interpreting and representing Slavery in Museums and Sites’ is to be held in March 2018 in partnership with Thomas Jefferson Foundation, US/ICOMOS and the University of Virginia;
i) The Film ‘The Birth of a Nation’ was screened in Paris, January 2017 followed by a debate at UNESCO;
j) Discussions are being held with the government of Benin to host a SRP conference in 2018 or 2019.

3. Presentation of the activities of the members of the International Scientific Committee (annexed)

A collective report on activities of ISC’s members over 2015 – 2017 prepared by the Chair of the Committee was circulated in the meeting. The following were highlighted:

- Participation in national and international Conferences, debates, round tables: Ali Moussa Iye, Doudou Diene, Samuel Regulus, Nelly Schmidt Abdi Kusow, Abubakar Babajo;
- Participation in digitization projects, archaeological excavations, scientific research, inscription to the world heritage site: Jane Landers, Vijayalakshmi Teelock, Rina Cáceres, Charles Akibode;
- Government was creating a census category for People of African descent: Ignacio Telesca;
- Publications on ‘Bois Caiman’ in Haiti, Protestant religion and organization of conference on consequences of slavery in Haiti: Samuel Regulus;
  A documentary on Afro-Caribbean immigration into Central America is being created: Rina Caceres Gomez;
- Maritime Archaeology Project in Cape Verde under the title ‘Riches of the Sea’ to excavate slave ships on the ocean floor around Cape Verde, over the next 10 years. This is to include exhibitions and research on the memory of slavery. Within the project, work is to be done on spiritual tourism: Charles Akibode;
- It was decided that SRP would support the Mauritius’ Ministry of Culture (Mauritius) for a National Museum on Slavery and African Diaspora;
- The *Telling Memories* programme bringing youth from the community to be taught on African Diaspora over two weeks known as the 'Tubman model' proved to be a success and was being adopted by others. A publication is planned: *Michele Johnson*;
- Report on the successful Decade activities so far in the Netherlands. Work is under way to build a slavery museum, there is need for official support. Also support needed for Maroon Research Center in Suriname and Maroon Saamaka Museum in Suriname. Research and capacity building project Travelling Caribbean Heritage in Dutch Caribbean: *Alex van Stipriaan*;
- The Project entitled 'Africa on 'Stage': Black Atlantic Cities of Performance encyclopedia project has started. Documenting performance as enabler of social transformation and consequences of performance when hindered in historical as well as contemporary contexts: *Sonjah Stanley Niaah*;
- French publication on human rights is under way: *Nelly Schmidt*.

**Resolution:**

Members agreed to prepare a one-page summary of projects to be compiled for IDPAD work plan to be executed by the ISC. These individual and/or collaborative projects should also indicate funding status and attempts to acquire funding.

4. **Presentation of the collective work of the Scientific Committee “Slave Trade and Slavery: A Plural Perspective”**

- The publication is coordinated by Nelly Schmidt and Paul Lovejoy: texts were completed and the editing was being finalized;
- 19 contributions on various topics dealing with slavery such slavery in ancient Egypt and East Africa, the Haitian dream, modern slavery, the reparations movement are included, among others.

**Recommendation:**

A list of projects on the question of reparations is required; the resolution from Cape Verde on reparations was to produce a text consistent with previous direction of the ISC for the project.

5. **Discussions on the Contribution of the Slave Route Project and the Scientific Committee to the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024)**

5.1 **Work plan**

Discussion on the work plan for the ISCSRP in respect of the International Decade reaped the following for which submissions were to be made to Mr Mactar Ndoye for approach to the European Union.

5.1.1 **Slavery, Digitisation, Preservation and Memory**

- This includes negotiation with Trimble Foundation; Monticello/Jefferson Foundation.
- Vijaya Teelock proposed collaborative projects related to museums on Indian Ocean slavery and slave trade through the SLAFNET (Slavery in Africa network).
- Ali Moussa-Iye indicated that a representative of Mauritius and other relevant countries should be present at the 3-day meeting in USA 19-22 March 2018. This was being organised to explore new approaches to represent slavery in museums and sites

Coordinator: *Jane Landers*
5.1.2 African and Diasporic Identity, Expressive and Performeative Cultures

- It was decided that the ‘Expressive Cultures’ project submitted for a SSHRC grant would be revised and would include Canada/Nigeria/Central America/USA/ Coordinator: Michele Antoinette Johnson, Sonjah Stanley Niaah.

5.1.3 Contemporary Forms of Slavery and Migration

- Fundamentalism, slavery in Libya, etc. Fundraising required to study this very significant phenomenon was necessary, especially in Africa including Kenya, Somalia, Nigeria, Niger and Djibouti. The same phenomenon appears in other forms within Panama, Colombia, Mexico, Canada, USA, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Haiti, Chile.
- Must involve the International Organization of Migration. Global analysis in concert with historical perspective importance.
- Alex agreed to put Dutch colleagues working on similar projects for EU funding in touch with relevant ISC members.
- Samuel indicated migration was now a major area for research regarding Haitian migration, flow to countries such as Canada, and now Chile with cut-off from USA on the entry of Donald Trump to office; labour abuses and social discrimination. This was deemed something to be researched including aspects where Canada for e.g. was sending envoys to stop Haitians entering Canadian borders and discrimination toward people of African descent more so than other categories of refugees. There was a suggestion to go with a pilot project here at the exploratory level and then expand a first phase to East Africa / West Africa converged into the middle east region and then secondly Central America with offshoot into Canada and the Pacific coast with Chile.
- There was also the suggestion to have a conference on this area and Vijaya Teelock indicated there was indeed one planned in Mauritius on Contemporary forms of slavery in April 2018. For such a conference as a means of intervention there was need for reflection and the suggestion to seek funding from Qatar, which has had an interest in slavery was raised.
- Michele Johnson stated that there was an urgency regarding the racist immigration policies in a context where countries such as Canada have been complicitous in the devastation and social conditions in Haiti.
- There was lengthy discussion on this and it was agreed that a declaration on contemporary forms of slavery would be drafted. Coordinator: Abdi Kusow and Abubakar Babajo.

5.1.4 Slavery, Education and New Pedagogy

- It was reported that a project was being developed with Georgetown University on this; the government of Panama was also pushing to pilot new teaching on slavery as reported by Rina, and Nelly agreed to draft and to include Indian Ocean.
- Finally, an International Conference on museums will take place from 19 to 22 March 2018 in Virginia, USA. Coordinator: Nelly Schmidt and Rina Caceres Gomez.

5.1.5 Labour, Land Rights and Economic and Social Legacies of Slavery

- Alex, Milton, Vijaya, Michele, Chapurukha;
- Ali Moussa Iye mentioned that there was a colleague working on land grabbing in Afro Nova Scotia, Canada; Kenya, Brazil, Mauritius to be included.
5.1.5 Reparations

A full discussion on this activity was deferred as activities should be guided by the Cape Verde reparations resolution. Hilary Beckles would be asked to coordinate this activity cluster. It was agreed that being an important dimension of the ISC's work, the details regarding preparation of a one-page outline for the project were to be transmitted to Prof. Beckles.

Coordinator: Hilary McDonald Beckles (TBC)

5.2 Collaboration with Mormons

Mr Ali Moussa Iye also presented a proposal for collaboration with the Mormons on the digitization of the genealogy of the people of African descent. The ISC advised not to engage in such partnership as many members expressed strong concerns related to access and quality of digitization, lack of information about the project's overall aim, training level of personnel, profile of stakeholders or investigators, the treatment of the data and, especially on the protection of personal data.

5.3 Mr Mactar Ndoye, representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights informed the meeting that there was commitment to achieve the following:

- Fundraising especially to follow-up on the voluntary contribution of Russia;
- Organization of a regional conference for Europe, Central Asia and South America;
- Publication of works; including collaborative projects (teaching of the General history of Africa), promotion projects (Software on the places of memory; Cartography of the places of memory), among others.

6. Proposals of priority activities to be carried out for 2018-2019

It was noted that the SRP had limited resources but the following priority areas were to be reiterated:

- **Preparation of a Guide on new approaches to representing slavery in museums and sites:** As a priority activity, it would be necessary to reflect on the representations of slavery in museums, how to talk about the history of slavery in museums, but also to rethink the implementation of an itinerary of memory. Development of a guide for museums was necessary in the 2018-2019 period. An international seminar will be held in March by UNESCO in partnership with the Thomas Jefferson Foundation, US/ICOMOS;

- **Preparation of a Guide to new approaches to teaching slavery:** It was recognized that a rethink of the manuals and new ways to teach slavery were necessary, including information and forms of disclosures/divulgences. It was reported that a number of Universities which have been built on plantation / by slaves or with legacies of slavery were interested in partnerships including Georgetown University, which expressed interest in a partnership to finance an International Conference.

- **Training sessions for managers of sites of memory:** the curriculum of training would take place in five sessions to be organized in partnership with key stakeholders.
DAY 2: 28 November 2017

7. Mobilization of funds and partnerships for the Slave Route Project

The across-the-board cuts in global support at UNESCO was an area of concern. The ISC was asked to consider new sources of funding, and new partnerships.

a) Many possible partnerships have been identified:

- MELLON FOUNDATION, USA, with Earl Lewis as President, interested by the valorization of the history of slavery in the State of Colorado;
- TRAMBLE (TRUMBLE) COMPANY, USA, interested to provide technical assistance, by recognition by drone for example, for the development of sites of memory of slavery in the World Heritage List;
- VOLKSWAGEN FOUNDATION, GERMANY;
- ACADIA FOUNDATION, CANADA.

b) Other ideas have also been expressed/generated

- The creation of an Endowment Fund
- The creation of a crowdfunding initiative for the SRP
- Solicit works of art from great artists for an auction as part of a funding campaign
- The creation of a Funding Committee with renowned artists and Emeritus professors for fundraising and approach the communities of afro-descendants

However, it was noted that many constraints existed with acceptance of funding support within UNESCO: UNESCO is an intergovernmental organization and because of the complexities of the tax laws could not receive money from an American benefactor for example.

8. Revitalization of the International Network of managers of Sites of Memory

A presentation by Mathieu Dussauge on the work this Network established in 2012 was made. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation had proposed in 2013 that a website for this Network be established but it does not have enough visibility. Indeed, it is difficult to find the project on Google.

Many other actions have been attempted to make the Network visible including with schools in Martinique and Guadeloupe. A symposium was held in 2014 in Guadeloupe on the training of managers. A new logo “Sites of memory associated to the Slave Route” was created and criteria defined. There is a need to rethink tools of communication and diffusion in order to rejuvenate the International Network on Managers Memory Sites of Slavery.


At the end of the meeting of the ISC, a public conference took place on 29 November at the University of Mauritius on the "Contemporary Issues Around Slavery: Legacy, Memory and Identity." Panel themes included Legacies, Preserving and representing the slave past; Archaeology, Memory and Representation.

Resolutions:

Following the intense discussion on contemporary manifestations of slavery, it was agreed that a resolution be drafted highlighting the sordid attacks to human rights and dignity in Maghreb, and to alert UNESCO, the Arab League, African Union and European Union about
the gravity of these resurgences of slavery. There is need to clarify the articulation of historical links/contexts and concerns about convergence of historical slave routes with contemporary ones and with similar economic impetus (which did not end with emancipation). For the preparation of the Declaration, suggestions were made to include international conventions that are relevant and the importance of museums to address these questions. Attention must be given to the cause and importance of museums as spaces to generate dialogue, research and preservation objectives, as they exhibit the trade, enslavement, resistance in the history and its present day legacies in the region. The Final Declaration was to be sent to the rapporteurs for inclusion in the meeting notes.

Rapporteurs: Sonjah Stanley Niaah and Charles S.C. Akibode