

**Preface:** The **Shenzhen Declaration on Museums and Collections (2016)** was adopted by the UNESCO's High-Level Forum on Museums, Shenzhen, People's Republic of China, 10-12 November, 2016.



The UNESCO high level forum was an opportunity for museum leaders to discuss how best to embrace social change resulting in a far-reaching declaration addressing diversity, urbanization, migration and the preservation and sharing of the heritage of humanity. The location of the conference in Shenzhen was meaningful: a new city that grew from 30,000 to more than 10 million residents in 45 years as a special economic zone trading with the world and neighbouring Hong Kong. It was very moving to visit the Shenzhen museum which has exhibits on the building of the city - a great example of “contemporary collecting” because they displayed clothing and blankets and household items from the early city residents in the 1980s. (Shun Hing Square, also known as Diwang Dasha, is the second highest skyscraper in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, China.)

The **High Level Forum on Museums** (in Chinese: 世界博物馆高峰论坛) was established by UNESCO to bring policy makers and the global museum community together to advance the role of museums in generating social, cultural, educational and economic benefits, which is at the heart of UNESCO's 2015 Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society. Its inaugural meeting was

held in Shenzhen, China, from 9 to 12 November 2016.

The **Forum** was co-organized with the National Commission of People's Republic of China to UNESCO, Shenzhen Municipality, ZHIZHENG Art Museum (in Chinese: 深圳博物馆) and the State Administration for Cultural Heritage (SACH) of China. More than 200 guests including curators, researchers and representatives from all around the world attended the forum. The **Forum** was a major opportunity to help the museum community craft much needed tools to address critical issues. The Shenzhen Declaration calls on all stakeholders to enhance the role and capacities of museums in protecting cultural heritage, adopting ethical and technological standards and developing cooperation at the international level. It also encourages the full implementation of the 2015 UNESCO Recommendation and explores the possibility of a global museum report. It furthermore invites UNESCO and ICOM to explore the possibility of publishing a global museum report. The Shenzhen Declaration was drafted in collaboration with ICOM and encompasses ICOM's vision and ethical approach.

Director-General Irina Bokova at UNESCO's High-Level Forum on Museums held in Shenzhen, People's Republic of China, from 10 to 12 November, 2016, declared,

“Museums are cutting-edge laboratories of our shared humanity – to protect our heritage, to catalyse new creativity, to help us capture the complexity of our world.”

In a message addressed to the participants, President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China, declared that *“museums are bridges that link our past to the present and future.”* Ms Liu Yandong, Vice Premier of the People's Republic of China, opened the High Level Forum and reaffirmed the many functions of museums in modern societies, stating *“the museum of today is not only an institute for collections, protection, research and display of cultural heritage, but also one for providing public cultural services and social education.”* She recalled that China's 4,692 museums host over 200,000 educational activities every year, and noted that the vitality of museums today requires technical support.

On this occasion, ICOM Director of Programmes and Partnerships, France Desmarais, participated in a panel dedicated to *“Illicit trafficking of cultural property: the importance of documentation, inventories, authentication”*. ICOM Vice-President, Alberto Garlandini, was also invited to present the ICOM Code of Ethics, during a panel dedicated to *“Ethical Standards of Museum Professionals”*. Other ICOM members, such as Carlos Brandao, member of ICOM's executive board and former Chair of ICOM Brazil, Dorota Folga Januszewska, Chair of ICOM Poland, Chedlia Annabi, former Chair of ICOM Arab, and Jean-Paul Koudougou, former

Chair of ICOM Burkina Faso, were also present.

Museums stand at the crossroads of several social challenges today, as a source of jobs and revenues at the heart of the creative economy, fostering a sense of belonging and social cohesion, and as key drivers of international cooperation. They are on the front-line of the fight against illicit trafficking in cultural property and are primary targets in times of conflict. Markus Hilgert, Director, Ancient Near East Museum Pergamonmuseum (Germany), called for museums to *“take the lead, within their communities, in creating resilient networks of cultural heritage protection.”* Emily Rafferty, President Emerita, The Metropolitan Museum of Art (USA) gave the example of the thousands of New York citizens visiting the MET in the aftermath of 9/11 to highlight the power of museums as unifying forces able to foster a sense of belonging.

The **Forum** was a major opportunity to help the museum community craft much needed tools to address critical issues. The **Shenzhen Declaration on Museums and Collections** (in Chinese: 深圳博物馆宣言, 深圳博物馆宣言) calls on all stakeholders to enhance the role and capacities of museums in protecting cultural heritage, adopting ethical and technological standards, and developing cooperation at the international level. It also encourages the full implementation of the **2015 UNESCO Recommendation** and explores the possibility of a global museum report. Going forward, the Forum will serve as an advisory body to the Director-General, who called for innovative cooperation to promote museums and to reduce inequalities among them.

In the margin of the **Forum** the Director-General had bilateral meetings with Minister of Education Mr Chen Baosheng, to discuss the state of cooperation with China, including the links between educational and cultural policies and the role of culture for sustainable development, for which China is one of UNESCO’s strongest advocates.

The Director-General also visited the UNESCO Center of Innovation on Higher Education at the University of Science and Technology of South of China. The visit took place in the presence of the Director of the Center, Mr Li Ming, and the Vice-mayor of Shenzhen and member of the governing board of the Center, Ms Wu Yihuan.

## Shenzhen Declaration on Museums and Collections (2016)



Participants in the UNESCO High-level Forum on Museums and the forum's staff pose for a picture after the forum closed Saturday.

The UNESCO High-level Forum on Museums closed Saturday morning in Shenzhen. The UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova pointed out at the closing ceremony that the forum aims to implement the 2015 Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society. The Closing ceremony of the **Forum** was held in the presence of Mr Chen Baosheng, Minister of Education of the People's Republic of China, Vice-Minister Hao Ping, President of the National Commission, Mayor Xu Qin of Shenzhen City, Mr Khaled El Enany, Minister of Antiquities of Egypt and Mr WU Fuqing, Board Chairman, Director of the ZHIZHENG Art Museum, as well as directors and representatives of the world's most important museums.

Museums serve more purposes than just collection, as it is a place where people can learn about other cultures and histories, said Bokova. In recent years, China has become the nation with the most new museums. Museums serve as an important platform for China's development, she said.

Minister of Education Chen Baosheng announced the closure of the **UNESCO High-level Forum on Museums**. He said that UNESCO is one of the most important international organizations. China has always been a staunch supporter and a key partner of UNESCO. The success of the **UNESCO High-level Forum on Museums** marks a new level in cooperation. Chen sincerely hopes that all countries can cooperate in the museum industry to contribute

to a wide diffusion of culture.

Shenzhen Mayor Xu Qin said at the closing ceremony that it was such an honor for Shenzhen, the UNESCO Creative City for Design, to host this forum. *“Thanks to UNESCO, the National Commission of the People’s Republic of China for UNESCO, and the State Administration of Cultural Heritage for your trust in this rising city,”* said Xu. Shenzhen will commit to greater and sustained international cooperation, Xu said, with an emphasis on museum operation, collection and research. He added that Shenzhen would continue to work toward the education of human civilization.

The **“Shenzhen Declaration on Museums and Collections”** was adopted and published at the closing ceremony. The **Declaration** calls on all stakeholders to:

Enhance the role and capacities of museums in protecting cultural heritage,

Adopt ethical and technological standards, and

Develop cooperation at the international level.

The **Declaration** also encourages the full implementation of the 2015 UNESCO Recommendation and explores the possibility of a global museum report.

The **Declaration** includes 24 calls to action for museums and stakeholders related to four themes:

Diversity of museums and collections, and their operational modalities.

Role of museums in the protection of heritage in times of peace and conflict.

Responsibilities of museums – ethical, professional and technological standards for museums and professionals and community engagement.

Greater national and international cooperation.

The **Declaration** strongly promotes the diversity of collections. It reconfirms museums as expert institutions that contribute to heritage protection. Additionally, it underlines the moral obligation and capacity of museums to counter illicit trafficking in cultural objects. The

**Declaration** encourages museums to adopt a rigorous code of ethics and to develop, where possible, cooperative projects.

Category

Declaration

Date

10-12 November, 2016.

### *Promulgation*

The UNESCO's High-Level Forum on Museums, Shenzhen, People's Republic of China, 10-12 November, 2016.

### *Descriptions*


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### *Source*

 [http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/BPI/EPA/images/media\\_services/Director-General/Shenzhen-DeclarationENG.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/BPI/EPA/images/media_services/Director-General/Shenzhen-DeclarationENG.pdf)

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 <http://orcp.hustoj.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/shenzhen-declarationeng.pdf>

### *References*


Shenzhen Declaration on Museums and Collections (2016)

Background:

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/museums/unesco-high-level-forum-on-museums/>

UNESCO High Level Museum Forum 

Programme. <http://www.unesco.org/culture/pdf/mus/english-french-programme.pdf>


Speakers Profiles- By 

Session. <http://www.unesco.org/culture/pdf/English-Biographies-High-Level-Forum.pdf>

Press Release:

 <http://icom-oesterreich.at/sites/icom-oesterreich.at/files/attachments/shenzhen-declaration>

eng.pdf

 [http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/BPI/EPA/images/media\\_services/Director-General/Shenzhen-DeclarationENG.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/BPI/EPA/images/media_services/Director-General/Shenzhen-DeclarationENG.pdf)

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