



World Heritage Youth Forum 2016

“At the Crossroads of Multi-Layered Heritage”

29 June -12 July Istanbul, Turkey

We, the representatives of the UNESCO World Heritage Youth Forum 2016 “At the Crossroads of Multi-layered Heritage”, would like to thank the Ambassador Lale Ülker, Chairperson of the 40th session of the World Heritage Committee and Dr. Mechthild Rössler, Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. We would also like to thank the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO and the Istanbul Site Management Directorate of organizers, and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality for the financial support. Furthermore, we express our gratitude to the executive team, the groups of experts and volunteers who contributed to make this amazing event possible.

Referring the Declaration of this Young Experts Forum to the 39th Session of the World Heritage Committee in Koblenz and Bonn, we recognize the importance of sustainable management as a key component in ensuring the continuous appreciation and conservation of heritage sites.

It is our honour and privilege to take this opportunity to deliver the outcomes of our work during the World Heritage Youth Forum 2016, as reflected in this declaration.

DECLARATION

We recognize that the concept of multi-layered heritage is a developing process. The complex nature of the processes and evolution that gave shape to the multi-layered heritage is also reflected in the diversity of potentials and challenges regarding heritage conservation and management.

As stakeholders to the implementation of the 1972 Convention, the activities in which we participated in the World Heritage Youth Forum 2016 related to the multi-layered aspects of heritage, eventuated in reflections and realizations that led us to formulate the following statements:

- The links between tangible and intangible heritage should be strengthened to contribute to a better understanding of heritage. We appeal to the World Heritage Committee to establish a stronger inter-disciplinary bond between the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). This shall allow a more holistic approach to heritage protection.
- The diversity of heritage needs to be accounted for in its appreciation and protection without neglecting any of its elements, regardless of its cultural, ethnic, national or religious origins.
- We emphasize the significance of raising awareness concerning the multi-layered aspect of heritage sites as a concrete proof of the historical appreciation of civilizations influencing subsequent periods that continuously gives inspiration to a universal cultural evolution, of which Istanbul is a significant example.
- By analyzing the many challenges of heritage, we could create a more consolidated and inclusive participation of communities in the holistic management of heritage sites. Acknowledging the involvement of local communities as essential means for proper conservation and management, we appeal to the World Heritage Committee to broaden the

scope of mandatory meetings for the States Parties with all local communities into the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention regarding the nomination process.

- Our experiences in the 2016 Youth Model of the World Heritage Committee emphasized to us the value of visiting heritage sites as a key tool in improving the decision-making process. Being able to directly observe the state of conservation of sites and their issues and potentials allows a more dynamic, realistic, and relevant discussion between the youth representatives that deepens their comprehension and appreciation of the concepts related to heritage.

To respond to these, we the representatives of the World Heritage Youth Forum (2016), put forward the following recommendations:

- We stress the importance of expanding the reach of the educational program to all age groups of youth on the topic of multi-layered heritage. It is essential to create awareness about the different layers of history and their significance. We therefore recommend that States Parties shall introduce heritage-related subjects to the primary and secondary education-level curricula and educational programs for youth in the World Heritage. Adequate lessons should, among other elements, cover the concept of multi-layered heritage and transboundary sites.
- We encourage the World Heritage Committee to develop a year-long youth fellowship, specific to World Heritage, selected by UNESCO upon nominations by their National Commissions. The fellowship should comprise site visits, workshops, youth engagement and advocacy. The fellows will participate in the Youth Forum and World Heritage Committee sessions to create a dialogue with the delegations and heritage experts. They will also write reports that will be published annually. The main contributors should be stakeholders including civil society organizations, the private sector, governments of States Parties, and UNESCO.
- We suggest that the existing statements of Outstanding Universal Value and site descriptions be enriched with the aspect of multi-layered heritage, when applicable.
- We strongly recommend participation of the youth in the decision-making process for heritage conservation and management in their respective States Parties, to allow them to develop their skills and acquire knowledge through collaboration with heritage experts.
- We further recommend that all subsequent World Heritage Youth Forum events must include visits to heritage sites related to the theme and discussions about its challenges and potentials in the corresponding Youth Model of the World Heritage Committee.

An interdisciplinary, intergenerational, and intercultural approach would be beneficial not only in providing a more diverse approach in heritage conservation and management, and helping bridge the gap between the youth and experts, but also in ensuring a consistent increase in work efficiency and professionalism in the field of heritage. As the representatives of the Youth Forum 2016, we commit to leading the way for our fellow youth in the conservation of World Heritage and transmitting the knowledge to future generations.

Our sincerest expression of gratitude to everyone.

Istanbul, Turkey
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