



**CULTURAL HERITAGE:  
A BRIDGE TOWARDS A SHARED FUTURE  
Fifth Ministerial Conference on Cultural Heritage  
in South-Eastern Europe**

**Meeting of International Working Group (IWG)**

**DRAFT CONCLUSIONS**

The International Working Group met in Bucharest, on 20 September 2008, on occasion of the Fifth Ministerial Conference on Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe, composed of representatives of the Ministries of culture of participating countries and UNESCO.

The IWG expressed its appreciation for the activities implemented so far under the Trust Fund for Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe, and encouraged all partners to continue in the definition and implementation of activities along the indications expressed by the annual Declarations of Ministers of Culture of SEE, under overall coordination and management of UNESCO. The role of UNESCO was unanimously, as a key one for the region.

At the same time, the IWG expresses the need to ensure a more effective coordination between accomplished activities and those in preparation. To this end, and approaching the conclusions of the first five years of activities under the framework of these Ministerial conferences, it was recommended to develop a shared strategy for future activities, to be possibly embodied by a revision of the Mostar Action Plan.

The IWG underlined the role of culture in fostering dialogue and mutual understanding. Accordingly, common activities in the future shall also pay special attention to cross-border and regional cooperation.

Participants emphasised the key-role of culture in development and strongly encouraged the inclusion of all cultural components into development strategies and policies, with special emphasis on cultural tourism. At the same time, due attention should be paid to the sustainability of economic exploitation of heritage resources. In particular, social and human aspects should be considered as central elements of the heritage, so as to ensure a more active and conscious involvement of civil societies and local communities. The IWG agreed that the role culture and, in particular, cultural heritage is playing in increasing the gross national product of each of our countries is, unfortunately, ignored by our colleagues, in the ministries of finances as well as by most of the civil societies. More should be done, in order to increase the awareness of the importance of cultural heritage in bringing economic development and social wealth.

Similarly, the role of intangible heritage, traditional knowledge, productions and ways of life should be highlighted as an integral part of the whole cultural heritage. In fact, the role of intangible aspects is indispensable in linking the heritage to the life of communities, and to improve the quality of life.

The IWG encouraged the pursuit of stronger coordination among relevant international frameworks and initiatives focussing on cultural heritage in South-Eastern Europe. In this respect, special attention shall be paid to ensuring a closer institutional as well as operational coordination with the annual Forums of Heads of State of SEE, with the annual meetings of the Council of Ministers of SEE, of the conference of ministers of culture of the BSEC, among others.

With regard to future activities, the IWG encouraged the development of cross-border and regional initiatives aimed at enhancing exchange of knowledge and good practices, capacity development, and training. In this sense, the following topics were indicated as priorities:

- Cultural Heritage Management;
- Inclusion of cultural heritage into educational and pedagogical programmes;
- Professional education in the field of cultural heritage protection and conservation;
- Special programmes for training in the field of cultural heritage for journalists, having in mind the role of the media in enhancing the value of cultural heritage;
- Ratification and implementation of relevant international legal and standard-setting instruments, with special attention to UNESCO conventions and recommendations, as well as to other diplomatic international treaties and conventions.

Such topics were recommended to UNESCO (particularly to the UNESCO Office in Venice – BRESCE) as priority subjects for future training activities at the regional level to be implemented under the Trust Fund for Cultural Heritage in SEE, in the wake of the successful experience of the course “Communication of Heritage”.

Within this framework, the IWG highlighted the role that the centres of excellence in the region in the various fields of cultural heritage safeguarding and promotion might play in the development of common capacities. In particular, the following institutions were indicated:

- International Centre for Underwater Archaeology (Zadar – UNESCO Centre of Category 2)
- Regional Centre for Digitization of Cultural Heritage (Skopje)
- Centre for Restoration of Monuments (Tirana)
- Centre for safeguarding and promotion of Intangible Heritage (Sofia – in process to be recognised as UNESCO Centre of Category 2).