



CULTURAL HERITAGE

A BRIDGE TOWARDS A SHARED FUTURE

Third Ministerial Conference on Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe

(Ohrid - FYR of Macedonia, 03-04 November 2006)

Concept Paper

1. Introduction

Over two years have passed since the first Ministerial Conference on Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe took place, organised in Mostar (B-H) under the joint initiative of UNESCO and of the Italian government. Two years dense of events that confirmed the fundamental importance of strengthening dialogue among cultures, at all political and geographical levels. But also two years during which the seed that was sowed in Mostar started to bear its first, important fruits of cooperation.

The shared commitment declared on that occasion was confirmed and enhanced by the Second Ministerial conference, which took place in Venice on 25-26 November 2006, once again thanks to the joint efforts of UNESCO and of the Italian government. The significance of the Venice event has been manifold. *In the first place*, it confirmed the will of all participating national and international institutions to cooperate for the valorisation

of South-Eastern European cultural heritage, to be considered not only as a shared treasure to be preserved, but also as a strategic resource for the economic and human development of the region. *Secondly*, it enriched the Mostar process of new principles and commitments, as expressed in the Venice Declaration. *Thirdly*, it enlarged this cooperation effort to new partners, with specific reference to the involvement of the Italian Regions, thus signifying the relevance of local government agencies in the definition of cultural policies. *Furthermore*, it equipped the Mostar process with a new, consultative as well as operative tool for its implementation, establishing an “International Working Group” with the specific task of assisting the UNESCO Venice Office – BRESCE in the definition and implementation of all projects stemming from this framework of collaboration. *Finally*, it paved the way for the successful continuation of this forum, with the announcement of the third Ministerial conference to be held in FYROM in 2006, made by H.E. Branko Crvenkovski, President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Following this announcement the FYROM Government, with the support of the Italian Government and of UNESCO Venice Office (Section for Culture), will host the Third Ministerial Conference on cultural heritage in SEE. The event will take place at Hotel Metropole, on the shores of the beautiful lake of Ohrid, on 3-4 November 2006. Among the most important centres of civilisation of the region, and inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list since 1979, Ohrid will offer an important chance to ensure the continuity of this cooperation process, and thus to further strengthen a dialogue of mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect of cultural diversity in the region.

2. Objectives

The Third Ministerial Conference will serve to continue defining and pursuing the priorities and common goals set in Mostar and Venice. Consequently, its main objectives are:

- A.** To *present and assess achievements and concrete projects* realized so far under this cooperation process;
- B.** To *steer the prosecution of Ministerial conferences*, and of deriving activities, towards new and more ambitious goals;

C. To provide this cooperation framework with *new political, conceptual and financial resources*.

Furthermore, the Conference will be the occasion to present the following new initiative, supported by UNESCO and by the Italian government:

COMMUNICATING CULTURE:
Information, promotion and participation for the enhancement of cultural heritage
Regional project for strengthening public communication on
South-East European cultural heritage

3. Participants

Conference **participants** are the recipient countries of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia), together with Italy and UNESCO. Participants are expected to be represented by their Ministers responsible for culture and cultural heritage.

Travel and accommodation expenses for participants will be covered by the conference, according to modalities to be communicated separately. Each participating country is invited to send a 3-person delegation, composed by the line Minister, the country representative in the International Working Group, plus a third member.

Representatives of all other partner countries of the Stability Pact are invited as **observers**.

4. Tentative Programme

Friday, 3 November

09h30 – 14h00

Discovering SEE Cultural Heritage: Ohrid and its treasures
Guided visit to Ohrid for participating Ministers, followed by lunch (St. Sofija restaurant). Return to hotel by 14h00 (rest till 15h00)

09h00 – 12h30:

Meeting of the International Working Group (IWG)

Participants: members of the IWG in representation of Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia (FYR of), Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, UNESCO.

Agenda: A. Assessment of on-going activities (operative follow-up to previous ministerial conferences); B. Presentation of community web-site.

13h00 – 14h00 IWG lunch (hotel)

15h00 – 19h30:

Plenary Session

15h00

Family Photo

15h10

Welcoming Addresses

- Nikola Gruevski, Prime Minister of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (to be confirmed)
- Francesco Rutelli, Minister of Cultural Heritage and Activities of Italy
- Representative of UNESCO

15h40

Presentation of the first results of the Trust Fund for Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe (UNESCO – BRESCE)

16h00

Ministerial Round Table – *“Across the Bridge - Recommendations for the continuation of regional cooperation on cultural heritage”*

17h00

Coffee-break

17h30

Ministerial Round Table (continuation)

18h45

Launch of the project «Communicating Culture - Information, promotion and participation for the enhancement of cultural heritage»

19h00

Signature of the Ohrid Declaration

19h20

Closing Addresses (by Head of Delegations from UNESCO, Italy and FYR of Macedonia)

21h00

Dinner and Cultural Programme (at hotel)

Saturday, 4 november

09h00 –10h30: Meeting of the International Working Group (IWG)

Participants: members of the IWG in representation of Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Italy, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, UNESCO.

Agenda: Follow-up discussion on conclusions of the plenary sessions. Coordination of future initiatives.

11h00 – 13h00 Guided visit to Ohrid for IWG members

09h30 –12h30: Bilateral meetings

13h30: Closing Lunch

5. Expected results and follow-up activities

The Ohrid event is expected to further consolidate the ideal, yet very solid bridge of cooperation built on the basis of previous conferences. In particular, this third meeting will allow for an enhanced coordination of interventions; for an updating of shared priorities; for a stronger networking of knowledge and resources; and, last but not least, for the prosecution of concrete projects aimed to improve the protection and valorisation of SEE cultural heritage.

Within this framework, the UNESCO Venice Office will continue to operate in order to support and promote cultural cooperation throughout the region, with a view to enlarge it to new partners and to strengthen its operational tools. This will include the prosecution and enlargement of activities financed under the “Trust Fund for the Enhancement of South-Eastern European Cultural Heritage”, in agreement with relevant authorities of the recipient countries, as well as other initiatives that may arise during the Ohrid event.

The political and institutional permanence of the whole cooperation process will be ensured by the continuation of the conference cycle, as the governments of Croatia and Romania already offered to respectively host the 2007 and 2008 editions.