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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

MEETING OF EXPERTS TO ESTABLISH AN INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM
FOR THE PROTECTION OF MONUMENTS AND SITES OF UNIVERSAL INTEREST

Unesco House, Paris, 21-25 July 1969

International protection of monuments, groups of buildings and sites of universal value and interest: Background and purposes

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Work Plan under Project 33.411 (paragraph 1181) of the Programme and Budget for 1969-1970 states that "Unesco will study the possibility of making international arrangements for the protection of monuments and sites which are of universal interest; the study will cover the legal, scientific and practical implications of such arrangements, applied to monuments at the request of the governments concerned, the criteria such monuments should satisfy, the procedure for establishing such arrangements, and the rôle likely to devolve upon Unesco".

II. PURPOSE OF PRESENT MEETING

2. "Following a meeting of experts in 1968 to cover the scientific, legal and technical aspects, a second meeting of experts (category VI) will be convened in 1969-1970 to consider ways and means of establishing the international arrangements in question."

3. The following working papers are provided to enable the 1969 meeting to continue the work of the 1968 meeting:

- (a) SHC/CS/27/8 (31 December 1968): Conclusions and recommendations of the 1968 meeting;
- (b) SHC/CONF.43/4: "The appropriate system for the international protection of monuments, groups of buildings and sites of universal value and interest: Basic premises of the question", by Mr. Raymond Lemaire (Belgium) and Mr. François Sorlin (France);
- (c) SHC/CONF.43/5 (13 June 1969): "Practical steps to facilitate the possible establishment of an appropriate international system", by Mr. R. Bricet (France) and Mr. Mario Matteucci (Italy).

III. THE PROBLEM

4. The world's cultural property heritage is a vast accumulation of wealth - monuments, groups of buildings, their sites and natural settings. The collective and common heritage of all countries, it needs greater protection against the grave dangers that may threaten nowadays, so that man can conserve and continue to enjoy its scientific, aesthetic, educational and recreative potentialities.
5. It would be utopian to expect the responsibility for such protection to be shouldered by any single agency. Based on co-ordinated regulations and as far as possible on common principles, it should be nationally and internationally the responsibility of agencies that have the scientific, technical, legal and financial means to ensure effective protection.
6. The 1968 meeting to co-ordinate principles and criteria with a view to establishing effective protection recommended:
 - (a) the adoption in each country of an effective system for the protection of monuments, groups and areas and sites at national level, and
 - (b) the establishment of an international system for the protection of monuments and sites of universal value and interest.

IV. EFFECTIVE PROTECTION NATIONALLY IN EACH COUNTRY

7. Suggestions covered the following points:
 - (a) the composition of each country's fixed cultural property, and how to protect it effectively against various forms of threat;
 - (b) protective measures - scientific, technical and legal;
 - (c) protective arrangements now feasible.
8. The meeting will briefly revert to concentrating on the aspects indicated below.
9. To provide an adaptable and open-ended inventory of all components of the heritage of fixed cultural property calling for protection, the meeting should give its views on the standardized terminology it is proposed to use to designate historic monuments, historic and artistic groups and areas, and natural, scientific and archaeological sites; such standardization would make it easier to ensure that legislative and administrative measures, national and international, will be clear and precise.
10. To provide the necessary scientific and technical personnel, it was suggested that recourse could be had to the services of curators, architects, art historians, sociologists, ethnologists, economists, geographers and nature science experts. The meeting should recommend a composition and structures for a national protection service that would enlist enough such experts, and indicate how it could function on a permanent basis, so as to carry out all its conservation and promotional responsibilities in a rational manner.

11. The 1968 meeting suggested allocating responsibilities among central, federal and local agencies. Has the time not come to consider that suggestion in the light of some recent experiments in Member States?
12. The energetic measures the authors of document SHC/CONF.43/4 suggest should be taken by individual countries include integrating the cultural heritage into the social life of our time. The meeting is invited to suggest ways in which various State services could take a dynamic approach to the conservation of monuments, groups and sites. Additional information would be needed on certain points: inclusion of such protection in a programme of town and country planning; recent legal measures of protection; encouragement of private initiative; financial participation by public bodies; rehabilitation of such property and its adaptation to new functions not compatible with the rôle it must continue to play.
13. At the conclusion of this debate, one question must be considered: What should be done about the scientific, technical and legal criteria drawn up or now being formulated to serve as a basis for national protective arrangements? Are they to be regarded in their present state as guidance or as the basic alternatives to be dealt with in new regulations to supplement the international protective recommendations adopted in 1956, 1962 and 1968?

V. INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

14. Apart from its normal work to safeguard cultural heritage generally, Unesco has urgently intervened on a number of occasions at the request of Member States to safeguard items of universal interest and value - interventions that have been enthusiastically and generally welcomed, eloquent evidence of what international co-operation can achieve in our day being provided by such spectacular examples as the monuments of Nubia; Florence and Venice; Mohenjo-Daro; Borobudur; and the Acropolis in Athens.
15. Has the time not come to regulate for emergencies, cases in which Unesco can participate permanently or as needed on behalf of the international community and for the benefit of all countries when major enterprises are needed to protect what is the concern of all?
16. The 1968 meeting thought so. Unesco is fully entitled to institute an international, ethical polity of protection, in which the question of repayment would not enter in, to provide a kind of Red Cross for outstanding monuments so far as present and future circumstances allow. The arrangements would be brought into operation at the request of a Member State or with its consent whenever the State found itself in a situation which demanded that it make an altogether disproportionate effort in order to safeguard monuments, buildings and sites that are superb, unique or irreplaceable; they would be invoked in such cases as outbreak of armed conflict, natural catastrophe, major public or private works, advanced deterioration of the structure or components of a monument, and so on.
17. Much thought has been devoted to the legal, scientific and practical implications: When and how the international authority should intervene, and what kind of aid it should provide.
18. The present meeting is asked to carry this reflection further, to fill, in greater detail, the outline already proposed, and to suggest practical means of doing so.

19. Discussion should consequently concentrate on the following points:

- (a) nature of the international polity for the protection of monuments, groups and sites of universal interest and value;
- (b) contributions needed to finance the international agency to be responsible for such protection;
- (c) organizational structure, and policy to be adopted.

(a) Nature of international polity for the protection of monuments, groups and sites of universal interest and value

20. The discussion regarding criteria for designating such property or its inclusion in an international schedule should not be reopened. The choice being left open, Member States would apply to Unesco in the exceptional circumstances referred to and ask for its assistance in protecting items they regard as of universal value; Unesco would then decide, in order of priority, in which cases to act.

21. This would raise the problem of agreements to be reached with the beneficiary State to ensure that the action is carried through properly as far as may be necessary. What are the reciprocal responsibilities and obligations from the time the request is allowed until all danger is averted and the item can be regarded as saved? And what guarantees for the regularity, continuity and effectiveness of the operations? Although not repayable, should not the international aid oblige the beneficiary State to guarantee the subsequent maintenance of the item, with due regard to the scientific and technical principles of conservation? Should not various advantages derive in consequence to the international community? Would a special status be feasible for items saved and enhanced through international co-operation?

22. International aid is mainly scientific and technical, and would rarely be a low-interest or interest-free loan, or subsidy - being essentially a participation in the efforts of Member States to protect part of their cultural heritage. Would it not be better - to cover such particular cases as may arise - to decide what form such participation may take and how it should operate: study and establishment of safeguarding or salvage projects, laboratory and technical facilities, expert services and equipment, work supervision, use of labour, loan rates, reimbursement schedules, and so on?

(b) Contributions needed to finance the international agency responsible for such protection

23. Contributions of all kinds, particularly financial, must naturally be adequate to enable the international agency to do all that has just been indicated; hence the question of an international fund for monuments, groups and sites of universal value. International co-operation in this form would seem essential. The idea has of course been mooted regularly in Unesco for the last twenty years. Without going into the details, it can be said that Unesco is at present studying the possibility of instituting such a fund with the help of international undertakings, establishments, agencies and others concerned with cultural tourist organization.

24. This does not preclude the meeting from making suggestions regarding the regular or voluntary contributions, taxes, donations, and so on, that might provide sources of revenue for the fund, or the means to be adopted for these purposes.
25. It would likewise be useful to have a clearer idea of amounts and allocations that would be necessary to satisfy at least five requests, large and medium, annually from Member States. That would be of help in deciding what solutions to work on.
26. Again, what contribution could be expected from international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations interested in protection questions? Hitherto they have been concerned with alerting the public, and studying specific protection problems or, in more limited cases, they have arranged expert missions and trained technicians. Could they take up applications put forward to the international authority, and pay for experts who would be made available to it to take part in specific operations that were decided upon?
27. Consideration should also be given to the proposal that Unesco co-ordinate bilateral agreements between States for the protection of the cultural heritage. Could Unesco channel these agreements into effective ways of safeguarding the major monuments, groups and sites? How should it go about doing so?
28. Unesco might also be able to enlist the aid of university departments, research centres and other agencies which do first-class safeguarding work outside their home countries. Should they be invited to associate and participate?
29. Lastly, how enlist the services of specialists and young volunteers who may be prepared to collaborate enthusiastically on specific projects?

(c) Organization and policy to be adopted

30. The structures can be arranged in the light of what emerges from a discussion of the above points, but should not involve an expenditure that would be difficult to bear.
31. Document SHC/CONF.43/5 proposes that three separate bodies with small staffs be established at Unesco. A permanent bureau would receive and examine requests for assistance from States and co-ordinate the various activities. Several suggestions have been made regarding its status: an advisory body in Unesco; an autonomous agency; something like a trust; or an agency run by the Unesco Secretariat. Which seems best in existing circumstances? Could the other two units (the committee for scientific co-ordination and the programme committee) handle the question of examining requests, deciding where action should be taken, and allocating the funds available between the projects accepted?
32. It is also important to be able to cope on either a long-term basis or intermittently with operations that in many cases may take several years. This implies the careful organization of camps for study, research and conservation purposes in the case of endangered items. In the interests of furthering international co-operation, and encouraging new trends in research and new conservation techniques and methods, should not these camps be open to young specialists and volunteers, so as to give them the training they lack, and enlist their services later in other operations of the same kind?

VI. CONCLUSIONS

33. The above points are submitted for consideration by the meeting. It is to be hoped that participants will suggest other alternatives, other policies and methods to help Unesco to pursue its work in favour of international arrangements for the protection of monuments, groups and sites of universal interest and value.