Final Outcome Document

For the UNESCO Regional Conference on Harmonizing Actions to Reduce Risks for Cultural Heritage in Asia and the Pacific

7-9 December 2015
Georgetown, Penang, Malaysia

We, the participants gathered in Penang, Malaysia, on the occasion of the UNESCO Regional Conference "Harmonizing Actions to Reduce Risks for Cultural Heritage in Asia and the Pacific" (7-9 December 2015), organized in collaboration with UNISDR, wish to express our gratitude and acknowledge the generous hospitality of the State of Penang and of ThinkCity in providing a forum to reflect on measures to strengthen the safeguarding of heritage from the impact of conflicts and disasters and enhance the contribution that heritage can make to the resilience of communities. We especially recognize the efforts and achievements made by the State of Penang, its people, and all local and international agencies, to conserve its heritage, root its development in the spirit of the place and foster the wellbeing of residents and visitors alike by protecting the diversity and qualities of the town's urban fabric and enduring cultural traditions.

We recall some of the most relevant policy documents adopted in recent years, including the Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties (UNESCO, 2007); the Hangzhou Declaration "Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies" (Hangzhou, 2013); the Recommendations of the International Expert Meeting on Cultural Heritage and Disaster Resilient Communities (Tokyo, 2015); the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (Sendai, 2015); the Bonn Declaration (Bonn, 2015); the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UNGA, 2015); and the Strategy on the Reinforcement of UNESCO's action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict (UNESCO, 2015), among others.

We are aware of the risks affecting this region in particular, one of the most exposed to natural hazards and vulnerable to disasters, including due to the effects of massive urbanization and climate change. We are also aware of the risks related to human-induced hazards, including the possibility of conflicts, and of their potential impact on heritage.

We consider that in the face of increasing disaster risks, the impact of climate change and the threats posed by conflicts around the world, the countries of the region should recognize that heritage represents both an asset to be protected and a resource to strengthen the ability of communities and their properties to resist, absorb and recover from the effects of a natural or human made hazard.

We are convinced, in this regard, that the appropriate conservation of the historic and natural environment, including cultural landscapes, and the safeguarding of relevant traditional knowledge, values and practices, in synergy with other scientific knowledge, enhances the resilience of communities to disasters and climate change, including by fostering their social cohesion, self-esteem, and confidence in the future.

We also emphasize how, in the context of globalization, and in the face of the identity challenges and tensions it can create, intercultural dialogue and the recognition of and respect for cultural diversity can forge more inclusive, stable and peaceful societies.

We acknowledge the urgent need to strengthen the preparedness of the heritage of our region, both tangible and intangible, to disasters and conflict, and to harness its significant potential for contributing to the resilience of our communities, as part of the overall strategies of our countries to reduce disaster risks and through the implementation of the relevant UNESCO Conventions.

We recall, in this regard, that the basic principles for a good management of disaster risks for heritage are the same of good conservation since, ultimately, both aim at ensuring its long-term resilience, and that therefore disaster risk assessments and risk mitigation through continuous maintenance, monitoring and preparedness must be integral part of normal management practices.

We recognize the need to strengthen the integration between the Culture sector and the Disaster Risk Management sector. To this end, and with reference to the four priority areas defined within the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030*, we consider that the following targets should be achieved at national and local levels, with support from partners through regional and global cooperation:

Priority Action 1 – Understanding disaster risk

I. Strengthened data collection, documentation and methodologies to assess and valuate damage and losses to heritage, both tangible and intangible, to contribute to the monitoring of the global targets of the Sendai Framework;

II. Listed heritage assets and cultural repositories (including sites and protected areas, museums, archives, libraries, etc.) have conducted multi-hazard risk assessments and methodologies are developed to assess risks to intangible cultural heritage;

III. Strengthened information management which will include:

   (i) well-defined information needs (for both cultural heritage and hazard, vulnerability and risk);

   (ii) complete inventories and appropriate documentation of all heritage assets, including immovable heritage, artefacts and collections and intangible cultural heritage, both digitalized and hard-copies through standardized formats;

   (iii) backup copies of data stored in safe locations including in other relevant agencies (civil protection, military);

   (iv) open source software, applications and data;

   (v) effective management systems, including training as appropriate, and

   (vi) accessibility to data and information with clarity on what is available in public domain and mechanisms to ensure data security;

IV. Enhanced research on relevant local knowledge, traditional techniques and skills that can be integrated in disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies and plans for heritage and in general, in combination with modern science as appropriate.

I. A significantly increased rate of ratification and actual implementation, in the region, of the relevant UNESCO cultural Conventions, particularly of the *1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* and its two Protocols (1954 and 1999), of the *1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property,* the *1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* and of the *1995 UNIDROIT Convention*;

II. A strengthened legal and institutional framework which will facilitate addressing DRR issues for the heritage sector, clarify the roles and responsibilities of concerned institutions and stakeholders;

III. National platforms for DRR to systematically involve all relevant stakeholders including representatives of the cultural heritage and education sectors;

IV. Empowered local authorities and stakeholders through the establishment of appropriate coordination mechanisms at local level, such as local platforms for DRR, with improved communication protocols, adequate resources allocated as well as the necessary tools and trainings provided to address disaster and conflict related risks to cultural heritage;

V. Inclusion of communities and the most vulnerable populations in planning and implementing risk management strategies to avoid and/or reduce losses and damage to heritage;

VI. Global concerns and frameworks (e.g. Sendai Framework, Agenda 2030, COP 21, and the forthcoming Habitat III) harmonized within relevant national policies including consideration for heritage, and ongoing DRR opportunities (e.g. Nepal) utilized in strengthening the existing governance system at local levels.

I. World Heritage properties, historic urban areas, heritage sites and cultural repositories (e.g. museums, libraries, archives, etc.) have established and actually implement disaster risk management plans with adequate resources and in coordination with other relevant agencies as part of overall DRR plans;

II. Increased awareness and strengthened capacity of all relevant audiences in the value of cultural heritage and the importance to include consideration for heritage in national and local policies and plans for DRR, including through fiscal incentives and risk-transfer mechanisms;

III. Master plans, land-use plans, building codes and other regulatory mechanisms integrate consideration for heritage and are informed by relevant traditional knowledge;

IV. Public-private partnerships established – including government at national and local levels, civil society associations, lending institutions, academics and expert institutions (such as national Blue Shield Committees) – for the strengthening of the protection of heritage from disasters and conflicts, and the harnessing of the potential of heritage to contribute to resilience in general;

V. The resilience to disasters and conflict of World Heritage properties, historic urban areas, heritage sites, protected areas and cultural repositories (e.g. museums, libraries, archives, etc.) is strengthened through appropriate structural measures, which do not have any adverse impact on their cultural and natural heritage value, integrity and authenticity as appropriate;

Priority Action 4 - Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery and rehabilitation

I. Effective communication and coordination protocols are established among heritage managers and external humanitarian and civil defence agencies for effective response during emergency situations at heritage sites and cultural repositories;

II. Information sharing platforms developed at regional level, which will include relevant materials, technology, past experiences from the region for effective and sustainable recovery of cultural heritage from disasters and conflicts;

III. Existing tools adapted and new tools developed, as appropriate, such as digital applications and software to document and assess damage to cultural heritage sites in emergency situations, adequate training provided for potential users and protocols established to regulate their use;

IV. Innovative technology for recovery and rehabilitation of cultural heritage from disasters and conflicts is developed, drawing upon relevant traditional knowledge and skills in combination with contemporary science and giving adequate consideration to the need to retain its cultural value, integrity and authenticity as appropriate.