

UNESCO Forum-University and Heritage

XII. Follow up of the Seminar

I. Introduction

“Our generation has inherited a wealth of cultural, material and immaterial resources, which are the embodiment of the collective memory of communities throughout the world and strengthen the perception they have of their identity in these uncertain times. As something precious which humanity must hold in trust, these resources are essentially non - renewable.

Evidence of a responsible attitude to the conservation of these fragile riches is to be found more particularly in regard to the constructed environment, namely historical monuments and sites. At the same time, there has been growing interest for the construction and attendance of museums and for the consequent enlargement of their collections. In this ways, material aspects – illustrious monuments and works of art - have been the main beneficiaries of the notion of preservation of the heritage. A worldwide movement has emerged, the pride and joy of international cultural co-operation which has reinforced solidarity between the peoples of the world for this common cause.

The disparity that exists between the scope of objectives and the limited means of conservation of the heritage throughout the world points to the need for international efforts to be made to secure the willingness of young people in the universities to perform voluntary work for the benefit of the cultural heritage, under the guidance and supervision of professionals.

Their task will be to contribute to the preservation and enhancement of the heritage so that, in a spirit of solidarity, mutual understanding and more profound respect could be promoted between cultures.

II. Objectives of the international network

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Within the framework of its Medium Term Strategy (1996-2001), UNESCO should strive to mobilize international solidarity and to give greater impetus to the development of specialized networks in the heritage field as well as to strengthen its action for greater participation of young people in development programmes and in projects for the preservation of cultural heritage and environment.

In point of fact, in recent years, young people have shown an ever commitment to the heritage, as illustrated by tangible results obtained by national and international youth work camps organized by UNESCO at sites in Cambodia, Egypt, Morocco, Romania, Senegal, Viet-Nam, Cuba, Mexico, Argentina and Uzbekistan. The training of young people, as the future protectors of heritage, is conducted in universities and specialized institutions which have now brought together many researchers, laboratories and facilities, in liaison with the everyday practice of work related to the heritage. Universities in various countries have committed themselves to operational projects implemented for protecting the heritage, at local, national and international level.

The aim of the Division of Cultural Heritage of UNESCO's Sector for Culture to strengthen the role of universities in the protection of the heritage has encouraged to create an international network UNESCO Forum - University and Heritage. The network, made up of students and

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teachers, serves as a link between the universities offering courses in the field of heritage, such as archaeology, architecture, town- planning, the fine arts and informatics. The purpose is more specifically to combine the activities of universities which today possess valuable instruments for the protection of the heritage.

- Mobilizing the human and technical resources of universities at national and international level in order to strive jointly for the protection and enhancement of the heritage for the benefit of the populations.
- Strengthening co-operation between heritage specialists and universities at local and national level.
- Establishing a movement of solidarity and mutual assistance by nurturing a sense of responsibility among young people and by creating ties between universities at regional and international level.
- Giving greater impetus to inter-university co-operation through a transfer of knowledge and the exchange of expertise in the heritage field.
- Perfecting theoretical training thanks to practical experience.
- Promoting mutual understanding between students and a mutual dialogue for peace building.

III. Construction of the international network UNESCO Forum - University and Heritage

Also, the establishment of this network needed to be preceded by reflection and mutual consultation on the part of teachers and students committed to this project, in close co-operation with the International Council of Museums(ICOM), the International Council of Monuments and Sites(ICOMOS), the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and the Restoration of Cultural Property(ICCROM), the International Federation of Landscape Architects(IFLA), the Universities' International Association (W), as well as with national officials in the field of cultural heritage. Therefore, UNESCO organized jointly with the Polytechnic University of Valencia (Spain) the International Seminar "UNESCO Forum-University and Heritage" which took place from 2 to 6 October 1996 in Valencia.

The visible results obtained from this seminar, grouping representatives of important organisations specialized in cultural heritage such as those above mentioned and 72 universities from 42 countries, encouraged the Lava1 University in Quebec, Canada, to organize jointly with UNESCO the Second International Seminar on UNESCO Forum University and Heritage from 5 to 10 October 1997 with a view to consolidating the network's base, to reinforcing its functional mechanism and to mobilizing other universities/commitments in favour of cultural heritage towards concret projects which will be presented during the sessions entitled "Project Fair" within the framework of the above mentioned seminar.