



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

Zadar, Croatia – 10 September 2007

ZADAR DECLARATION

Fourth Joint Declaration of the Ministers Responsible for Culture
in South-Eastern Europe and Italy,
concerning the Enhancement of Cultural Heritage
for the Integration and the Sustainable Development of the Region

We, the Ministers participating in the Fourth Ministerial Conference on Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe,

Considering our participation in these annual Ministerial Conferences as an expression of our commitment to strengthening a spirit of peace, dialogue and mutual understanding between our countries and peoples; as well as an opportunity to reaffirm our strong will to preserve the richness and diversity of our shared cultural legacy, with a view to promote it as a treasure of the entire world;

Reaffirming in full the contents, objectives and activities included in the Mostar Declaration and Action Plan, in the Venice Declaration, and in the Ohrid Declaration, respectively approved by the First (Mostar, 2004), Second (Venice, 2005), and Third (Ohrid, 2006) Ministerial Conferences on Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe;

Recalling the purposes and principles embodied in the Ohrid Declaration (August 2003), in the Tirana Declaration (December 2004), in the Varna Declaration (May 2005), in the Opatija Declaration (June 2006), and in the Bucharest Declaration (June 2007) adopted by the Heads of State of the South-Eastern European countries within the framework of the Regional Forum on Dialogue Among Civilisations;

Renewing our appreciation for the generous contribution by the Italian government to the Trust Fund for cultural heritage in South-Eastern Europe, and encouraging the continuation of the Italian support to the Trust Fund, as well as to the overall process of integration, dialogue and sustainable development in this region;

Commending the efforts of the Section for Culture of the UNESCO Venice Office – BRESCE for the positive implementation of the above-mentioned Trust Fund, as well as its general commitment to the preservation and promotion of South-East European cultural heritage;

Adopt the following Declaration:

1. Annual ministerial conferences on cultural heritage in South-Eastern Europe greatly contribute to the creation of a spirit of collaboration for the safeguarding and promotion of the shared cultural heritage. We are convinced that the continuation of this regional gatherings are extremely important in order to further strengthen the common political and institutional commitment for the enhancement of South-East European cultural heritage, as well as to provide guidance and resources for the achievement of concrete activities in this sense.
2. Consequently, we praise the activities so far accomplished or initiated within the different signatory countries as a follow-up to previous ministerial conferences, with special reference to the projects carried out under the Trust Fund for Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe, and we encourage their continuation. We are convinced that future efforts shall insist in pursuing the objectives set forth in the Mostar Action Plan, in order to ensure an overall strategic coherence. At the same time, future actions of the Trust Fund shall continue to be defined according to specific priorities of the different beneficiary countries, so as to achieve a better tuning of activities with the actual needs and resources of each country and with distinctive aspects of their tangible and intangible heritage.
3. In this regard, we express great appreciation for the renewal of the generous financial contribution by the Italian government to the Trust Fund for Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe, with a second donation of 800,000€. The Italian support remains a corner-stone in the continuation of this regional cooperation framework, as well as an encouragement for strengthening our respective commitment to the enhancement of cultural heritage.
4. Accordingly, we commit ourselves to explore the possibility of ensuring further resources within respective national programmes, in order to enhance the safeguarding and promotion of our shared cultural heritage at both national and international level, commencing with the sites inscribed in the World Heritage List, and the masterpieces inscribed in the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

5. Bearing in mind the symbiotic relation between the preservation of cultural legacy and its promotion as a tool for dialogue and sustainable development, we welcome the initiative promoted by the UNESCO Office in Venice about a regional training programme for a better communication of the heritage, specifically aimed at Ministries of culture of South-East European countries. The programme responds to the objectives laid down in the Ohrid Declaration (2006), and we shall ensure the active participation of our respective Ministries in the training activities.
6. Similar initiatives at the regional level shall continue to be encouraged, with an aim to coupling the positive effects of capacity building activities with those of an enhanced collaboration between institutions of South-East European countries. In this regard, and aware of the increasingly important role of culture in supporting sustainable development processes, we recommend the economics of culture as a priority subject for future training programmes, with a special focus on cultural heritage management.
7. Intra-regional cooperation, including transfer of knowledge and the sharing of good practices, shall remain a cross-cutting priority. To this end, we solicit the creation of a regional data-base for experts and professional in the various fields of cultural heritage administration, ranging from restoration, to preservation, to valorisation and promotion. Such instrument shall be intended to favour the collection, management, and sharing of relevant information, in order to strengthen regional cooperation networks and to facilitate the reciprocal exchange of experts among the countries in the region.
8. While welcoming the recent entry into force of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (18 March 2007), we firmly encourage the adoption of all relevant UNESCO legal instruments by all countries participating in the present declaration. At the same time, efforts must be stepped up to ensure effective application and

implementation of these instruments, as well as to define proper tools for their periodical updating and flexible application.

9. Acknowledging the importance of underwater cultural heritage as an integral part of the cultural heritage of humanity and a particularly important element in the history of peoples and nations, we welcome the initiative of the Republic of Croatia in establishing the “International Centre for Underwater Archaeology” and recommend its nomination as UNESCO category II Centre. We are convinced that such an institution will greatly contribute to the regional and wider international capacities in protection of underwater and waterlogged heritage, thus fulfilling the basic intention of these annual ministerial conferences in reinforcing regional cultural cooperation.
10. Given the positive results so far achieved by the cooperation process initiated with the previous ministerial conferences on cultural heritage in South-Eastern Europe, re-launched with this Zadar conference, we support its continuation in form of yearly ministerial conferences, to be held on a rotation basis in all the countries participating in this declaration. Hence, we express appreciation for the proposal by the government of Romania to hold the next ministerial conference in 2008, and accept its invitation to participate.
11. Mindful of the pivotal role played by communication and public relations in our increasingly interconnected societies, we also commend the initiative to create a specific website dedicated to the ministerial conferences on cultural heritage in South-Eastern Europe. This instrument, managed by UNESCO Office in Venice, shall be firstly aimed at ensuring due visibility to this cooperation framework, and at providing relevant information to the general public. Subsequently, we encourage its development into a shared tool for promotion of regional cultural heritage, and we commit ourselves to provide operational as well as institutional support to its enhancement.

Signatures



H.E. Mr. Božo Biškupić
Minister of Culture

Božo Biškupić



H.E. Mr. Ylli Pango
Minister of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports

Ylli Pango



H.E. Mr. Sredoje Nović
Minister of Civil Affairs

Sredoje Nović



H.E. Mr. Stefan Danailov
Minister of Culture

Stefan Danailov



H.E. Mr. Francesco Rutelli
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Culture

Francesco Rutelli



H.E. Mr. Arifkmet Xhemali
Minister of Culture

Arifkmet Xhemali



H.E. Mr. Artur Cozma
Minister of Culture and Tourism

Artur Cozma



H.E. Mr. Predrag Sekulić
Minister of Culture, Sports and Media

Predrag Sekulić



H.E. Mr. Adrian Iorgulescu
Minister of Culture and Religious Affairs

Adrian Iorgulescu



H.E. Mr. Vojislav Brajović
Minister of Culture

Vojislav Brajović