

SHANGHAI DECLARATION ON MUSEUMS FOR HARMONIOUS SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

ICOM General Assembly, Shanghai, 12 November 2010

Underlining the theme of the 'ICOM 2010' General Conference in Shanghai, *Museums for Social Harmony*, as a profound and resonant concept for global society;

Recalling the crucial change in ICOM's international definition of *museums* in 1974, introducing for the first time a clear statement of museums' social purpose: that museums exist '*in the service of society and its development*';

Noting that the concept of 'society' itself has undergone transformation in the decades since ICOM profiled museums' social responsibilities – and that all modern societies today are increasingly challenged by far-reaching changes internally and in their relations with the world, where values and ideas about future development are evolving dynamically in an ever more pluralistic environment;

Affirming the enlarged ethical responsibilities of museums, as set out under eight broad principles in the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* (2004), which includes the following statements:

(Principle 1) *Museums preserve, interpret and promote the natural and cultural inheritance of humanity.*

(Principle 4) *Museums provide opportunities for the appreciation, understanding and management of the natural and cultural heritage.*

(Principle 5) *Museums hold resources that provide opportunities for other public services and benefits.*

(Principle 6) *Museums work in close collaboration with the communities from which their collections originate as well as those they serve.*

Reaffirming the 1998 UNESCO World Culture Report framework, the breadth and pluralism of its vision of culture, and ongoing work that promotes the indivisible connections between biodiversity and cultural diversity, between tangible and intangible heritage;

Fostering recognition and respect for diverse social and cultural practices, to build strong societies that include persons and groups from varied backgrounds;

Promoting openness, freedom of thought, conscience and belief, and wide access to knowledge generated by museums for all;

Celebrating the increasingly important and reflexive roles that museums play today in international affairs, including as ambassadors for intercultural awareness and informed relations between nations;

Warning that the positive recognition of difference and experience of intercultural communication with others cannot be passively assumed, but must be actively promoted by museums in their engagement with diverse audiences, to achieve greatest benefits to civil society in a global age;

Emphasising the growing need for museums to develop skills, capabilities and new models of collaboration to provide a structured platform for interactions between different peoples, cultures and forms of knowledge;

Members of the international museums community and ICOM delegates gathered in Shanghai for 'ICOM 2010' declare the important value of museums as agents for harmonious social development, in which individuals and diverse groups participate freely and actively – through museums' preservation and projection of the varied environments, histories and achievements that human beings share, affirming humankind's unique and irreplaceable legacy for future generations.

Endorsed unanimously by the 25th General Assembly of ICOM (International Council of Museums) Shanghai, 12 November 2010