

World Heritage Youth Forum Qatar 2014 to the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee

Declaration

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We, the participants of the *World Heritage Youth Forum Qatar 2014*, wish to express our sincere gratitude to the State Party of Qatar and the Qatar Museums Authority for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to us during the past two weeks and for the great opportunity for intercultural exchange that has become a lasting experience for all of us.

We fully support the declarations of the previous youth forums held in Kazan, Russian Federation in 2012 and Siem Riep, Kingdom of Cambodia in 2013, which have been vital references for our collaborative work in Qatar. In this framework and as stakeholders to the implementation of the Convention, we take this opportunity to deliver our message to the international community.

The young generations need an opportunity to get involved in key areas and processes in the preservation and promotion of World Heritage.

For a sustainable preservation of World Heritage, we would like to emphasize the importance of youth involvement in the transmission and promotion of community, national and universal values of World Heritage. Considering that heritage is a concept that is still mainly the matter of experts, the youth encounters many obstacles to their participation. Therefore, education and youth involvement are the basis of our proposal.

World Heritage is strongly linked to our identity and our day-to-day lives. We would like to emphasize the transmission of the values of World Heritage sites to the public in more diverse and varied forms. Thanks to new technologies, the young generation of today

already possesses diverse ways to express themselves and to communicate with their peers, the community and the public.

We are eager to use our potential to create innovative and inspiring means that contribute to the management, preservation, promotion and interpretation of World Heritage sites. For the involvement and mobilization of young people we would like to propose to the World Heritage Committee the establishment of an official Online Platform. With the support of the Committee and in conjunction with UNESCO services, the platform shall be managed, monitored and utilized by young people around the globe.

The Online Platform shall constitute an umbrella promoting diverse activities in connection with cultural and natural World Heritage sites. Through sharing of pictures, videos and essays in virtual forums, streamlining conferences and workshops, it will provide a concrete opportunity for exchanging ideas, experiences and best practices for World Heritage.

To ensure the effectiveness and use of the platform, we would encourage its accessibility to existing local youth centers, mobile libraries and cultural institutions. We underscore the importance of ensuring that such material is made available to those who do not have access to it on a regular basis.

In order to manage the Online Platform the participants of the World Heritage Youth Forum 2014 request the States Parties to support the establishment of youth representative presence or “Youth Units” to collaborate closely with UNESCO field offices around the world. These Youth Units would develop and promote youth capacity-building on World Heritage site management, provide international and trans-regional platforms and facilitate the exchange among young specialists from different professional environments.

These Youth Units shall organize, in cooperation with local authorities, periodic academic seminars and on-site trainings in collaboration with regional and international experts in the frameworks of local UNESCO offices. They would act as liaisons between specialists and local youth through programming, practical workshops and other community engagement projects to raise awareness about the need for sustainable management of World Heritage sites.

Through the Online Platform, the Youth Units could also support the development of online courses on World Heritage related issues and bridge the gap between communities of experts and the youth.

We also suggest the creation of youth cultural centers within the communities and led by young people. These centers will aim at reinforcing identity and generating more knowledge and skills on tangible and intangible values linked to World Heritage sites. Regarding conservation, these youth units will also support the management system in place, for example to watch over the heritage sites to prevent vandalism. Youth-to-youth communication would facilitate better understanding and preservation of the sites.

Upon the completion of the trainings, we as young specialists will contribute to enhancing management practices on World Heritage sites in their respective countries.

We encourage the States Parties to create young ambassadors to bridge the gap between the experts and the local youth and to disseminate heritage information via creative methods such as plays, workshops, story-telling, application development, etc.

Moreover, recognizing the importance of awareness in the promotion and transmission of values, another concrete activity would be the establishment of a Youth World Heritage Day.

We believe that in order to encourage youth involvement, States Parties should provide a complex program of training and internships in the field of management. Existing management and conservation plans do not necessarily take into account contributions and fresh ideas of youth. Including youth in management planning of World Heritage sites would have a positive impact on the evolution of management plans in the future - ensuring the investment of the youth of today in order to protect the heritage of tomorrow.

All these initiatives related to the Youth Units and the Online Platform will mobilize the existing potential of our young generation that will be of greater benefit for the sustainable development of World Heritage values and the implementation of the Convention by youth.

We thank the Committee and all the participants to the 38th session for their attention and for allowing us to express our vision and our proposals. On our part, we are committed to use all our potential and energy in sharing with you the inspiring but challenging task of promoting and preserving our shared heritage.

Thank you.