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African World Heritage Day Celebrations

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Defining strategies for resilience and sustainability in COVID-19 context

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First of all, I would like to pass to you the best wishes of the Director-General of ICCROM, Webber Ndoro, and of all Team ICCROM, for the "World Heritage Day of Africa" and thank the organizers of for this opportunity.

Like all of you, ICCROM is monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is primarily a health crisis and while implementing a series of measures to ensure the safety of the personnel, we feel very close to all are suffering from this pandemic.

With the lockdowns in place in the host countries of both ICCROM offices - Italy and the United Arab Emirates – we are mostly working from home, planning the postponement of some activities scheduled during these months, as well as reflecting on alternative ways to provide content and support for professionals and conservation institutions within our Member States.

Now, more than ever, we are reflecting on what our work means for the people we train, the communities they serve, and our network of partners from all over the world.

More and more, by providing a favourable forum for the Member States on how to preserve their cultural heritage, we aim to contribute to the environmental, social, and economic sustainability of communities.

To this end, ICCROM has published a declaration and a call to action¹ so that those in our field may come together to look for ways to use the heritage as a tool for recovery and resilience while protecting its vulnerabilities.

COVID-19 has placed a huge burden on institutions and on colleagues who manage the cultural heritage of all kinds.

¹ https://www.iccrom.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/covid19_call_of_iccrom_for_protecting_heritage_-eng.pdf



While the emergency phase is still on, ICCROM team has been working to prepare a dedicated web area², which offers resources and advice on managing Heritage in Times of COVID. The page includes evaluation modules,

but also stories from our network of different cultures.

With this platform, we aim to open space and share relevant information for the benefits of professionals and conservation institutions in every region of the world, and, at the same time, to offer a opportunity of discussion in view of the recovery after-COVID 19 emergency and its challenges.

We are extremely grateful to those in our network who shared their knowledge and to all those who reached us during this period.



We also believe that the Africa Program Youth.Heritage.Africa³ could play a key role in this regard in the region.

The overall aim of the program is to make Africa's cultural heritage a source of inclusive, economic, and social benefits for its young people. At the heart of this aspiration is the need to create and foster partnerships among higher education, heritage institutions, and other role-playing actors in Africa.

These actors and stakeholders, in particular universities and cultural heritage institutions, can play an important role in terms of capacity building and training for young people.

² <https://www.iccrom.org/news/heritage-times-covid>

³ <https://www.iccrom.org/regions/africa>

The heritage hub, one of the innovative components of the programme, in its broadest sense, can efficiently offer multidisciplinary space for the development and implementation of ideas, particularly at this time.

Few words on Heritage Hubs:

As in the creative world, hubs are designed in many shapes and sizes, from buildings that house professionals in the field and businesses, to temporary laboratories and incubation spaces that ignite innovations (particularly in academic institutions), as well as networks online that bring people together through various events.

Each creative hub is unique, according to geographical location, cultural context, community requirements, and funding model.

Youth.Heritage.Africa programme is already developing pilot initiatives in this sense in South Africa, Benin, and Kenya. They all deal with the different aspects of heritage from immovable to mobile, from cultural to natural, as well as from tangible to intangible.

It is our ambition, particularly now, to demonstrate that heritage hubs may successfully contribute in a spirit of cooperation to the growth and the resilience of the cultural heritage sector, and the economy as a whole. At the same time, they can attract those energies already working in the region and fostered by young generations.

The just few hints that I hope will give enough food for discussion,

Thank you,

Maria Teresa Jaquinta, ICCROM – 22 May 2020