



STRATEGIC PLAN

2016 -2022

INDEPENDENCE | INTEGRITY | PROFESSIONALISM

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) is the international organisation of museums and museum professionals with a worldwide reach through its over 35,000 (2016) members, its active National and International Specialist Committees, Regional Alliances and Affiliated Organisations, and its work with intergovernmental agencies. In this Strategic Plan ICOM clarifies its mission and vision and pledges itself to carry out a series of actions to strengthen its solidarity with colleagues throughout the world, enhance democracy, defend our common heritage from wanton and criminal destruction, improve its structures and operations and advocate for museums everywhere.

Preliminary remarks

The Strategic Planning Committee started its work on the Strategic Plan of ICOM for the next six years from 2016–2022 under the leadership of Michael Ryan in 2013. After first discussions at the triennial ICOM General Conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the Committee started its work in dialogue with the National and International Committees, the Regional Alliances and Affiliated Organisations of ICOM, as well as the Strategic Allocation Review Commission, the Working Group on Governance and with the support of the Secretariat.

By means of an online survey, published in the three official ICOM languages, English, French and Spanish dialogue partners were able to comment and submit suggestions anonymously. The outcomes of this survey were made available online and constitute the base of this Strategic Plan.

In 2015 the decision was made to postpone the presentation of the plan to 2016 to give the Committee the chance to check if the strategic objectives are in accordance with the updated Statutes. The discussions and close cooperation between the Strategic Planning Committee and the Working Group on Governance have positively influenced the results of both groups.

The objectives of the new ICOM Strategic Plan intend to meet the needs of the members, to advance the work and value of museums, to strengthen ICOM's role as an international key player in the museum world, to raise ICOM's visibility and to audit ICOM's needs in terms of staff and resources.

The new Strategic Plan will give guidance for governance and members, and will enable ICOM to strengthen its role as a strong protector of the natural and cultural heritage of the world. After its approval at the triennial ICOM General Conference in July 2016 in Milan, Italy, the Plan and its objectives will be evaluated annually by the Strategic Plan and Resolutions Monitoring Committee, and recommendations for necessary updates will be discussed and approved by the Executive Board.

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Preliminary statement: where ICOM stands

Culture and heritage belong to everyone and access to it in all its forms – tangible and intangible – is a human right¹. Protection of culture and the natural world is a moral duty of individuals, communities and governments, regional and national. Governments support heritage because of the benefits that it brings – for example, the economic dividend of cultural tourism, the potential for international relations and projection of prestige or the support for ideas of identity.

Governments are the prime patrons of our human and natural heritage in many countries but they do not own it: it is owned by the people – all of us. ICOM engages with governments and intergovernmental agencies and will continue to do so actively in the advancement of our heritage, cultural and natural, tangible and intangible.

Since its foundation in 1946, ICOM has been at the forefront of the protection of cultural and natural heritage and is still at the cutting-edge of this great enterprise in a world which is dangerously unstable, and riven with economic, social, cultural, educational and health inequalities. In addition to damage to the heritage as a result of conflict, we have seen the emergence of cultural destructiveness as an ideological value prized by forms of terrorism for promoting their agendas or for raising funds for their activities through theft and illicit trafficking of antiquities and works of art.

We have also seen the massive displacement of people and their subjection as refugees to circumstances of profound deprivation as a result of war. Many refugees find themselves dislocated from their cultural inheritance and from the landscapes and cities of their birth, creating an intangible impoverishment to match their losses in material well-being.

¹ The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, Article 27, states:

“(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits”.

See also the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005 and the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity 2001 and the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, Article 15.

1. ICOM and Museums

Through its membership of more than 35,000 professionals (2016) worldwide and its advocacy for museums and museum professionalism, ICOM is a powerful voice in advancing the traditional values of collecting, conserving, documenting, researching and educating which remain the bedrock of museum practice the world over. But today, museums are doing so much more.

Museums have discovered ways to add significant value to their traditional roles through creative programmes, which realise the potential of their knowledge and skill to reach out to alienated and vulnerable groups in their communities, to promote intercultural dialogue, to provide experiential learning for those who have missed out on conventional education or to create programmes that tap into the benefits of culture.

Museums have embraced all of this and more without forgetting their responsibilities to their traditional duties and audiences, and to schools and learning.

Museums, led by ICOM's Code of Ethics, are more alert to the ethical dimensions of their work whether it is in environmental consciousness and sustainability or the need to be concerned with issues of provenance and source of the objects in their care or conscientious behaviour in their practice.

The role of museums and the public and governmental understanding of it have changed radically in recent years. Many museums are recognised as having a profound effect locally, nationally and internationally – they contribute to the reputation and standing of a city or country, they are places of discussion and debate on pressing challenges of identity and democracy and are leading institutions of civil society and of active citizenship. They have important educational effects and a vital role to play in breaking down social divisions. They are major contributors to local and national economies and to communal well-being.

These attributes of museums are clearly signalled by those countries and cities that frequently have chosen museums and other leading cultural institutions to spearhead or consolidate social and economic renewal in distressed urban areas. Museums have found new ways of identifying the composition of their audiences and have embraced novel methods of communicating with them.

ICOM recognises and celebrates all of this, because the socially engaged museum is only successful if it is also an excellent museum. Not all museums have the resources to fulfil their mission as they would wish to but all are united in their commitment to the

heritage they protect and to the public they serve. Museums have the potential to improve people's lives.

This Strategic Plan is valid for the period 2016–2022. During its decades of existence, ICOM has faced periods of great challenges and has changed in many ways, but the cornerstone of its work has been the commitment of its members through its National and International Committees, its Regional Alliances as well as its Affiliated Organisations.

These have taken leadership roles in their countries and profession:

- to stimulate governments to live up to their cultural obligations.
- to provide capacity building programmes and experience opportunities to their members.
- to form Regional Alliances.
- to share knowledge in order to sustain the specialist groups of ICOM.
- to advance the cause of museums and museum professionalism.

ICOM today is the result of their combined efforts over many years. The active participation of National and International Committees, Regional Alliances and Affiliated Organisations is essential to the success of the initiatives proposed in the plan.

2. The vision underpinning the Plan

With this Plan, ICOM offers continued support and leadership to the international museum community. It commits the organisation to:

- providing as far as possible equal benefits to its members worldwide.
- support continued professional development for colleagues in regions in need by enabling members to obtain experience through capacity-building programmes and short-term fellowships in order to observe the work of leading museums.
- strengthening existing initiatives in publishing, communication with the membership, and developing and clarifying the identity, achievements and potential of ICOM for the public stakeholders and decision-makers in national and regional government.
- enabling timely debate of urgent issues.

- bold advocacy of natural and cultural property protection and fighting illicit traffic in artefacts and ecofacts through ICOM's programmes and standing committees including the participation in the programmes of the International Committee of the Blue Shield, of which ICOM is one of the founders.
- enhanced engagement with governments and inter-governmental bodies to place heritage protection at the forefront of natural and cultural policy and diplomacy.
- continuing its internal review to ensure that its governance and management systems are sound in accordance with the revised Statutes which have been developed by the Working Group on Governance.

The Plan is intended to be modest, but resources will be required to carry out most of its objectives. These resources will be invested in people through programming, such as personal development, and the encouragement of ICOM activities in locations where they can be of most benefit.

3. The duration of the Plan

This Plan is intended for a period of six years. To make progress, each major objective should be the subject of detailed operational sub-plans commissioned and approved by the President, Bureau and Executive Board (EB).

The Plan and its objectives should be evaluated annually by the Strategic Plan and Resolutions Monitoring Committee. It will be reviewed by the EB every two years for necessary adjustment. The reviews will be reported to the Advisory Council and annual General Assembly.

This Plan is a series of proposals and expectations. It is assumed that unforeseen events will cause the reviews to propose significant adjustments to the plan.

The Strategic Plan

1. ICOM's Mission and Purpose

ICOM's mission and purpose are embedded in the Statutes and are quoted below. There are practical difficulties with a statutory mission statement. The Mission Statement in the Statutes should be replaced with a simple overarching statement of vision and purpose, as mission statements require regular revision and updating and it is inconvenient to have to do this by revising the Statutes each time changes are required.

*"Section 1. **Mission***

ICOM is the international organisation of museums and museum professionals which is committed to the research, conservation, continuation and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible.

*Section 2. **Purpose***

ICOM establishes professional and ethical standards for museum activities, makes recommendations on issues related thereto, promotes capacity building, advances knowledge and raises public cultural awareness through global networks and co-operation programmes."

2. ICOM's Values

ICOM subscribes to a large and detailed list of values and associated activities. The Reform Task Force which reported to the General Assembly in Barcelona first set these out in detail². That report remains the primary reference for ICOM's values. However, for the purposes of this Strategic Plan, these have been encapsulated in three key words:

INDEPENDENCE | INTEGRITY | PROFESSIONALISM

² Report on ICOM review and reform, 1998-2001; available at: http://archives.icom.museum/rtf_report.html

INDEPENDENCE

ICOM is an independent worldwide membership organisation comprised of over 35,000 individual and institutional members in 2016. Its membership has been steadily growing. It is structured into National Committees and International Committees, Regional Alliances and in its wider family, Affiliated Organisations.

ICOM is organised on democratic principles and conducts its business in a transparent manner. ICOM is a non-governmental body (NGO), which has formal relations with governments, intergovernmental bodies and agencies. It works internationally and independently of governments and has no biased political, financial or other interests. Its independence is a fundamental principle and value. It is ICOM's most valuable asset.

ICOM independently advocates for the heritage of humanity and in particular for museums and museum work with knowledge, boldness and conviction. Its members, staff and affiliates work solely for the benefit of that heritage, cultural and natural, tangible and intangible, and this quality of independence is an important protective attribute for members and staff working in troubled environments, especially those assisting in ICOM's work of documenting the illicit trade in natural and cultural goods. It is also an essential quality in the mediation process offered by ICOM in cases of contested heritage and it is in itself an important ethical stance.

INTEGRITY

ICOM conducts its business in accordance with its Code of Ethics, its most influential and lasting contribution to museum professionalism. It requires museums and museum professionals to adopt it into their practice if they are or wish to become members of ICOM. The Code is kept under constant review.

PROFESSIONALISM

Through its National and International Committees, its Code of Ethics, through professional development, publications, annual conferences, and other projects of International Committees and the work of National Committees especially in countries where there is no national museum association, and through alliances with similar organisations, ICOM supports museum professionalism in all its aspects and recognises the growing practical scope of that professionalism. One of ICOM's collaborations involves taking a leadership role as mentioned in the UNESCO *Recommendation on the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society* from 2015.

3. ICOM's Strategic Objectives 2016 – 2022

...in a nutshell

- #1** | Enhancing membership value through improved participation, service, communications, and capacity building

- #2** | Enhancing ICOM's international profile

- #3** | Raising the visibility of ICOM

- #4** | Enhancing ICOM's international role

- #5** | Auditing ICOM's needs in terms of staff and resources

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1 | Enhancing membership value through improved participation, service, communications, and capacity building

ICOM can make a lasting contribution of value to its members in regions where there are difficulties of access and participation. Key objectives are:

√Participation by attendance

ICOM has a long-established practice of providing support to members attending the annual meetings and this support will continue. This participation is necessarily limited to a small number of members primarily due to financial considerations but it is vital to ensure that decision-making is sensitive to regional perspectives. The programme of support will be enhanced where resources permit. In addition, the organisers of the triennial ICOM General Conference regularly build into their financial plans support for younger museum professionals/students to attend. This practice will continue to be encouraged by ICOM as a matter of policy.

√Virtual participation

ICOM's communications have improved greatly in recent years. Such a large worldwide membership organisation, however, requires enhanced use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to provide virtual access both in real time and via online media services to business meetings, keynote addresses, regular updating of information and continuous professional development courses. This action will require an expertly drafted plan of action and increased resources of staff and funding but will contribute greatly to ICOM's cohesion as an organisation with the long-term benefits of improved access to debate and information.

√Democratic participation

In the interests of wide democratic participation, ICOM will support, subject to appropriate regulation and budget, attendance at the meetings of the Executive Board by elected representatives.

√ **Capacity building**

- **Training:**

In order to pursue capacity building, ICOM will increase its activities in training in regions where it is not available or where it may be difficult to organise locally. Training courses will be organised in regions of need. Close co-operation of the International Committees with National Committees will be key to success. The further development of online training will be considered as equality of access as technology improves globally.

- **Learning Experiences:**

In addition to training programmes, ICOM will endeavour to raise funds to support a series of short-term fellowships to enable suitably qualified professionals from areas with training needs to visit, work in and observe the activities of a relevant museum.

√ **Value of the annual meetings**

ICOM organises an annual General Assembly to meet the requirements of the French Association Law of 1901. Additionally, it organises the Advisory Council Meeting (AC), which is an important consultative organ of ICOM and as such should be tasked with a challenging agenda of work.

ICOM will ensure that its traditional business meeting will be enhanced by debates on urgent issues of concern to the museum community. Those topics should then be considered at the separate National and International Committee meetings for reporting to the Advisory Council plenary session. It will be developed as a platform for meaningful and timely debate on pressing issues of concern as well as a structured opportunity for networking.

√ **Committees**

ICOM will review the functions of National and International Committees in the spirit of the Barcelona Reform Task Force Report with the intention of enhancing their activities and role³.

³ A first step has resulted in the rules for the National Committees and International Committees created by the International Committee Task Force (ICTF) and the Standing Committee of International Committees (SCIC).

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #2 | **Enhancing ICOM's international profile**

ICOM's international profile will be enhanced through the following actions:

✓ ***Regional events and meetings***

ICOM's National and International Committees meet regularly and these meetings are an important affirmation of the value of ICOM at national and international level.

✓ ***Agreements with National Governments and Museum Associations***

ICOM will develop agreements with national governments and various museum associations in concert with the National Committees to ensure an enhanced appreciation for museums and their heritage in public policy.

✓ ***ICOM's Missions***

ICOM will continue its missions through the President, the Executive Board (EB), the Director General and staff as required on ICOM business including participation in regional and national events.

✓ ***Public Relations***

ICOM will continue to enhance its international profile through an improved programme of public relations.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #3 | **Raising the visibility of ICOM**

The Executive Board (EB) has approved a **rebranding** of ICOM to raise its profile worldwide. This rebranding will redefine the image of ICOM and its work – especially in its communications with members and the wider world, place the organisation appropriately in the world of cultural heritage and cultural diplomacy and bring ICOM more to the notice of the public, governments and intergovernmental agencies.

It will clarify **what ICOM offers to the world of museums, to its members and to the public**. The work will provide an important advocacy tool. The rebranding of ICOM is essential for the Organisation and its progress shall be regularly reported to the members.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #4 | **Enhancing ICOM's international role**

ICOM has a proud record as a pioneer of Cultural Property Protection (CPP). ICOM has a long tradition of forging alliances with international agencies such as UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICCROM, IFLA, ICA and the Blue Shield, and with governments worldwide. As part of a structured programme, ICOM will refresh older, and develop new, relationships with museums and museum associations worldwide and enhance the role of Regional Alliances and Affiliated Organisations in pursuing common purposes.

√ **Cultural Property Protection**

With the threat of terrorism and ideologically inspired assaults on the cultural heritage and on the safety, and even the lives, of those who champion our common heritage, the work of ICOM in Cultural Property Protection (CPP) has assumed an even greater significance and urgency.

- **ICOM Red Lists:**

ICOM will continue to publish its Red Lists of Cultural Objects at Risk.

- **International Observatory on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Goods:**

ICOM will continue fighting the illicit traffic in cultural goods.

- **Statements:**

ICOM, with expert preparation, will speak out boldly on the issues of the terrorism threat and the illicit trade in cultural and natural property whether promoted by states, insurgencies or criminals.

- **Emergency Response:**

- ICOM will use its worldwide contacts and use its position in the International Committee of the Blue Shield to assist in the sourcing of practical advice and help for countries and communities suffering from significant or potential loss of cultural or other heritage property.
- ICOM will develop further its capacity to respond to natural and manmade disasters through its Disaster Risk Management Committee (DRMC).

√*Publications*

This Strategic Plan recognises and endorses the steps being taken to refresh and improve ICOM's publications and particularly commends the ambition to provide a **platform for informed and scientific analyses of the issues facing the museum profession internationally**. ICOM will continue to develop its publishing activity, regular and occasional, and continue to provide guidance to ensure the visibility of and access to the publications of National and International Committees.

√*ICOM, Museums and National Museum Associations*

ICOM will commit to developing **further formal links with museum associations** worldwide with a view to cooperation on shared aims.

ICOM will identify **key individual museums**, sub-groups of museum professionals and museum friends associations with which it shares a common purpose in order to advance the aims of the organisation.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #5 | **Auditing ICOM's need in terms of staff and resources**

ICOM's staff provides a range of expert services and organises numerous meetings large and small. Skill, attainments and efficiency are at a high level in the Secretariat. Much is achieved but by any reasonable standard ICOM is understaffed and under-resourced for its global mandate. Therefore:

- a review of staffing needs and the development of a plan to meet its management and specialised requirements will be carried out;
- a review of resources needed to meet its objectives as described in strategic objectives 2, 3 and 4, especially for capacity building and networking, will be carried out.