INTERNATIONAL CHARTER FOR
THE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF MONUMENTS
AND SITES

(The Venice Charter - 1964)

2nd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of

Adopted by ICOMOS in 1965

Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people
remain to the present day as living witnesses of their age-old traditions. People are
becoming more and more conscious of the unity of human values and regard ancient
monuments as a common heritage. The common responsibility to safeguard them for future
generations is recognized. It is our duty to hand them on in the full richness of their
authenticity.

It is essential that the principles guiding the preservation and restoration of ancient buildings
should be agreed and be laid down on an international basis, with each country being
responsible for applying the plan within the framework of its own culture and traditions.

By defining these basic principles for the first time, the Athens Charter of 1931 contributed
towards the development of an extensive international movement which has assumed
concrete form in national documents, in the work of ICOM and UNESCO and in the
establishment by the latter of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and
the Restoration of Cultural Property. Increasing awareness and critical study have been
brought to bear on problems which have continually become more complex and varied; now
the time has come to examine the Charter afresh in order to make a thorough study of the
principles involved and to enlarge its scope in a new document.

Accordingly, the 2nd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic
Monuments, which met in Venice from May 25th to 31st 1964, approved the following text:

DEFINITIONS

Article 1.
The concept of a historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also
the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a
significant development or a historic event. This applies not only to great works of art but
also to more modest works of the past which have acquired cultural significance with the
passing of time.
Article 2.
The conservation and restoration of monuments must have recourse to all the sciences and
techniques which can contribute to the study and safeguarding of the architectural heritage.

Article 3.
The intention in conserving and restoring monuments is to safeguard them no less as works
of art than as historical evidence.

CONSERVATION

Article 4.
It is essential to the conservation of monuments that they be maintained on a permanent
basis.

Article 5.
The conservation of monuments is always facilitated by making use of them for some
socially useful purpose. Such use is therefore desirable but it must not change the lay-out or
decoration of the building. It is within these limits only that modifications demanded by a
change of function should be envisaged and may be permitted.

Article 6.
The conservation of a monument implies preserving a setting which is not out of scale.
Wherever the traditional setting exists, it must be kept. No new construction, demolition or
modification which would alter the relations of mass and colour must be allowed.

Article 7.
A monument is inseparable from the history to which it bears witness and from the setting in
which it occurs. The moving of all or part of a monument cannot be allowed except where
the safeguarding of that monument demands it or where it is justified by national or
international interest of paramount importance.

Article 8.
Items of sculpture, painting or decoration which form an integral part of a monument may
only be removed from it if this is the sole means of ensuring their preservation.

RESTORATION

Article 9.
The process of restoration is a highly specialized operation. Its aim is to preserve and reveal
the aesthetic and historic value of the monument and is based on respect for original
material and authentic documents. It must stop at the point where conjecture begins, and in
this case moreover any extra work which is indispensable must be distinct from the
architectural composition and must bear a contemporary stamp. The restoration in any case
must be preceded and followed by an archaeological and historical study of the monument.

Article 10.
Where traditional techniques prove inadequate, the consolidation of a monument can be
achieved by the use of any modern technique for conservation and construction, the efficacy
of which has been shown by scientific data and proved by experience.
**Article 11.**
The valid contributions of all periods to the building of a monument must be respected, since unity of style is not the aim of a restoration. When a building includes the superimposed work of different periods, the revealing of the underlying state can only be justified in exceptional circumstances and when what is removed is of little interest and the material which is brought to light is of great historical, archaeological or aesthetic value, and its state of preservation good enough to justify the action. Evaluation of the importance of the elements involved and the decision as to what may be destroyed cannot rest solely on the individual in charge of the work.

**Article 12.**
Replacements of missing parts must integrate harmoniously with the whole, but at the same time must be distinguishable from the original so that restoration does not falsify the artistic or historic evidence.

**Article 13.**
Additions cannot be allowed except in so far as they do not detract from the interesting parts of the building, its traditional setting, the balance of its composition and its relation with its surroundings.

**HISTORIC SITES**

**Article 14.**
The sites of monuments must be the object of special care in order to safeguard their integrity and ensure that they are cleared and presented in a seemly manner. The work of conservation and restoration carried out in such places should be inspired by the principles set forth in the foregoing articles.

**EXCAVATIONS**

**Article 15.**
Excavations should be carried out in accordance with scientific standards and the recommendation defining international principles to be applied in the case of archaeological excavation adopted by UNESCO in 1956.

Ruins must be maintained and measures necessary for the permanent conservation and protection of architectural features and of objects discovered must be taken. Furthermore, every means must be taken to facilitate the understanding of the monument and to reveal it without ever distorting its meaning.

All reconstruction work should however be ruled out "a priori". Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts can be permitted. The material used for integration should always be recognizable and its use should be the least that will ensure the conservation of a monument and the reinstatement of its form.

**PUBLICATION**

**Article 16.**
In all works of preservation, restoration or excavation, there should always be precise documentation in the form of analytical and critical reports, illustrated with drawings and photographs. Every stage of the work of clearing, consolidation, rearrangement and integration, as well as technical and formal features identified during the course of the work, should be included. This record should be placed in the archives of a public institution and made available to research workers. It is recommended that the report should be published.

The following persons took part in the work of the Committee for drafting the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments:

- Piero Gazzola (Italy), Chairman
- Raymond Lemaire (Belgium), Reporter
- José Bassegoda-Nonell (Spain)
- Luis Benavente (Portugal)
- Djurdje Boskovic (Yugoslavia)
- Hiroshi Daifuku (UNESCO)
- P.L. de Vrieze (Netherlands)
- Harald Langberg (Denmark)
- Mario Matteucci (Italy)
- Jean Merlet (France)
- Carlos Flores Marini (Mexico)
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- S.C.J. Pavel (Czechoslovakia)
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- Victor Pimentel (Peru)
- Harold Plenderleith (ICCROM)
- Deoclecio Redig de Campos (Vatican)
- Jean Sonnier (France)
- Francois Sorlin (France)
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- Gertrud Tripp (Austria)
- Jan Zachwatowicz (Poland)
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