

Puebla Declaration

regarding Prevention and Protection Measures for World Heritage Cities in Case of Disaster

(OVPM)

We, the signatories, mayors and representatives of the World Heritage Cities who gathered for the sixth time in the city of Puebla on October 5, 2001, have had the opportunity to hear about the experiences of other cities of the world and share our own experiences by addressing a great number of themes related to the activities and programs to be implemented and projects initiated to protect heritage which, it goes without saying, is linked to the space inhabited by man and immersed in its own environment.

Man has modified nature thus giving birth to the most important civilizations that existed, those very civilizations that evolved through history with the support of knowledge, science and technology. We are now confronted with a progressive dynamic in which not only human thinking, and with it culture, but also the environment has changed gradually resulting in climate disruptions due to global warming which makes us face a constantly increasing number of natural disasters that jeopardize not only human lives but also the architectural heritage exposed to destruction.

However, destruction is not solely caused by nature since today more than ever man is vulnerable to the loss of its own heritage that he himself has provoked, an aspect which various factors have impacted on.

That is why, in the presence of delegates of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), the World Monument Fund (WMF) and the Getty Foundation, we consider:

That international gatherings should be aimed not only at disseminating advances, discoveries and activities being developed throughout the world in order to communicate them to the general public and involve citizens in the fight against any kind of threats to cultural heritage but also at including the cooperation of all local and international organizations involved in the conservation of cultural heritage apart from political considerations.

That currently, conservation is achieved through restoration interventions defined with an essentially cultural approach that is based on the historic and artistic values central to a rich intellectual activity completed by increasingly intense scientific activity.

That criteria have been defined internationally to identify monuments as such and legal instruments have been developed and implemented to contribute to their protection and guardianship. However, we will have to understand the meaning of threatened heritage and define the factors responsible for this condition.

That we will make a diagnosis to determine the vulnerability of heritage to various risk factors, whether man-induced or nature-induced.

That we will need to coordinate our efforts to avoid losing heritage as a result of permanent and progressive actions of nature or unpredictable events causing natural disasters by developing specific prevention and conservation programs related to urban development programs, the latter being linked to the management of the city. Risk preparedness involves the interdisciplinary participation of various types of organizations sharing a common objective, i.e. identifying threats and determining a way to face them.

That financial programs and mechanisms should be developed to encourage and ensure the implementation of restoration and permanent upkeep projects for historic buildings to make sure that the architectural unity of the monuments contained in the areas and sites is preserved.

That vulnerability factors should be identified since historically, risk prevention was determined by comprehensive studies on the behavior of traditional constructions because disastrous events which can be very destructive have a significant impact on heritage and environmental and climatic conditions create problems that appear slowly and gradually and can go as far as completely destroying a building.

That is why:

WE DECLARE that all citizens responsible for cultural heritage hereby undertake to improve environmental conditions by fighting against pollution, the excessive use of fuels and all factors affecting climate.

That all cities belonging to the Organization of World Heritage Cities and related international organizations will give their support through human, scientific, technological and economic resources available to develop coordinated conservation programs to preserve world heritage.

Therefore, at the Fifth General Assembly taking place during the Sixth International Symposium, we agreed to issue a declaration intended for governments and citizens everywhere in the world asking that peace and understanding between nations be a reality that no unilateral interests of any kind can alter.

We consider that unjustified violence only generates more violence; that is why neither terrorism nor war is an option for humanity. The General Assembly of the OWHC hopes that the peoples of the world can forget about hatred and resentment and will do everything they can to avoid conflicts through dialogue, cautiousness and harmony.

If economic inequity, creed differences and political disagreements are characteristic of our time, we must always appeal **to reason and tolerance** to maintain political stability and international cooperation for the benefit of democracy and justice.

Nothing is more important than for nations to find a way to overcome their differences by calling on international authorities; the international community must punish any violation by mobilizing every resource available in favor of peace.
