

Dubrovnik Global Heritage Forum

28. September 2007

Key Topic: Reclaiming Cultural Property

Hosted by ICOM Europe

THE BEST IN HERITAGE, Dubrovnik, 27-29 September 2007

Summary

Dubrovnik, Croatia, is a world heritage site and is the venue for the annual conference "The Best in Heritage", taking place this year from September 27 - 29, 2007. In the framework of this conference, the „Dubrovnik Global Heritage Forum“ will be - for the first time - a summit of the world's leading Heritage Organizations. The event is hosted by ICOM-Europe on September 28, 2007. Key topic of the following panel discussion will be "Reclaiming Cultural Property". For information please contact: www.thebestinheritage.com.

1. The Initiative

Issues concerning cultural heritage and the preservation of cultural property are slowly gaining more attention and recognition throughout the world. There is, though, a serious lack of knowledge and understanding about the important role, that international heritage organizations play in this field. Unfortunately the activities of these organizations are seldomly coordinated, due to an insufficient transfer of information and little mutual consultation. Therefore the European Heritage Organisation, based in Zagreb, Croatia, proposes an annual meeting of high representatives of heritage organizations to take place as the Global Heritage Forum in Dubrovnik, Croatia. Such a meeting would be unique in the world and enable participants to discuss all matters concerning global strategies for the preservation, care and communication of cultural heritage.

2. The Event

As an ideal setting for the Dubrovnik Global Heritage Forum, the European Heritage Association suggests to integrate it into its annual conference "The Best in Heritage" (27. – 29. September 2007) that has been taking place in Dubrovnik for five years now. (see: www.thebestinheritage.com) The conference has become a remarkable event of inspiration and encounter, each time gathering about 20 museum, heritage or conservation projects from all over the world, that have received, in the preceding year, national or international prize for their outstanding achievements. The presentations of these projects are attracting more and more visitors each year (135 in 2006, from 25 countries). A documentation of "The Best in Heritage" is being provided in conference publication, on its website and an excellent interactive DVD with 20 hours of programme. The web site has become a unique search engine for the best practices and quality in heritage domain.

The Dubrovnik Global Heritage Forum will take place on the second day of the conference "The Best in Heritage" and consists of two major events: 1. A consultative meeting of high representatives of the

world's heritage organizations 2. A forum discussion with representatives of the heritage organizations and experts focussing on a key issue.

3. The key issue

The key issue of the 2007 Dubrovnik Global Forum will be "Reclaiming Cultural Property".

With the ratification of the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Diversity in more and more countries throughout the world the awareness for the preservation of sites of cultural heritage and collections has increased. When it comes to questions of restitution, though, the debate often turns very emotional, lacks professional insight and ethical standards. ICOM's focus on mediation and the enhancement of dialogue with museums in countries or areas, that have lost a significant part of their heritage, is promising. The return of the Aksum obelisk to Ethiopia by the Italian government was a symbol of hope. Having in mind the looting of the National Museum in Baghdad or the Museum of Macedonia in Skopje we should realize, though, that this is happening today, not in colonial times. Therefore the theme "Reclaiming Cultural Property" will gather representatives of heritage organizations and experts to discuss in which way illicit traffic of cultural property can be prevented and how a new understanding of universal cultural heritage may reshape the approach to questions of exclusive ownership.

4. The partners

The European Heritage Association has acclaimed patronage and support for "The Best in Heritage" event by ICOM, UNESCO (Venice office), Europa Nostra, ICOMOS, ICCROM and the City of Dubrovnik, a world heritage site. With the Dubrovnik Global Heritage Forum it wishes to extend its partnerships in order to make it a regular summit of international importance. ICOM supports this initiative, whereas ICOM-Europe has agreed to be the host of this event. Therefore the European Heritage Association and ICOM-Europe jointly offer heritage organisations worldwide a platform, on which they can discuss and raise issues of global concern. And as you know: Heritage counts.

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