

Tokyo Declaration for the Protection of World Cultural Heritage from Seismic Disasters

2008.11.17

Preamble

1. Experts in cultural heritage and disaster management, who came together from all over the world to the United Nations University, Tokyo, are grateful to the organizing bodies in Japan, who created this opportunity to share ideas for the protection of World Cultural Heritage located in earthquake zones.
2. At present, there are 878 World Heritage Sites in total, of which 679 are cultural heritage sites, including those inscribed on the World Heritage list by the World Heritage Committee in Quebec City in July 2008. However, many of them are exposed to several risks, which come from man-made factors such as conflicts, rapid urbanization or concentration of population. Natural hazards such as earthquakes greatly increase the impact of these risks.
3. Earthquake zones are spread all over the world. Half of World Cultural Heritage Sites are located in these areas, especially in the Asia-Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean and Southern Europe. Potential damage due to large seismic disasters in the future are feared in these regions. Severe damage to the World Cultural Heritage Site of Dujiangyan in China from the earthquake in May 2008 is a typical example in recent times.
4. There are regions that are facing situation similar to Japan, where the entire country is located on the Circum-Pacific Earthquake Zones and experiences frequent damage. An earthquake at the scale of the Iwate Miyagi Inland Earthquake that struck on June 2008 can occur anywhere and at any time. Therefore such regions are in need of urgent measures to safeguard cultural heritage from disasters.
5. We are pleased to note that international consensus in this field is being formed by international organizations, governments, educational and research institutions through initiatives such as the Hyogo Framework of Action of the United Nations' World Conference on Disaster Reduction 2005, and the recommendations of the Thematic Workshop on Risk Management of Cultural Heritage of the same conference. We attach great importance to the fact that the responsibility of each State Party to formulate comprehensive policies for the protection of cultural heritage, has been emphasized in Article 5 of the World Heritage Convention.
6. In view of the above worldwide situation, we experts declare the following points, in order to encourage related international organizations, governmental agencies and academic institutions such as universities to take measures or do the research needed for the protection of World Cultural Heritage located in earthquake zones in particular.

Declaration

1. International organizations and NGOs involved in the protection of cultural heritage such as UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICCROM as well as related international conventions such as the World Heritage Convention should take more action to promote disaster risk management for cultural heritage in earthquake zones.
 - Building of UNESCO's international networks through universities in developed countries has been effective. More efforts should be made through relevant activities within the frameworks of projects such as UNESCO UNITWIN, UNESCO Chair, and Forum UNESCO – University and Heritage.
 - It is hoped that UNDP and the World Bank will encourage international training activities by the developed countries in this field and also help in the development of facilities and equipment necessary for undertaking practical disaster prevention measures in order to support the developing countries in disaster risk management of cultural heritage.
2. Each country's government is encouraged to respect the following points.
 - Since Article 5.a of the World Heritage Convention states that each State Party shall endeavor, in so far as possible, and as appropriate for each country, to adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programmes, therefore the governments should promote coordination between policies for cultural heritage earthquake risk management, urban planning and disaster management for the cultural heritage sites and the surrounding environment.

- In order to guarantee the effectiveness of these policies, governments should on one hand establish an expert committee that would enable exchange of opinions to formulate coordinated policies by bringing together cultural heritage and other departments, and on the other hand promote administrative and financial measures necessary to establish comprehensive disaster prevention facilities for cultural heritage sites as well as their surrounding urban environment. In the case of Japan, the Special Committee for Disaster Management of Cultural Heritage within the Cabinet Office Central Committee for Disaster Management, established in July 2008 would be a good example of the former, while comprehensive urban planning covering disaster management measures for cultural heritage as stated in Historic Towns Conservation and Enhancement Law (Law for the conservation and enhancement of cultural setting and environment in the historic towns) that came into force in November 2008, would be a good example of the latter.
3. Academic institutions such as universities are encouraged to promote education and research on comprehensive disaster management for cultural heritage sites located in earthquake zones, and are especially encouraged to engage in the following international activities.
 - To invest greater human resources and funds into the efforts in this field, such as UNESCO's international framework of activities by universities: UNESCO UNITWIN, UNESCO Chair, and Forum UNESCO – University and Heritage.
 - Through such frameworks, universities should make the efforts to form multinational academic networks, and improve the quality of their activities by cooperating with the activities of regional cultural heritage centers supported by organizations such as UNESCO and ICCROM. In the case of Japan, Ritsumeikan University's UNESCO Chair programme on Cultural Heritage and Risk Management, which started as a result of the recommendation of the Thematic Meeting on Risk Management of Cultural Heritage, held during the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005, is an example of such activities by universities that reflect building of international consensus.

The "Tokyo Declaration for the Protection of World Cultural Heritage from Seismic Disasters" was drafted and proposed by the experts below, and adopted with the applause and common consent of all the participants of the International Symposium "How to Promote Risk Management for World Cultural Heritage Sites in Earthquake Zones" commemorating the Enforcement of the Historic Towns Conservation and Enhancement Law, hosted by UNESCO, Ritsumeikan University, the United Nations University and ICL (International Consortium on Landslides) with the support of ICOMOS, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transportation and Tourism of Japan, Waseda University, Japan Economic Newspaper (Nikkei Inc.), the NHK, NPO for Protection of Cultural Heritages from Disaster, and so on, which was held at the U Thant Hall, United Nations University (Aoyama, Tokyo), on 17th November 2008 (in alphabetical order).

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