

OUTCOME DOCUMENT
of the International Forum on the Great Silk Roads
(14-16 October 2013, Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan)

International Forum on the Great Silk Roads, held on 14-16 October 2013 in Almaty, was organized by the National Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan for UNESCO and ISESCO in cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat, Kazakhstan Federation of UNESCO Clubs and the National ICOM Committee. The event was held in the framework of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022).

The Forum brought together leading researchers and experts in the field of Silk Roads studies from Azerbaijan, United Kingdom, Germany, Iran, China, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Oman, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Tajikistan, Turkey, France, Japan, as well as representatives of the UNESCO Secretariat, Kazakhstan National Commission for UNESCO and ISESCO, and a number of prominent local experts.

An important outcome of the event was the official launch within UNESCO of the world's first integrated online platform, representing the research database of the ongoing worldwide initiatives related to the Great Silk Roads. This project was undertaken with the financial support of Kazakhstan and Germany.

In addition, in the course of the Forum the workshop on the second phase of the Serial World Heritage Nomination of the Silk Roads was held with the participation of representatives of Central Asia and the UNESCO Cluster Office in Almaty.

The cultural programme of the Forum included children's art exhibition «The Great Silk Roads in the eyes of children» and a guided tour to the UNESCO World Heritage Site «Petroglyphs of the Archaeological Landscape «Tamgaly».

Objectives

The main objective of the Forum – revisiting common cultural heritage of the Great Silk Road and its potential for more intensive international scientific, cultural and humanitarian cooperation within the framework of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022).

Seven interactive panel discussions were held in the course of the Forum on the following topics:

1. «Cultural heritage of the Silk Roads»;
2. «Intangible cultural heritage of the Silk Roads»;
3. «Common heritage and pluralistic identity along the Silk Roads»;
4. «Presentation and launch of the UNESCO online platform on the Silk Roads»;
5. «The Silk Roads as a vector of intercultural dialogue in the 21st century»;
6. «The Great Silk Road and its potential for international cooperation»;
7. «The Silk Roads and the culture of peace».

Following the discussions, the participants of the Forum, recognizing the unique character of the Great Silk Roads and the need to continue comprehensive study and preservation of tangible and intangible heritage, which underlies this outstanding phenomenon, worked out the following recommendations.

Recommendations

1. To contribute to wider cooperation and exchange of experience in the fields of specialist training and technology transfer in the framework of the Serial World Heritage Nomination of the Silk Roads in order to improve the level of management, research, conservation, monitoring and interpretation of the nominated property;

2. To pay special attention to the preservation of the Silk Roads monuments in the following areas:

a) Conservation: strengthening the exchange of experiences through holding conferences, seminars, trainings, particularly related to the problems of preservation of raw architecture;

b) Museumification: elaborating the idea of creating archaeological parks as a basis for developing infrastructure and preservation of cultural heritage;

3. To promote the development of the tourism sector along the Silk Roads sites by means of:

a) creating a unified concept of the «Silk Roads» tourist route;

b) providing joint visa support;

c) raising awareness of tour operators;

d) encouraging appropriate bodies and local authorities to create a favorable environment for the development of the tourism cluster on the basis of anchor sites of Serial World Heritage Nomination of the Silk Roads (strengthening of infrastructure);

e) developing transport routes and launching special tourist trains throughout Central Asia;

f) establishing a coordinating committee for the development of the «Silk Roads» tourist route;

g) conducting master classes and preparing master plans for tourism development with the inclusion of the Silk Roads monuments;

4. To extend, with active support of the governments of the region, through routes along the Great Silk Roads crossing the territory of all Central Asian states and taking into account all attractive tourist destinations;

5. To join mutual efforts on the interdisciplinary level for the purpose of creating common development strategy and facilitating research on the Great Silk Roads;

6. To apply expert scientific potential of the countries along the Silk Roads to a greater extent;

7. To emphasize the necessity of strengthening interaction between scientific community and children's associations with respect to study and popularization of the heritage of the Great Silk Roads;

8. To intensify efforts to inspire children's interest in studying the Great Silk Roads by means of:

a) developing popular children-oriented programme on the history of the Great Silk Roads;

b) preparing and posting popular children-oriented projects on the Great Silk Roads on the UNESCO's Silk Road online platform;

9. To develop programmes, comprising comprehensive data on the history and development of the Silk Roads, for the students of historical faculties for the purpose of preparing young specialists in this field;

10. To study national histories in the context of studying the history of the Great Silk Roads in order to create a new historical consciousness in the age of growing globalization and mainstreaming of intercultural dialogue in the modern world;

11. To study and promote the Great Silk Roads experience for its use in the current context in the following areas:

a) dialogue of civilizations;

b) trade, security, tax policy, etc.;

c) co-existence and interaction of religions;

d) definition of «philosophical points» on the Great Silk Roads.

12. To expand the format of the initiative «Conversations on the Silk Roads» (Kazakhstan's ongoing regional project since 2007) by attracting thinkers from other foreign countries;

13. To welcome the creation of the UNESCO's Silk Road online platform which represents an interdisciplinary tool for collecting and sharing quality (accurate) information related to the Silk Road studies;

14. To take measures for stimulating the process of digitization and posting various materials concerning the Great Silk Roads on the UNESCO's online platform;

15. To complement the UNESCO's online platform with a glossary, information on key diplomatic missions carried out along the ancient Silk Roads, as well as a section on cultural landscapes of the Silk Roads including such aspects as intellectual history, contemporary art, spiritual culture and symbolism with a focus on the countries' regions;

16. To carry out necessary work on systematization and cataloging of the Silk Roads monuments on the basis of the UNESCO's online platform;

17. To include the issues of linguistic studies, particularly, etymology as «the archeology of consciousness» and comparative linguistics of the Silk Road spaces into the programme of subsequent fora and events;

18. To initiate training courses and competitions for journalists on the Great Silk Roads with the use of new technologies;

19. To aim for understanding the history of Eurasia on the new methodological level - in unity and diversity of civilizational types and cultural communities - through studying the cultural heritage of the Great Silk Roads;

20. To acknowledge the relevance of the methodological approach taking into account not only unity, but also a variety of different forms within the same-type cultures, for example, nomadic and sedentary forms (Prof. J.Legrand);

21. To consider at governmental level a proposal on creation of a natural-ethnographic park and a museum of nomadic civilizations in Kazakhstan;

22. To further studies on pluralistic interaction between cultures and their various manifestations using materials and artifacts on the history of Kazakhstan and Central Asia found in storages and museums, libraries and archives around the world;

23. To promote research on the development of various corridors of the Great Silk Roads (including Iranian) as unique examples of cross-cultural influence and symbiosis;

24. To expand the research on the history of development of the nomadic civilization and the challenges posed by modernization and globalization;

25. With the support of UNESCO and in the framework of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022) to study, disseminate and promote the heritage of the nomads, their traditional knowledge (traditional medicine), customs and culture that made a historic contribution to the development of the Great Silk Roads and civilizations;

26. To consider the possibility of creating , in the framework of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), a UNESCO Silk Roads Pavilion as part of the international specialized exhibition «Astana EXPO-2017» in order to highlight UNESCO's mission on preservation and dissemination of knowledge about world cultures, diversity of the cultural heritage of the Great Silk Roads and Kazakhstan's contribution to the UNESCO mission.

The participants of the International Forum on the Great Silk Roads expressed appreciation to the National Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan for UNESCO and ISESCO as well as the UNESCO Secretariat, Kazakhstan Federation of UNESCO Clubs and the National ICOM Committee for initiating and organizing this event at a high level.

16 October 2013

Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan