Peace Garden Declaration

Beijing, China

We, scholars, experts and practitioners in history, culture, linguistics, anthropology, heritage, and ICTs from different continents of the world, gathered in Beijing, China from May 31 to June 1, 2017, to participate in a consultative meeting on the development of an Interactive Atlas of the Cultural Interactions along the Silk Roads.

We thank UNESCO, China World Peace Foundation and Beijing International Peace Culture Foundation for having organized this timely meeting and we express our appreciation of the warm hospitality and the excellent working conditions that were provided to us by China World Peace Foundation and Beijing International Peace Culture Foundation.

This Expert Meeting offered us a good opportunity to exchange our experiences and expertise, also to discuss the possibilities and modalities for producing an interactive Atlas which we hope will capture the complex cultural interactions along the Silk Roads.

Our exchanges were led by the objectives defined by UNESCO for its Routes of dialogue, and in particular the guiding principles set for the Silk Roads Online Platform and its International Network of Focal Points. Our discussions were inspired by the outcome of the "Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation", held in China from 14 to 15 May 2017, which brought together representatives of some 130 countries, among whom were 30 heads of state and heads of government, as well as representatives of around 70 international organizations, including the Secretary-General of United Nations and the Director-General of UNESCO.

Concerned by the rise of extremism, ignorance, mistrust in every part of the world, we consider the production of this Atlas to be crucial as it will illustrate the common heritage of humankind and how cultures and peoples have mutually influenced each other and contributed to global development.

During our two days’ meeting, we held extensive discussions to define the scope, structure, targets and themes of this Interactive Atlas. The themes could include items such
as: transport and transmission of goods, knowledge, ideas, and persons along the Silk Roads; science and technology; music and other arts; language and literature; religion, spirituality, rituals and celebrations; food production and preparation, gastronomy and costume. We also discussed the methodology and technologies - in particular, modern IT like 3D, VR, AI in order to make this Atlas more attractive and interactive to the general public, in particular the youth. We believe this project could inspire and mobilize stakeholders of all ages working on issues related to the Silk Roads, as well as those working towards inter-cultural dialogue and the rapprochement of peoples. We also believe this will contribute to reward all efforts engaged in fostering mutual understanding and promoting a culture of peace.

In light of the above, and taking into account the challenge of translating the complexities of the issues into attractive, user-friendly and accessible knowledge to the general public, we recommend the following:

1. The Atlas should cover a broad span, from the earliest recorded accounts to the modern period, taking into account the plurality of chronologies;
2. It should also cover the entire geographic span of the Silk Roads;
3. It should target primarily the younger generation, who will be the decision makers of tomorrow;
4. It should focus on examples of interactions that contributed to the improvement of the human condition;
5. The Atlas should incorporate only reliable scholarly approved data; For that purpose, a scientific panel should be established to oversee the Atlas content;
6. It should highlight the role of women in these developments;
7. It should explore the full potential and possibilities of ICT;
8. It is envisaged that the Atlas will be implemented in stages, starting with a pilot activity, which will be extended according to the availability of resources; and
9. The implementation of this project will require an extensive cooperation and partnership with the widest possible range of stakeholders, including specialized institutions, governmental and non-governmental agencies, private sector partners, foundations, media, as well as experts.