

Opening remarks

Teti Hadjinicolaou, chair of ICOM Greece

On behalf of the Hellenic National Committee of ICOM, I would like to welcome you to today's conference that was initiated by ICOM Germany with the participation of ICOM Cyprus.

We had planned this conference in a totally different way, under different circumstances and conditions: our plan was to host it at the Acropolis Museum in Athens with the support of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and other research organisations. This is why you see an image of the Acropolis in the conference publication material.

In addition, to complement the conference, we were going to host a special two-day masterclass in the ICOM premises in Athens. The *Masterclass on Integrative Security, Emergency and Disaster Management in Museums* will now take place online on 26 and 27 November 2020.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced us to change our plans. At the same time, the consequences of the pandemic force us to think differently about the operation of museums in the immediate future and in the longer term. The pandemic is not the only emergency that we are called to respond to. Climate change, natural disasters, armed conflicts, the demographic boom, mass immigration, food sustainability and social issues are global emergencies that demand global solutions. Hence, international meetings such as this one are very important.

Climate change is a serious challenge for both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. It does impact on the museums' microenvironments, and transforms their energy needs. Under these circumstances, the museum community has to grapple with issues such as digital collections management, conservation, audience mobilisation, skills development and lifelong learning, the dialogue between international

organisations, emergency planning tailored to local and regional needs, etc.

At the same time, social disruptions demand the redefinition of the social role of museums, while the consequences of the pandemic make us realise that the museums of tomorrow will be different than those of the past. The digital turn is rapidly materialising, however the quest for balance between reality and digital reality is ongoing. We, as museum professionals, have to negotiate the dynamics of the material and virtual worlds.

It is obvious that the aforementioned issues necessitate interdisciplinary partnerships for the strengthening of environmental sustainability, as well as the protection of human rights.

We started planning and preparing this conference over two years ago with a great enthusiasm about this collaborative venture. We have a long-standing and fruitful cooperation with our German colleagues in the context of many International Committees. With our Cypriot partners, we share deep cultural heritage bonds. The pandemic may have deprived us from seeing our colleagues in person this time, but will not stop us from working together in the future. Thanks to the digital technology, today we have the opportunity to operate as an ICOM community.

I would like to cordially thank ICOM Germany Chair Prof. Dr. Beate Reifenscheid for the initiative to organise this Conference, ICOM Cyprus Chair Dr. Despina Pilides for her cooperation, Dr. Klaus Staubermann, Mrs Beate von Toerne and all ICOM Germany Board members for the organising, and all speakers for their participation.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my gratitude to the Goulandris Museum of Natural History, an award-winning organisation with high environmental credentials, for its assistance in today's event.

I wish the conference every success and I do hope that next time we meet in person.