International Council on Archives (ICA)

The International Telecommunication Union Council (ITU), in close cooperation with other interested United Nations Agencies, will organize the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in December 2003 in Geneva, Switzerland, and in 2005 in Tunis, Tunisia. UNESCO is closely involved in the preparation process and, since February 2002, has organized five consultative meetings with professional non-governmental organizations (NGO's) representing civil society, including ICA. The objective was to determine the ways and means by which the NGO's could participate to the Summit and to prepare a draft Declaration embodying a set of principles and rules of conduct to be proposed to the organizers.

In order to involve its members in the preparation of the Summit, ICA held a consultative seminar on May 30 and 31, 2002 with the cooperation of UNESCO. Taking place in Beijing, following the meeting of the Executive Committee, this seminar brought together the Presidents of ICA regional branches and the National Archivists from the Asian Branch. Other such consultations are planned for the other branches on the occasion of their professional meetings.

The participants to the Seminar have adopted the following recommendations :

International Council on Archives (ICA)/UNESCO Consultation in preparation for the World Summit on the Information Society

Beijing, China, 30 and 31 May 2002

Recommendations

The International Council on Archives (ICA)/UNESCO Consultation in preparation for the *World Summit on the Information Society* held in Beijing 30 and 31 May 2002 stresses the need for the forthcoming World Summit to take into account the essential role that should be assigned to archives and records management in the development of a global information society and the preservation of its memory.

Records and archives are the direct and authentic product of human activities and constitute evidence documenting the development of humankind and the environment**.**

In particular the Consultation recommends that the following principles and actions be adopted by the WSIS:

Principles

1. Archives and records are unique and irreplaceable

2. Archives and records concern all citizens today and in the future as evidence of their rights and entitlements

3. Archives are fundamental to the historical and cultural identities of individuals and peoples as well as to understanding diverse cultures, both between and within countries

4. Archives and records are essential to effective governance and a prerequisite for accountability

5. Archives and records are crucial to have informed citizens

6. *Archives and records' preservation guarantees the authenticity, integrity and availability of information over time, which is critical in a time when information is volatile and changeable and electronic media are instable and subject to rapid technological obsolescence*

7. Archives are the most extensive existing sources of publicly available information and provide free and unlimited use of public domain information by citizens

8. Access to Archives and records requires appropriate legislation and implementation

9. Access to archives requires appropriate training for archives users, staff and future staff

10. Accessible and affordable technology permits global sharing of on-line information and the development of a global knowledge society in which all citizens are both contributors and users, hereby creating a commonwealth of information and knowledge

Principles and Actions

1. Archives and records are unique and irreplaceable

   a   promote development of national and international strategies that recognize the essential role of archives and records professions and institutions

   b   promote development of national and international policies that increase public awareness of archives and records

2. Archives and records concern all citizens today and in the future as evidence of their rights and entitlements

   a   promote the preservation and restoration of traditional and born digital material in a balanced way

   b   promote both virtual and traditional access

3. Archives are fundamental to the historical and cultural identities of individuals and peoples as well as to understanding diverse cultures, both between and within countries

   a   promote cooperation between educational systems and archival systems, including training and curriculum development to introduce teachers and students to the richness of their own heritage

   b   promote availability of appropriate educative materials by combining traditional and electronic media

   c   ensure that Archives include records that reflect all components of society to avoid concentration on "official" culture only

4. Archives and records are essential to effective governance and a prerequisite for accountability

   a   promote implementation of effective records management in the public sector

5. Archives and records are crucial in order to have informed citizens

   a   promote better access through the development and implementation of international standards and national policies

   b   promote literacy and wider access to information

   c   promote access to and sharing of information and communication technologies

6. Archives and records' preservation guarantees the authenticity, integrity and availability of information over time, which is critical in a time when information is volatile and changeable and electronic media are instable and subject to rapid technological obsolescence

   a   promote the establishment of effective information, knowledge and records management systems in both the public and the private sector in order to facilitate long term accessibility

7. Archives are the most extensive existing sources of publicly available information and provide free and unlimited use of public domain information by citizens

   a   promote development of capability to deliver content

   b   promote preservation of unique information, including in climate-challenged regions

   c   promote digitization of access tools and related materials

8. Access to Archives and records requires appropriate legislation and implementation

   a   promote legislation ensuring access by citizens to public information on an equal basis

   b   promote legislation on privacy

   c   promote continued access free of charge to information held in the public domain by opposing legislation that supports the privatization of public domain information thus limiting public access

9. Access to archives requires appropriate training for archives users, staff and future staff

   a   promote adequate training for users in both accessing archives and understanding them

   b   promote adequate training and resources enabling archivists in all countries to provide online access to information in their holdings

   c   promote training of teachers in the preparation of distance learning courses

   d   promote provision of infrastructure to all national archives, schools and information training programmes

   e   promote support for Internet access and necessary training for all archivists and users

10. Accessible and affordable technology permits global sharing of on-line information and the development of a global knowledge society in which all citizens are both contributors and users, hereby creating a commonwealth of information and knowledge

   a   promote equitable tariff structures for access to the Internet worldwide

   b   promote among the information industry the introduction of appropriate international standards

   c   promote among the information industry the development of information carriers, platforms and applications that will enable permanent access to electronic information for future generations

   d   promote interdisciplinary cooperation between archivists and other information professionals worldwide

   e   promote partnership with other cultural institutions because of the related nature of archives, museums and libraries in serving the public