

## **The Future of ICOM as a World Organisation**

### Remarks at ICOM DEUTSCHLAND Annual Meeting

Dear colleagues, let me at the outset offer my heartiest congratulations to the new ICOM Deutschland Chairperson and board. I also want to indicate what an honour and pleasure it is for me to have been invited to speak at your annual meeting here in Berlin, particularly given your impressive and successful profile as a national committee of ICOM. Your proceedings during this morning with the introduction to Germany's foreign policy and then Hans Martin Hinz' comprehensive presentation, were particularly enlightening and should certainly be broadly publicized as an excellent model for the way in which national committees can and should, interrelate with their governments from the point of view of informing each of the ways in which museums and other heritage institutions can provide excellent support to the policies of cultural exchange for any country.

Many times I think it is forgotten that the national committees of ICOM, are the national arms of an international and global organisation, with the primary focus being to concentrate on facilitating and implementing a shared vision and mutual goals and objectives with museums all over the world. It is clear to me that ICOM Deutschland has given careful thought and articulated a very deliberate stance with the programmes initiatives it has established within the last five years, transforming it into a highly dynamic forum for professional development and exchange. I will speak more on this later on in my presentation but let me begin by giving you a brief overview of ICOM itself as an organisation before launching into the future direction of its programme. Indeed, this power point presentation was developed just recently to provide our members with a better picture of what ICOM is? how it functions? and who were the major participants in this whole process? It is necessary to really have this kind of orientation as a backdrop to identifying the ways in which ICOM can effectively develop as a truly global phenomenon.

(Power point presentation giving overview of the history, the partnerships, the major programmes, and the organisational structure of ICOM – vgl. [http://www.icom-deutschland.de/profil\\_rueckblick.htm](http://www.icom-deutschland.de/profil_rueckblick.htm) )

Now that we have reviewed the overall picture of ICOM let me come to the main point of my presentation “The future of ICOM as a world organisation”, and if you will permit me I would like to extend that remit to consider as well “Possible ways in which ICOM Deutschland can assist this process”. We have just concluded in November in Seoul a very thoughtful and constructive process of updating and revising ICOM's strategic plan 2004 – 2010 which was finally approved by the general assembly. This will be one of our basic texts guiding our progress the future. The General Assembly concluded that ICOM must continue the reform process started in 2001, focusing on reshaping itself into a more flexible and capable organization equipped to address the challenge of change and diversity. This it must do by fostering its visionary spirit capable of stimulating the increased involvement of the broad range of membership in upholding and fostering its core values.

Let me just take a moment to reflect upon ICOM's mission as approved (indeed reaffirmed) in Seoul – and I quote –

***ICOM is the international organization of museums and museum professionals, committed to the conservation, transmission and communication to society of the world's natural and cultural heritage, present and future, tangible and intangible.***

***As a non-governmental, non-profit body, ICOM establishes professional and ethical standards for museum activities, promoting training, advancing knowledge, addressing issues, and raising public cultural and social awareness through global networks and cooperation.***

The organization has articulated three principal objectives to assist us in achieving these overall goals -

***Objective 1: ICOM is recognized as the international leader in the museum field, and a respected voice on issues affecting understanding of cultural values, protection, conservation and promotion of the world's ...heritage***

***Objective 2: ICOM advances the sharing of professional knowledge and museum practice internationally through mutual assistance, and actively encourages new models of collaboration.***

***Objective 3: ICOM achieves a dynamic, flexible and consistent framework for communications and advocacy on behalf of museums internationally.***

The question is how will ICOM achieve this remarkable and ambitious mission, particularly in the next triennium which is our mandate? This is the question that has been preoccupying the attention of the new executive council of which your colleague will play such a vital part. We felt it necessary to really focus our attention on this in order to identify clearly the priority areas which will direct the future activities of the organisation. Out of this invaluable session of strategic planning, in which we welcomed the involvement of both our partners and the ICOM staff, we were able to envision both a process and major indicators which would signal to us that we had successfully achieved the objectives outlined earlier;

**We asked ourselves first: IS ICOM....**

Relevant?

A reference for younger generations?

Holistic?

**And then we moved on to examine what ICOM should or could be:**

Should ICOM be a (or even THE).....

Developer of knowledge

Creator of memory

Protector of heritage

Lobbyist

Peacemaker

Policy maker

**Finally we moved on to identifying what we envisage ICOM will be by 2007:**

ICOM is inclusive

ICOM is global

ICOM is visible

ICOM is holistic

ICOM is collaborative and integrative

ICOM is a proactive advocate

ICOM generates and disseminates knowledge

As you can imagine with all of thoughts and ideas and ambitions emerging from this process it is very interesting to see what a consistent and holistic picture emerged from such a disparate group of where we wanted the organisation to go or to be. Let me just take a few minutes to outline what our vision is for ICOM in these priority areas; In our view therefore the future of ICOM as a world or global organisation can be achieved through the implementation of the stated objectives as follows:

***Objective 1: ICOM is recognized as the international leader in the museum field, and a respected voice on issues affecting understanding of cultural values, protection, conservation and promotion of the world's... heritage***

ICOM is globally recognized

ICOM is inclusive

***Objective 2: ICOM advances the sharing of professional knowledge and museum practice internationally through mutual assistance, and actively encourages new models of collaboration.***

ICOM generates and disseminates knowledge

ICOM is collaborative/integrative/holistic

***Objective 3: ICOM achieves a dynamic, flexible and consistent framework for communications and advocacy on behalf of museums internationally.***

ICOM is a proactive advocate

ICOM is visible

Having outlined for you the kind of organization we want ICOM to become, you may well ask how are going to achieve all that, and so I would now like to turn my attention to the second part of my personal agenda what are the "Possible ways in which ICOM Deutschland can assist this process".

In my view how we are going to achieve these objectives is by asking each one of our constituents to join us in taking this work forward. The national and international committees, the members, the partner agencies, the governing bodies, the staff etc all have their roles to play and should at the earliest possible time when the strategic plan is presented offer their view and identify the actions they might take in order to achieve these goals.. I would like to take this opportunity to offer you some of my (our – because many of the staff also had input ) perspectives on how ICOM Deutschland might assist this process.

Hans Martin Hinz has provided a truly comprehensive picture of the impressive work that ICOM Deutschland has been carrying out over the last six years. I therefore have no need to reiterate these points but rather will suggest areas where your members might take the lead as a kind of example to other committees by building on the work you have already carried out. As your national committee represents more than 10 % of the total membership of ICOM, and almost 10% of ICOM's overall institutional membership, as well as with representing leadership of 1/3 of all international committees and an active membership in the boards of virtually all international committees, any action you take finds a response amongst the broader membership of ICOM. I have chosen therefore to concentrate on those areas which my colleague has given less emphasis to, or those areas requiring even greater reinforcement.

Some of the ways in which ICOM Deutschland could facilitate ICOM's agenda by:

**Objective 1:**

I took note with interest of ICFA's proactive approach to the preparation of the World Summit for Information Societies, positioning Libraries as essential partners in the process of developing a Declaration of Principles related to the same. Indeed this action echoes ICOM's preoccupation with such global measures and mirrors ICOM's active engagement in the process of elaborating a strong, principled position with respect to international conventions for the protection of cultural heritage. In coming months for example ICOM plans to review UNESCO's new draft convention on cultural diversity to determine its applicability to the museum context. ICOM Deutschland could organize itself to work with the German National Commission for UNESCO to give us the benefit of their advice.

Working to advance the notion of a new, inclusive and where appropriate, unified approach to the safeguarding, identification and conservation of cultural heritage in all its aspects is a challenge thrown out to all heritage agencies by the Director General of UNESCO. To what extent could ICOM Deutschland's members provide test cases and best practice models which could be applied elsewhere. Our colleague from ICOMOS has given some reflections on where he perceives ICOM might work in collaboration with ICOMOS, but there are also other areas which still require close cooperation for the protection against illicit traffic and would benefit from ICOM Deutschland's active involvement.

ICOM Deutschland has been instrumental in ensuring the broad dissemination of the ICOM Code of Ethics and Statutes in earlier times. This is absolutely in keeping with ICOM's core objective. However there is still a lot of work to be done to achieve global recognition of the organization, for example German translations of ICOM's Red Lists, ICOM News and Object ID would have the very positive effect of broadening the reach and strengthening the position of ICOM as a viable organization for Germanic speaking peoples, and most particularly among the young.

ICOM has been an active partner in the development of the International Committee for the Blue Shield which has established 11 national committees to date. I would like to take this opportunity to urge my German colleagues that swift recognition is given to the need to develop a coordinated, comprehensive and committed approach to the process of Emergency preparedness or planning is critical for any responsible agency mandated with the role of protecting and conserving the cultural heritage. It

would be truly important mark of progress in our organization if a German Committee of the ICBS was developed and implemented over the next 3 years. With this action you already give excellent support to one of ICOM's resolutions from the Seoul conference, making the Arab region a priority for attention over the next three years.

**Objective 2:**

ICOM Deutschland already has developed invaluable programmes of knowledge sharing and development through the three country conferences which Hans Martin has reported on as well as the CEICOM programmes conceived and organized by your committee. These are excellent models which firstly deserve to be promoted and disseminated globally. The highly important interregional activities which you are presently developing with ICOM Arab will also serve as a model for the international museum community. The upcoming meeting in Egypt may offer ICOM Deutschland a prime opportunity to develop a longer term partnership with ICOM Egypt on which to base internationally recognized perspectives and positions.

ICOM Deutschland might also consider further action complementary to what it currently undertakes – showing solidarity with the international museum community through active support for other deserving national committees through regular contributions to the ICOM fund developed in 1992 for this special purpose. The regular contributions of your sister committees of Switzerland and France do provide opportunities for deserving professionals (and particularly Advisory Committee chairs) to participate in the annual meeting of this decision making body and thus providing real opportunities for cross cultural exchanges of knowledge and truly global representation in a core area of ICOM activity.

Another area where ICOM Deutschland could take a proactive approach is in the area of interceding with their Ministry of Foreign Affairs to seek support through international cultural exchange programmes for bursaries and travel grants to support foreign museum professionals to participate in annual meetings of international committees, regional organisations and General Conferences.

**Objective 3:**

ICOM Deutschland needs to give its firm and unequivocal support to the dot museum initiative which will ensure the museum identity of your institutional members in a way no other internet address or identity can. To date the lack of direction, focus, intensity, commitment and determination from the larger and more important committees and institutions has had the effect of stalling the project. The ICOM Executive Council has once again renewed its commitment to Musedoma in support of an initiative will be the most critical mechanism for museum presence on the Web in the future. All that is needed now is commitment and leadership in the process. Indeed, apart from registering your own institutions, ICOM Deutschland should consider supporting this process for other institutions in developing countries and countries in transition which deserve to have the same visibility, and net presence as more established museums. Will ICOM Deutschland take up the challenge and be the standard bearer for this project.

ICOM Deutschland has also been highly successful in generating publicity for its major events and yet the general programme and objectives of ICOM receive only minimal or occasional coverage. ICOM Deutschland's help may be sought in terms of

developing a broad reaching, sustained and comprehensive media campaign and strategy to generate support and appreciation for the objectives and activities of ICOM.

I trust that this presentation has given you some idea as to where ICOM is going within the next three years as an international organisation and ways in which ICOM Deutschland can help ICOM to achieve its goals. I certainly hope I have given you food for thought and even inspiration, in identifying the challenges and opportunities awaiting you all along the way.

Once again my congratulations on the wonderful progress you are making in achieving a truly global leadership position in the museum world. I believe that with the development of long term partnerships at a number of levels, and efforts made to encourage younger generations of museum staff the relevance and reciprocity of ICOM can continue to gain in support over the next three years and beyond.

Dankeschön !

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