

Ethical Commitment Statement for ICOMOS Members

Adopted by the 13th General Assembly (Madrid, 2002)

Pursuant to resolution 17GA 2011/11 adopted by the 17th General Assembly (Paris, 2011), the text concerning the ethical commitment of members is being revised.

Introduction

For some years ICOMOS has struggled with the desire and need to develop an ethical practice statement for its members. Former ICOMOS President Roland Silva has been a particular champion of the need for such a document. There have been various conferences and meetings. The Training and Education International Scientific Committee has been especially active in this debate. Several ICOMOS National Committees already operate their own such ethical commitment statements. Many cultural and heritage organisations have already developed such documents, in a variety of spheres of professional interest.

In the ICOMOS Strategic Plan, the priority of developing such an international statement was recognised, and in 1999 the first of a series of drafts was presented to the ICOMOS Executive Committee for consideration. There has been extensive debate, and several versions circulated for comment.

The objective of the ICOMOS Ethical Commitment Statement is to clarify ethical conservation standards and principles, outlining an ICOMOS member's practical responsibility toward cultural heritage and toward fellow members. It should be a useful statement of principles for ICOMOS members and non-members alike.

The matter of using "post nominals" to indicate ICOMOS membership and recognise the professional nature of the organisation is resolved in association with consideration of the draft ICOMOS Ethical Commitment Statement.

It is proposed that when ICOMOS members agree to the Statement of Ethical Commitment (e.g. via their National Committee annual membership renewal, or when they first apply to be members), if they are suitably qualified and experienced, they may use the appellation/suffix (post nominals) "M.ICOMOS" after their name, to indicate their professionally recognised affiliation with an ICOMOS Committee.

The operational management of the Statement is dependant upon the willingness of National and International Scientific Committees to implement it. A particular issue for committees to consider is the handling of breaches of the statement. Guidelines for the operational management of the Statement are attached for information but do not form part of the Statement itself. A sample text for the management of breaches is available on request from the Secretariat.

The draft Statement was warmly approved by the Advisory Committee meeting in Dubrovnik in October 2001 and circulated to all committees. During 2002, a range of supportive general comments were received from individuals and notably from the French, United Kingdom and Australian national committees, together with some suggested wording amendments which have been incorporated into the revised text. My thanks to all those who provided comment and wise advice on the draft documents.

Sheridan Burke
ICOMOS Vice-President
Sydney, 2 November 2002

Ethical Commitment Statement for ICOMOS Members

Preamble

ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, is the international non-governmental organisation, established in 1965 that works to promote the application of theory, methodology and scientific techniques applied to the conservation, protection and enhancement of the world's cultural heritage. It is an official advisory body to UNESCO, and to the World Heritage Committee on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

The world's cultural heritage includes monuments, sites and places that range from the monumental to the vernacular; from cultural landscapes with intangible values which reflect layers of social traditions, to individual sites of community importance.

ICOMOS considers that the conservation of the world's diverse cultural heritage is the responsibility and privilege of current generations as well as the privilege and right of future generations.

Its members work in a diverse range of fields, engaging with local communities and recognising the economic contribution which heritage conservation makes to local and regional development.

The object of the ICOMOS Ethical Commitment Statement is to provide a tool to improve and clarify ethical conservation practice and principles useful amongst members, Associates, non-members and communities who are active in conservation.

The Ethical Commitment Statement will be reviewed every 6 years.

Article 1

It is an ICOMOS member's responsibility to give professional advice and act in accordance with the charters and doctrine of ICOMOS, relevant international conventions, recommendations of UNESCO and other relevant Acts, codes and charters to which ICOMOS is legally committed.

Article 2

The fundamental obligation of an ICOMOS member is to advocate the conservation of monuments, sites and places so that their cultural significance is retained as reliable evidence of the past, doing as much as is necessary to care for them and support their ongoing use and maintenance but adversely affecting them as little as possible. This requires a comprehensive, holistic, dynamic and often multidisciplinary approach to guarantee authenticity and integrity and to present and interpret significance. It requires the recognition of the historical and economic role of heritage conservation in local and world development.

Article 3

ICOMOS members respect the diverse, dynamic tangible and intangible values of places, monuments and sites that may hold different meaning for various groups and communities, enriching human culture. Members are committed to promoting effective community involvement conservation processes, through collaborating with people or communities associated with the monument, site or place and recognising, respecting and encouraging the co-existence of diverse cultural values.

Article 4

ICOMOS members should maintain, refine and update their knowledge of contemporary conservation philosophy, practice and techniques including relevant legal requirements, where applicable furthering their development, exchanging information and sharing experience (subject to a client's or employer's right of confidentiality). ICOMOS members can also be members of the professional organizations affiliated with their training and field of work, adhering to their relevant codes and disciplinary standards.

Article 5

ICOMOS members promote public awareness, appreciation, access and support for heritage, fostering informed debate, education, training programmes and in particular, international information exchange. They support fellow professionals and mentor junior colleagues by promoting ethical heritage conservation practice to advance the wider understanding of conservation philosophy, standards and methods. ICOMOS Committees are open to a diversity of appropriately qualified, experienced and committed applicants for membership.

Article 6

ICOMOS members recognise that many conservation projects require an interdisciplinary approach, needing collaborative teamwork amongst professionals, technicians, administrators and craftspeople and communities.

Article 7

ICOMOS members are committed to ensuring that conservation decisions are based on adequate knowledge and research that viable options are explored and that chosen options are justified.

ICOMOS members ensure that complete, durable and accessible records are made of the conservation process and works carried out (including diagnostic examination, monitoring techniques, managerial methods, preventive conservation and restoration intervention) on all conservation projects for which they are responsible. Such documentation should be placed in a permanent archive (such as a national library) and made publicly accessible as promptly as possible, (subject to requirements of client/employer confidentiality, security and privacy), and where this is culturally appropriate.

Article 8

In an emergency, where heritage monuments, sites and other cultural places are in immediate danger or at risk, ICOMOS members render all assistance practicable, provided they do not put their own health and safety in jeopardy.

Article 9

ICOMOS members are personally and professionally accountable to their society and community for the authorship and validity of their advice, and for data collected, analyses performed and plans developed under their direction.

Article 10

ICOMOS members actively discourage misrepresentation, false advertising and/or misuse of work and will accurately and fairly acknowledge record and publicise the intellectual, material and practical contributions of others.

Article 11

ICOMOS members oppose any manipulation or the concealment of results of necessary conservation work to meet outside demands. Subject to client/employer confidentiality, ICOMOS members ensure appropriate disclosure of the scope and limitations of their work, for example, limitations due to insufficient resources, budgetary constraints or other factors.

Article 12

ICOMOS members act in an honest, impartial and tolerant manner .

An ICOMOS member will always advise another member (where another member's involvement is known about) when undertaking a commission or providing a second opinion to assess or review work carried out by that member.

Article 13

Members undertake to enhance and to uphold the dignity and reputation of ICOMOS. They conduct their professional activities in an open, honest, accountable and objective manner, avoiding bias or dishonesty. Members shall at all times avoid or publicly declare any real or apparent conflict of interest.

Article 14

A member may not claim to act or speak on behalf of ICOMOS or one of its committees, without the authority of the relevant ICOMOS Committee.

Article 15

Failure to observe the principles and obligations of this statement constitutes unprofessional conduct and may bring ICOMOS into disrepute. ICOMOS membership is contingent upon the member conforming to the provisions and the spirit of the Ethical Commitment Statement. Failure to observe the articles of this statement may cause sanctions against the member, including review of his/her ongoing membership.

This Statement is from time to time amended by the Executive Committee of ICOMOS and ratified by members of an ICOMOS General Assembly.

Glossary

“Authenticity” depending on the nature of the cultural heritage, and its cultural context, authenticity judgements may be linked to the worth of a great variety of sources of information. Aspects of the sources may include form and design, materials and substance, use and function, traditions and techniques, location and setting, and spirit and feeling, and other external aspects of information sources. The use of these sources permits elaboration of the specific artistic, historic, social and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage being examined².

“Conservation” means all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance. It may, according to circumstance, include the processes of retention or reintroduction of use, retention of associations and meanings, maintenance, preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation and interpretation and will commonly include a combination of more than one of these³.

“**Cultural significance**” means: aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present or future generations⁴. Cultural significance is embodied in the place, site or monument itself, its fabric, setting, use associations, meanings, records, related places and related objects

“**Values**” means those beliefs, which have significance for a cultural group or an individual, often including, but not being limited to spiritual, political, religious and moral beliefs⁵. Monuments, sites and places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups and values are continually renegotiated.

Guidelines for the Operational Management of the Statement

National Committees may determine membership standards regarding qualifications and experience to be met in order to become an ICOMOS member. It is generally required that individual applicants have attained appropriate professional qualifications and a minimum of three years appropriate experience in practical work and policy development. Sustaining Members of ICOMOS are interested supporters of ICOMOS, who may not meet criteria for individual membership.

It is proposed that agreement to the ICOMOS Ethical Commitment Statement will be incorporated into the annual membership renewal forms of National Committees in addition to such qualifications and experience requirements as are already indicated. Post-nominals to indicate ICOMOS national membership by individual members may THEN be used. It is suggested that M.ICOMOS be used as post nominals to denote individual members of ICOMOS.

The implementation of the Ethical Commitment Statement is dependent upon the willingness of national and scientific committees. Implementation will primarily include educational activity and professional guidance, but may occasionally encompass confidential investigation of inappropriate conduct. National ICOMOS Executive Committees may manage any breach of the Ethical Commitment Statement by investigating claims of misconduct. The National Committee will first discuss the matter with the member in a mediation context.

Some National and International Scientific Committees already use operational guidelines to manage breaches of ethical professional behaviour by their members. It is noted that these should be matters of professional conscience, not for civil legal action. However, given the litigious societies in which we live, legal advice is strongly recommended.

1. Including the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972), the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing of Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970), the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (Venice Charter) (1964) + subsequent Charters: the Florence Charter (Historic Gardens, 1981), the Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas (1987), the Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage (1990), the Charter for the Protection and Management of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (1996), the International Cultural Tourism Charter (revised in 1999), the Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage (1999).
- 2 Nara Document on Authenticity, 1994
- 3 Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 1999
- 4 Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 1999
- 5 Australia ICOMOS Code on the Ethics of Co-existence in Conserving Significant Places, 1998