



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Executive Board
Hundred and eighty-first session

181 EX/INF.5
PARIS, 17 April 2009
English & French only

Item 13 of the provisional agenda

**REPORTS BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL
ON THE SLAVE ROUTE PROJECT**

SUMMARY

As a supplement to documents 181 EX/13 Parts I and II, this document contains the report on the UNESCO mission to Togo conducted from 28 February to 6 March 2009 at the request of the national authorities with a view to providing technical support for the establishment of a Slave Route itinerary in that country.

I. Introduction

1. UNESCO conducted a mission to Togo from 28 February to 6 March 2009 at the request of the national authorities. It took place after the publication by UNESCO, in close cooperation with the School of African Heritage, of a guide entitled *Slave Route and Cultural Tourism in West and Central Africa*. The mission also demonstrates Togo's determination, acting through its National Slave Route Committee established in 2008, to revitalize activities relating to the Slave Route project, for which Togo has had an item concerning assessment and prospects of the project included in the agenda of the 180th session of the Executive Board. The objective of the mission was to provide technical support for the establishment of a Slave Route itinerary in Togo, and to build the capacities of the Togolese National Commission for UNESCO in that regard.

2. The mission is to be viewed in the context of the Remembrance Tourism programme established under the Slave Route project in order to preserve places of remembrance linked to the slave trade and slavery. This particular category of tourism is crucial to raising awareness of that tragic feature of a country's history, for nothing can replace the visitor's actual perception of historical events in the very place in which they took place. The "missing link" concept put forward by Togo reflects the country's determination to supplement the remembrance itinerary shared with neighbouring countries, in particular Benin and Ghana.

3. At both the beginning and the end of the mission, the Togolese National Commission for UNESCO convened meetings which were attended by the main project stakeholders in the ministries of culture and tourism, academics, archaeologists and directors of cultural institutions (museums). It also organized appointments with the ministers concerned, academics, tour operators and the Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A field visit was organized so that the various components of the tourist circuit could be seen first-hand on the country's slave trade sites.

4. Togo's potential for remembrance sites and places linked to the slave trade and slavery is remarkable. The tour circuits, as yet barely in operation if at all, deserve to be enhanced in order to develop remembrance tourism. The tour operators encountered in the field expressed full readiness to cooperate with the project, and stressed the sites' value to them in terms of visits from Africa and all over the world. Several sites in the south of the country, the region with the best tourism infrastructure and the easiest access (cruise operators), are already very popular. The northern region of the country also has great potential, as it has preserved its great cultural wealth and authentic landscape. Its remembrance sites would therefore gain from being associated with cultural discovery tourism, which is already practised in the region.

5. Several associations for the safeguarding of the sites are already present in the field, in particular Wood House and Rhodes House (slave houses). They catalyse efforts by civil society, which thus participates in the project. It would be desirable to involve them more closely in the restoration and safeguarding of remembrance sites and places.

II. Proposed activities

6. In formulating proposed activities, the mission drew on the provisional document drawn up by the National Committee and entitled "Programme: development and promotion of sites linked to slavery in Togo".

7. This document could form the basis for a proper project document, which could be supplemented, in particular, by existing documents and studies, such as the cultural tourism guide entitled *Sur la Route de l'esclave et tourisme culturel en Afrique occidentale et centrale* published in 2008 by UNESCO and the School of African Heritage (EPA), the "Slave Route project in Togo" document, drawn up by the University of Lomé and the research and training project document put forward by the Chancellerie des universités du Togo (Department of Togolese Universities).

8. The project document could also be enriched by studies carried out for three planned itineraries of remembrance sites and places linked to the slave trade and slavery in Togo (two in the south and one in the north of the country) forming the basis of tour circuits taking in Benin, Ghana and Togo needed to reconstitute the slave trade and slavery “link” which is common to the whole Gulf of Guinea region.

- (i) The first tour would run along the River Mono valley, and would coincide with the first period of the slave trade (sixteenth to seventeenth centuries), during which captives from among peoples living in the territory of present-day Togo were brought down the Mono River to the slave-trade ports in present-day Benin (Ouidah).
- (ii) The second tour concerns the period during which slavery persisted in Togo, despite its abolition in the nineteenth century. This illegal slave trade itinerary would highlight the route that was used when the ports of Cape Coast and Ouidah were under surveillance. It would run along the Haho River down to the coast at Aného and Wood House through Togoville and Dékpo.
- (iii) The third tour, shared with Ghana, would cover the northern part of the country, and the itinerary would take visitors to former sites where slaves were held captive, resisted (caves) and rounded up at Champa market in the centre of the country before being driven down to the coast.

8. On the basis of these proposals, it would be desirable to draw up a strategy paper comprising capacity-building activities for the population groups concerned and laying the foundations for the development of income-generating remembrance tourism which respects the sites.

9. With this in mind, the following recommendations may be made:

- to produce, in addition to the above-mentioned strategy, a project document (30 pages), in cooperation with other United Nations agencies, including UNDP. In addition to a narrative part specifying objectives and expected results, this document would include a table of activities showing an implementation schedule, a budget, national institutions (ministries) executing the activities, and United Nations agencies and other associated partners;
- in support of Togo’s National Slave Route Committee, to establish an advisory committee composed of tour operators concerned, site protection associations (civil society), United Nations system agencies such as UNDP, the World Tourism Organization, and expert institutions and associations such as the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and associated private partners;
- once the project document is ready, to launch a fund-raising campaign among multilateral and bilateral cooperation institutions and private firms, in particular at the official presentation organized specially for selected potential donors.

10. Similarly, with regard to the cultural heritage of the countries of the Gulf of Guinea (initially), it is recommended that remembrance sites and places linked to slavery and the slave trade be identified and that consideration be given to the possibility of placing them on the World Heritage Tentative List under the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) and on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, in accordance with the procedure set out in the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003).

11. It is important to note that the promotion of remembrance tourism in Togo would have the following prerequisites:

- preparation, together with tour operators concerned, of the tour circuits already examined by Togolese specialists (the three tour circuits), in order to identify needs relating to infrastructure, trained staff and signposting of sites. A tourist map might also be produced, showing the various circuit stages and related explanations;
- development of suitable tourist infrastructure (lodges) in areas where there are no hotels on the northern circuit;
- explanatory notice boards on slave trade sites showing circuit stages;
- creation of a Slave Route in Togo label to guarantee the authenticity of sites and the quality of services provided by project partners: hoteliers, craftspersons and others;
- once the circuits are ready, organization of a presentation tour enabling national and international tour operators to see the tour circuits for themselves in order to encourage them to include them in their travel brochures;
- preparations for enhanced training of guides to ensure that explanations are accurate and consistent with recent scientific discoveries, and publication of guides for visitors to slave trade sites. The training of guides should include encouraging visitors to show due respect for emblematic slave trade places.

12. For more effective development of these sites, there is an urgent need to:

- include them in tourist circuits and in festivals currently held in Togo, in particular *La veillée du Grand Départ* (Vigil on the Eve of the Grande Departure) and *Les Divinités noires*;
- examine ways of enhancing synergy among tour circuits and itineraries relating to remembrance tourism in the Gulf of Guinea region, which might, for example, lead to the implementation of joint projects such as an itinerant exhibition on the slave trade which might go all over the world.

13. With regard to crafts and cultural industries, it is also recommended that consideration be given to developing crafts (copies of sculptures, engravings, batik drawings and post cards) and cultural products (books, CDs and DVDs) on the slave trade in Togo in particular. Such cultural products would be sold in particular near sites and museums to be developed (Wood House and Rhodes House).

14. Itineraries to remembrance sites and places could also be used for educational and awareness-raising initiatives, in particular for teaching such history in Togo to pupils and the general public, by means of visits and excursions. This would help to ensure broader sharing of this chapter in Togo's collective memory. To facilitate such an initiative, it would also be desirable to give consideration to the compilation of educational materials documenting the sites and their history to ensure that they are more sharply imprinted on the collective memory.

15. Related to such an initiative, consideration should be given to the establishment of a specialized centre that would pool information, historical documents, studies and films on the slave trade and slavery. Open to the public at large, its task would be to provide dynamic management of such resources according to a well-defined communication strategy, and hence to give greater visibility to the Togolese segment of the Slave Route project, and to make this historical period known to young people both in Togo and in the other countries concerned (Benin and Ghana in particular), as well as to visitors from all over the world, who could visit these places of remembrance.

III. Conclusion

This mission has helped to highlight the growing interest not only of the Togolese authorities, but also of civil society partners and the private sector in the tangible and intangible heritage of slavery and the slave trade, and also the prospects for remembrance tourism in Togo in a subregional approach aimed at contributing to sustainable economic development. Thanks to the commitment and determination of Togo's National Slave Route Committee, this project could spark keen interest in the region, and at the same time help to revitalize Slave Route project activities in the Gulf of Guinea.