



## General Conference

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# ci

United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

Organisation  
des Nations Unies  
pour l'éducation,  
la science et la culture

Organización  
de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация  
Объединенных Наций по  
вопросам образования,  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
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## Commission CI

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### Item 5.17 of the agenda

## DRAFT RESOLUTION

Submitted by SENEGAL

Supported by BELIZE

### Universal Declaration on Archives

The General Conference,

1. *Recalling* Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides that “everyone has the right (...) to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers”,
2. *Also recalling* UNESCO’s Constitution, which stresses in Article I the desire of Member States to help to “maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge”,
3. *Noting* that, under the Memory of the World programme, UNESCO works to preserve invaluable archival and library collections worldwide, ensures that they are widely diffused and, in conjunction with the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS), aims to protect the world cultural heritage,
4. *Acknowledging* that that Universal Declaration on Archives, prepared by the International Council on Archives (ICA), is an important instrument for raising world awareness of these problems,
5. *Noting* moreover that the basic principles and objectives of the Universal Declaration are consistent with those set out in the Library Manifestoes adopted by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and UNESCO,

6. *Further acknowledging* the important role that archives play in support of the democratic rights of citizens,
7. *Congratulates* the International Council on Archives on its work in drawing up the Universal Declaration on Archives;
8. *Invites* Member States to approve the Universal Declaration on Archives;
9. *Also invites* Member States to take the principles set out in the Universal Declaration on Archives into account when planning and implementing future strategies and programmes nationally.

## ANNEX

### UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON ARCHIVES

Archives record decisions, actions and memories. Archives are a unique and irreplaceable heritage passed from one generation to another. Archives are managed from creation to preserve their value and meaning. They are authoritative sources of information underpinning accountable and transparent administrative actions. They play an essential role in the development of societies by safeguarding and contributing to individual and community memory. Open access to archives enriches our knowledge of human society, promotes democracy, protects citizens' rights and enhances the quality of life.

#### **To this effect, we recognize**

- **the unique quality** of archives as authentic evidence of administrative, cultural and intellectual activities and as a reflection of the evolution of societies;
- **the vital necessity** of archives for supporting business efficiency, accountability and transparency, for protecting citizens rights, for establishing individual and collective memory, for understanding the past, and for documenting the present to guide future actions;
- **the diversity** of archives in recording every area of human activity;
- **the multiplicity of formats** in which archives are created including paper, electronic, audiovisual and other types;
- **the role of archivists** as trained professionals with initial and continuing education, serving their societies by supporting the creation of records and by selecting, maintaining and making these records available for use;
- **the collective responsibility** of all – citizens, public administrators and decision-makers, owners or holders of public or private archives, and archivists and other information specialists – in the management of archives.

#### **We therefore undertake to work together in order that**

- appropriate national archival policies and laws are adopted and enforced;
- the management of archives is valued and carried out competently by all bodies, private or public, which create and use archives in the course of conducting their business;
- adequate resources are allocated to support the proper management of archives, including the employment of trained professionals;

- archives are managed and preserved in ways that ensure their authenticity, reliability, integrity and usability;
- archives are made accessible to everyone, while respecting the pertinent laws and the rights of individuals, creators, owners and users;
- archives are used to contribute to the promotion of responsible citizenship.

## EXPLANATORY NOTE

1. The Universal Declaration on Archives sets out the unique characteristics of archives and their value to societies. Easy access to the archival heritage of humanity is a vital necessity for citizens and researchers, enabling them to understand and write the history of nations, and among peoples and societies, across national boundaries. High standards for archives and records management are essential for the functioning of democracy by ensuring accountability and transparency and at the same time protecting privacy and legitimate public interests.
2. The Universal Declaration on Archives has been developed by the International Council on Archives (ICA), which is the voice of the professional community of archival institutions and archives and records management professionals worldwide. The ICA delegates decided unanimously at their Annual General Meeting in Oslo, on 17 September 2010, to approve this text as an expression of the core requirements of the profession across cultures in order to serve societies and citizens of the world in organizing, safeguarding and providing access to the shared memory of humanity. The Universal Declaration on Archives has already been translated into 15 languages; all language versions are available at the ICA website: <http://www.ica.org/6573/reference-documents/universal-declaration-on-archives.html>.
3. The Universal Declaration on Archives is based on the ideals expressed in the Constitution of the ICA. The Declaration is in line with the principles of the Charter on the Preservation of Digital Heritage, adopted by the General Conference on 15 October 2003. Like UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme, the Universal Declaration on Archives strives to ensure the preservation and universal accessibility of the world's documentary heritage.
4. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights took note in resolution 1998/53 of the "Set of Principles for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights through Action to Combat Impunity". These principles were recalled by the Commission in resolution 2003/72 and resolution 2004/72 and by the Human Rights Council in resolution 9/11, adopted in 2005, and resolution 12/12, adopted in 2009. The Principles emphasize that "Every people has the inalienable right to know the truth about past events ... A people's knowledge of the history of its oppression is part of its heritage and, as such, must be preserved by appropriate measures in fulfillment of the State's duty to preserve archives". The Universal Declaration on Archives supports this right to know, by underscoring the responsibility of States to preserve archives and make them available to citizens according to clear, transparent rules based on internationally recognized archives and records management principles.
5. The ICA has a longstanding history of close cooperation with UNESCO. It was itself established at UNESCO on 9 June 1948, the date on which International Archives Day is celebrated every year. In 1996 it was one of the founding members of the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS), the symbol proposed in The Hague Convention (1954) for the protection of cultural property in armed conflicts.
6. The adoption of the Universal Declaration on Archives by UNESCO will emphasize the importance of including wide public access to archives as an essential component of knowledge societies and of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. This endorsement by the General Conference also highlights the key role of archives and records management in combating corruption and in enhancing good governance as a whole.