Item 5 of the provisional agenda

FOLLOW-UP TO DECISIONS AND RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE GENERAL CONFERENCE AT THEIR PREVIOUS SESSIONS

PART I

PROGRAMME ISSUES

SUMMARY

H. Report of the International Advisory Committee (IAC) on the Review Process of the Memory of the World Programme

Pursuant to 199 EX/Decision 29, the Director-General submits to the consideration of the Members of the Executive Board, the progress report of the International Advisory Committee (IAC) on the Review Process of the Memory of the World Programme.

Action expected of the Executive Board: Proposed decision in paragraph 6.
H. Report of the International Advisory Committee (IAC) on the Review Process of the Memory of the World Programme
(Follow-up to 199 EX/Decision 29)

BACKGROUND

1. UNESCO launched the Memory of the World Programme (MoW) in 1992 with the aim to preserve the world's documentary heritage and ensure its wide dissemination. The Programme vision is that the world's documentary heritage belongs to all, should be fully preserved and protected for all and, with due recognition of cultural mores and practicalities, should be permanently accessible to all without hindrance. This year the MoW Programme celebrates its 25th anniversary.

2. The MoW Programme has grown significantly since its establishment, with the development of activities, events, committees and registers, and the expanding of operational expertise. The adoption of the Recommendation on the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form by the General Conference in 2015 also required that the General Guidelines of the Programme be reviewed accordingly.

3. The MoW Programme review is undertaken pursuant to the decision by the International Advisory Committee (IAC) taken in October 2015. It seeks to explore means for further strengthening the Programme by enhancing its visibility, mobilizing additional resources, ensuring greater transparency and dialogue. The MoW review is conducted on a global scale, which includes a wide consultative process involving experts and Member States.

4. In addition, an Experts Meeting on the MoW review was held in Berlin, in March 2017. The meeting, jointly organized by UNESCO and the German Federal Foreign Office in cooperation with the German Commission for UNESCO, took place from 1 to 4 March 2017 at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. The meeting, chaired by Dr. Abdulla Alraisi, Director-General – Under Minister of the National Archives of UAE, and Chair of the International Advisory Committee (IAC) of the MoW Programme, brought together IAC experts and members of the two working groups tasked to review respectively the Statutes, Rules and overall functioning of the Programme. The set of recommendations formulated in Berlin synergize the different views expressed by the IAC and the experts of the two working groups, taking into consideration the comments made by the Member States during the online consultation.

5. Based on the experts' deliberations in Berlin the IAC Chair prepared and submitted to the Director-General the progress report contained in the Annex.

Proposed decision

6. In the light of the foregoing, the Executive Board may wish to adopt the following decision:

   The Executive Board,

1. Recalling 199 EX/Decision 29, by which the Director-General was invited to keep the Executive Board appropriately informed of the review undertaken by the International Advisory Committee (IAC) of the Memory of the World (MoW) Programme,

2. Having examined document 201 EX/5 Part I (H),

3. Welcomes the progress achieved by the International Advisory Committee on the MoW review;

4. Expresses its appreciation to the national authorities of Germany for their generous contribution to this review process by hosting the experts' meeting in March 2017;
5. **Welcomes** the IAC Chair’s progress report contained in the Annex and encourages the IAC to continue working on the statutes and guidelines along the lines of this report and its recommendations;

6. **Requests** the Director-General to present the final report on the MoW review by the International Advisory Committee to the Executive Board at its 202nd session.
ANNEX

Report of the International Advisory Committee (IAC) on the Review Process of the Memory of the World Programme

by

Dr. Abdulla Alraisi,

Director-General - Under Minister of the National Archives of UAE and Chair of the International Advisory Committee (IAC)

Background

At its 12th meeting in Abu Dhabi in October 2015, the Memory of the World International Advisory Committee (IAC) launched a comprehensive review of the rules, procedures and guidelines of the Programme (Final Report, part VI, p. 18). It seeks to explore means for further strengthening the Programme by improving its visibility, human and financial resource mobilization, transparency and dialogue among relevant heritage institutions. The review was also welcomed by the UNESCO Executive Board at its meeting in April 2016 (199 EX/29). The revision of the modalities of implementation of the MOW Programme was made necessary by the evolving operating context of MoW which has changed markedly. The MoW Review is conducted on a global scale, including a wide process of inclusive consultation both with experts and with Member States.

In addition to the wide and transparent consultation process an Experts Meeting on the Memory of the World Programme Review was held in Berlin, in March 2017. Organized by UNESCO in cooperation with, and thanks to the substantial contribution of the German Federal Foreign Office and in collaboration with the German Commission for UNESCO, it took place from 1st to 4th March 2017 at the Staats-bibliothek zu Berlin. The meeting brought together IAC experts and members of the two working groups tasked to review the Statutes, Rules and overall functioning of the Programme. The set of recommendations formulated in Berlin presents the views expressed by the IAC and the experts of the two working groups, taking into consideration the comments made by Member States during the online consultation.

To provide the necessary background and facilitate the review process, two discussion papers were prepared:

Review of Statues and Rules: Discussion Questions on issues and Direction

Review of Guidelines and Companion Documents: Call for Submissions and Discussion Issues

The comprehensive review was conducted on globally, through an open process of inclusive consultation. Many comments and suggestions had been submitted by National Commissions for UNESCO, National and Regional Memory of the World Committees, national and international associations, institutions and individuals. These have been taken into account by the two working groups charged with reviewing and revising the basic documents of MoW: The Statutes of the IAC, the Rules of Procedure, the General Guidelines for the Implementation of MoW, and the Register Companion.

The Meeting also finalized specific recommendations to the Director-General of UNESCO for consideration by Member States on how to address a range of issues, including those relating to procedures for nominations that have been called into question, and new challenges created by the global move to digitization, in order to achieve the full potential of this important Programme.
Outcomes of the experts’ deliberations at the Berlin meeting:

Summary of Report – Working Group 1 (WG1)

Dr. Ian Wilson presented a report and a set of recommendations, which he had prepared, together with Dr. Alraisi and Dr. David Fricker, who was attending the Forum via video conference. They formed WG1, which was in charge of revising the Statutes and the Rules of Procedure of the IAC. Not all recommendations were discussed due to the limited time-frame and the intensive agenda, but it was decided that this be done at the next IAC meeting. These recommendations, which are summarized below, will be revised by WG1 based on the comments received.

Recommendation 1

The Forum debated whether MoW could be considered an established programme, with a legal framework. This debate was triggered by the statement that “there is neither a long term strategy for preserving the precious documentary heritage nor a legal framework for the functioning of the Memory of the World Programme”, to be found in the UNESCO Resolution 36C/COM CI/DR2. Some members of the Forum noted that MoW was an established programme, with a legal framework given by the Statutes and by the 2015 Recommendation concerning Documentary Heritage. This view was confirmed by Mr. Boyan Radoykov, Chief of Section, Communication and Information Sector of UNESCO. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Forum agreed that MoW had to be strengthened, along with the advisory role of the IAC.

Recommendation 2

All previous evaluations of MoW revealed that it was under-staffed and under-resourced. While commending the work that has been achieved despite existing constraints, the Forum recognized that the programme cannot develop its full potential under such conditions. Some participants remarked that the MoW International Register was stretching resources in the MoW Secretariat. Thus, the Forum considered whether slowing down the process of submitting nominations, or even closing down the register was an option. The Forum agreed that the Register had a very important role for the visibility and popularity of MoW, and that the inability to accept further nominations would put the programme in a risky situation. Consequently, the Forum noted that it was necessary to make a real statement about the financial situation of MoW, in order for Member States to understand that there is a financial problem, and a need to seek new revenue measures and increase the group of donors.

Recommendation 3

With the increasing popularity of commercial search engines and the online availability of documentary heritage resources, the recognition of the role and needs of memory institutions preserving heritage are obscured and overlooked. Apart from that, the current website of MoW is limitative in terms of design and capacity, is not doing justice to the range of MoW activities and the possibilities of presenting them. This has a negative impact on the visibility and understanding of MoW. The Forum debated whether MoW could establish its own interactive website, more attractive and with an advanced design, to be controlled by UNESCO but prepared and maintained in collaboration with external partners. Although a draft design had already been developed previously, it could not be implemented due to the technical and institutional limitations imposed by UNESCO. The Forum agreed that this recommendation be put forward to UNESCO, after gaining more clarity concerning the financial and structural implications, and the distinction between content- and technology-related aspects, the former being something that would rest with UNESCO.

Recommendation 4

Due to technical and financial constraints, the Forum noted that the documentary heritage of many regions of the world was poorly represented online. This was considered a problem, especially in light of today’s massive migration of people, who can access their documentary heritage only
electronically. Consequently, the Forum agreed that it was necessary to encourage the digitization of important documents inscribed on the MoW International Register or those at risk, so as to make them discoverable and sustainable online. Nevertheless, they also stressed the need to conserve the originals, which must be promoted along with digitization efforts.

**Recommendation 5**

Currently, the international MoW register is not evenly representative of the diversity of documentary heritage around the world. The Forum considered the possibility that IAC take a proactive approach to encourage nominations based on a gap analysis of existing documentary heritage at the international level. The Review Committee noted that whereas this might function at a national or regional level, it would be difficult, even impossible, at the international level. Besides, it was further remarked that the growth of the registers had been happening organically, and that this should not be led from the top. Yet, the Forum agreed that there was need for measures to raise the profile and visibility of MoW, which should include opportunities devised by the General Conference of UNESCO, such as the celebration of new MoW inscriptions and its inclusion at their meetings.

**Recommendation 6**

In response to the need for follow-up on the condition of inscribed documentary heritage, the Forum agreed that the custodians of inscribed documents should report periodically, at least every four years, to the IAC, on the state of conservation and provisions for access. They further considered whether this would require visits by MoW staff to the custodian institutions. Due to visits being expensive, the Forum sought alternative methods. They remarked that support could be obtained from National Commissions of UNESCO, national authorities and other relevant institutions. The Director General of UNESCO could periodically circulate a letter, asking the relevant bodies to provide a report on the status of inscribed documentary heritage.

**Statutes and Rules of Procedure**

The Forum agreed that the name “International Advisory Committee” (IAC) would continue to be used as the official name of the peak body of MoW. This decision was taken in response to the online consultation, in which the majority of respondents preferred to retain the existing name. In addition to minor adjustments of language, the Forum agreed that some provisions of the Statutes should be amended. The resulting revised version of the Statutes and of the Rule of Procedure is to be discussed at the next IAC meeting after consultation with the Legal Office of UNESCO.

**GUIDELINES AND COMPANION - Summary of Report – Working Group 2 (WG2)**

Dr. Ray Edmondson, chair of WG2, former IAC member and author of the current Guidelines and the Companion, explained the sequence of events followed by WG II, which was composed of Roslyn Russell, Alissandra Cummins, Joie Springer, Jan Bos, David Fricker and himself. Dr. Edmondson presented the current working draft of the revised General Guidelines, which incorporated feedback from the online consultation process. WG II was commended for their work, which was considered a great improvement on the current Guidelines, and several participants offered themselves to actively support the finalization of the revised Guidelines for adoption at the next IAC meeting.

**2015 MoW-related Recommendation adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO**

Its provisions had to be accommodated throughout. The main definitions used in the new draft were adopted word-for-word from the 2015 Recommendation, so as to ensure consistency between the two tools. In addition, the new text includes an annex which provides an expanded discussion of these definitions. Chapter 2 of the new text, which sets out the main strategies of the Programme, matches the structure of the 2015 Recommendation.
Code of Ethics

The ethical foundations of MoW were strengthened with the introduction of a Code of Ethics. This was adopted some years ago by the IAC but was used primarily by the Register Sub-Committee to guide their work. WG II will amend the Code of Ethics so as to apply to the IAC and all Sub-Committees.

Knowledge Centres

The need to more intensively consider the concept of knowledge centres was stressed by the Forum on several occasions.

Criteria for Assessing Nominations

The Forum agreed to the revised nomination criteria, which are more detailed than the current criteria but which embrace the same values and are intended to be easier and clearer to follow. An important change is the introduction of a “statement of significance” which summarises the points made under the detailed criteria and explains why the heritage in question is important to the world’s memory, why its loss would impoverish the heritage of humanity, and what its impact has been.

Submission of Nominations

The Forum agreed that IAC would continue to accept nominations from non-state actors, including individuals. For practical reasons, the requirement that nominations be limited to two per country will be maintained. This rule does not apply for joint nominations by two or more countries. It was also agreed that while nominators are encouraged to contact the National MoW Committees, where they exist, or the National Commissions of UNESCO, submitting nominations through such committees would not become a requirement. The Forum also agreed that there was need to develop a mechanism to ensure that nominations evaluated by the IAC conform with UNESCO legal requirements and the MoW Code of Ethics.

Monitoring

The Forum agreed on the need to introduce a monitoring strategy so as to be able to monitor on the condition of inscribed documentary heritage. A questionnaire that serves this purpose will prepared and annexed to the Guidelines. WG II will now work on the next draft of the revised Guidelines based on the remarks received during the Forum discussion, and the written contributions received from members following the meeting. An updated version will be circulated for further comments.

Branding

The Forum acknowledged that as a concept MoW was very powerful and organizations worldwide would like to cooperate. In order to continue to work, however, MoW needed funding to sustain its activities. The MoW brand could help in this regard but the Forum decided that there was need to consult the UNESCO policy on branding and the use of its logos, before developing specific measures.

Strategic Partnerships

The Forum debated the need to develop partnerships and stretch MoW in all areas. Examples were provided, including the World Digital Library, the Endangered Archives Programme, Europeana, or academic associations.

Questioned Nominations

The Review Committee discussed cases when Member States sharply disagree over the significance of the documents nominated, or when historical issues are mixed with national political
agendas and international disputes, accompanied by active lobbying through diplomatic channels. IAC is an advisory committee, whose role is limited to technical and professional expertise. IAC cannot solve political disputes but the Forum agreed that, as an advisory body, the IAC needed a mechanism which would protect the MoW programme from political abuse. Consequently, the participants present at the Forum prepared and unanimously adopted the following recommendation for consideration by the Director-General:

Recommendation to the Director General of UNESCO

The UNESCO international expert meeting “Memory of the World Review Discussion Forum” proposes the following recommendation for consideration by the Director-General of UNESCO:

The Memory of the World programme has three main objectives:

(a) To facilitate preservation of the world’s past, present and future documentary heritage.

(b) To assist universal access to documentary heritage.

(c) To increase awareness worldwide of the existence and significance of documentary heritage.

(1) In its pursuit of these objectives, the Memory of the World programme recognises that “history is an unending dialogue between the present and the past” (E.H. Carr) or, in other words, the interaction between primary sources and their on-going interpretation. MoW’s concern is with the preservation and accessibility of primary sources, not with their interpretation or the resolution of historical disputes. The recommendation of the experts is that Memory of the World does not enter into disputes concerning the interpretation of historical events, nor does it take sides. It neither endorses the ideas or opinions expressed in any items of documentary heritage accepted for register assessment and/or inscription, nor does it necessarily endorse the content of the nominations themselves. Therefore, the following clarification related to the nomination procedures is proposed.

2) At least 4 months prior to the fixed deadline, the MoW Secretariat issues a call for nominations for the international register on the MoW website also indicating the deadline and the formal criteria that each nomination must meet.

On submission of a nomination the MoW Secretariat examines the legal, technical and other pertinent aspects of the nomination and informs the nominator about the results of this preliminary examination. If the nomination is accepted for assessment the MoW Secretariat notifies the nominator copying the concerned Permanent Delegations, National Commissions for UNESCO and the National Committees “Memory of the World”, uploads the nomination forms on UNESCO’s Memory of the World website and sends the nomination form to the Register Subcommittee (RSC) for assessment.

The nomination is immediately open for comments (objections, support or other information pertaining to the selection criteria). Comments can be sent to the Secretariat via the respective form within a fixed time frame according to the timeframe set in the MoW guidelines.

The entire process of the assessment of MoW nominations will be conducted in accordance with both the UNESCO rules of procedures and the MoW Code of Ethics.

(3) The MoW Secretariat transmits to the RSC the received comments. The RSC reviews these and initiates a course of action appropriate to the circumstances indicated and the context of the documentary heritage nominated.

(4) The RSC takes into account all the comments received in its assessment of the nomination. The RSC comes to a preliminary assessment of the nomination.
After the RSC issues its preliminary recommendation, the MoW Secretariat notifies the nominator copying the Permanent Delegations, the National Commissions for UNESCO and the National Committees “Memory of the World” of the countries concerned.

The nominator is offered the opportunity to respond to this preliminary recommendation.

(5) Based on these responses the RSC can reconsider its assessment before submitting its recommendations to the IAC.

(6) The IAC examines the nominations together with the recommendations of the RSC and recommends to the Director-General its professional assessment of the nominations.

(7) Questioned nominations will be given more time for dialogue to the concerned parties, even before submission to RSC. Dialogue may be mediated.

The outcome of such a dialogue could be

(a) a joint nomination,

(b) agreement on an inscription including opinions showing differing perspectives on the events or facts reflected in the nominated document,

(c) if no agreement has been reached, continued dialogue among the concerned parties may be encouraged for one more cycle (i.e. a maximum of four years after submission of the nomination) at which time the RSC will submit its recommendation to the IAC and the IAC will be expected to make a final recommendation to the Director-General.

(8) The Director-General takes the final decision on the inscription taking into account the professional advice provided by the IAC and any other relevant information.

Transparency

The need to increase transparency of decisions emerged in relation to how RSC and IAC members are appointed; to decisions concerning the nominations, whose assessment is held in camera and the participation of observers at such meetings. The Forum agreed that discussion of nominations in the IAC would continue to be held in camera but that the final decisions concerning nominations, meeting agendas and reports would be made publicly available. Similarly, it was agreed that the mandates, rules of procedure, and membership of each subsidiary body be made public. All these aspects are now reflected in the modified Statutes, and will be suitably highlighted in the Rules of Procedure, the Guidelines and the Code of Ethics.

Abdulla Alraisi, Ph.D.

Chairman, IAC Memory of the World Program

10 March 2017