



The President

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*Culture of responsibility, and economics of culture. COVID19*

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Dear Members of ICOMOS National Committees,

I feel the sincere need to write to all of you in this difficult moment, to express the closeness of all the Board of the National Council of ICOMOS Italy and mine that we extend to your families and loved ones.

Covid19 has abruptly changed our habits but has also united Italy in a common effort, with the awareness that only rigorous and respectful behaviours of health provisions will be able to put an end to this tragedy. The Country is showing a large majority of its ability to bear the limitations imposed thanks to those values that made Italy great after the WWII.

It is surprising how each of us is just waiting to return to a normal life, to embrace loved ones while understanding that the world economy, and in particular the Italian one, is deteriorating irreparably.

I am sure, that beyond the slogans, "everything will be fine", the bill to be paid will be very high in terms of human lives and of social and economic stress.

Together with all of you, I express the closeness of ICOMOS Italy to the doctors, nurses and all the women and men of the institutions who fight every day to save our lives.

The "culture of responsibility", to which the President of the Italian Republic Sergio Mattarella referred us not many months ago in the end-of-year speech, referring to Italy as a synonym of wisdom, genius, harmony is, in my opinion, the starting point for the rebirth of the Country.

The "culture of responsibility" will need to be started well before the end of the epidemic, by taking an active and proactive role. Never as at this time, must the Country have confidence in itself by striving hard to recover quickly.

We welcome ICOMOS' appeal to stay connected with all the colleagues committed to Cultural Heritage. First, we express our solidarity with all the colleagues of the ICOMOS National Committees for the victims of this pandemic that hit China and Italy among the first. Committees that would have appreciated greater closeness in this difficult time.

However, we need to move forward, and that is why I called an upcoming ICOMOS Italia Executive Committee to propose the opening of a **solidarity platform** to stay connected. We created an emblem that unites us in the battle against this microscopic enemy, capable of locking up hundreds of millions of people in their homes.

The platform will welcome all the testimonials and reflections from the Members for initiatives aimed at Cultural Heritage that can look beyond this moment. ICOMOS Italia shares UNESCO's efforts to help move forward through free access to the World Digital Library (<https://www.wdl.org>): it is a great idea!

Thanks to all of you, ICOMOS Italia will be able to contribute, making its knowledge available to the institutions to offer the ruling class of the Country a new vision proposal in the field of which it is highly competent, specifically engaging in favour of Cultural Heritage and tourism in a project on



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which ICOMOS Italia has already been working at regional level with many Italian regions for some years.

ICOMOS Italy, can contribute to the recovery of the Country through all of you, with your skills under a dedicated emblem that anyone can join by looking, as of now, beyond this crisis whose times, I repeat, are not predictable. We offer our support to the Italian recovery in the field of culture, committing ourselves to re-interpret the entire sector of culture by connecting creativity and tourism, cultural heritage and landscape with the cultural industries and stakeholders. Stakeholders who produced 33.6 billion euro in 2019 of benefit, 2.02% of the national whole added value, as the Symbola report for 2019 "I am culture" reminds us, in a cultural production system worth 96 billion euros!

This situation will prevent us, for a certain time, from traveling and moving with the freedom to which we have been accustomed, but it will certainly inspire innovative alternatives able to generate interest and renewed trust in the Italian system, favouring, first of all, attention to internal demand, which will be much greater than external demand for a period that is not easily predictable. Promote the virtual knowledge of our Cultural Heritage, as is already happening by 10 Italian museums, which can be visited from home with virtual tours and using remote management systems.

The national network of Italian UNESCO sites represents, from this point of view, an infinite resource for our Country that still holds the primacy of sites registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List, just together with China, but that Italy must finally put in value under a single governance by establishing the Italian UNESCO World Heritage Agency.

ICOMOS can work on a National Strategic Plan for enhancing the Italian UNESCO heritage by structuring this governance model aimed at the development of cultural industries and the tourism industry system allowing entrepreneurs to quickly return to growth by helping the economic recovery. The return to trust in our Country have to take place within the shortest possible time in a sustainable and compatible way beyond what this horrible experience has taught us: man and the environment first!

Our website, renewed by ICOMOS Italy Board, will be the virtual square in which each Member can send proposals and reflections on the theme of the economy, culture, and UNESCO heritage to be collected and developed after the emergency. Thanks for what you can do.

While, I still wish you all and your families to be able to overcome this moment soon to return to normal life. I ask you to stay at home, put your professional energies in favour of Italy, and summarize them on the platform "everything will be fine".

See you soon and a warm greeting.

The President of ICOMOS Italy

Maurizio Di Stefano