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**IFLA World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) 2017, Wrocław, Poland.  
Safeguarding Our Heritage for the Future – UNESCO Open Session  
Monday, 21st of August 2017, 16:00-18:00**

I am pleased to represent Polish National Commission for UNESCO at this official Open Session during the IFLA World Library and Information Congress (WLIC), this year in my home country, Poland. This UNESCO Open Session has been held during the WLIC conferences for over twenty years.

UNESCO is a strong supporter of IFLA and its role as the global voice for libraries. The mission of UNESCO as a global, intergovernmental organisation of the UN System specialised in education, science, culture and communication and information goes hand in hand with that of IFLA in numerous fields. It has been confirmed over years by the cooperation between them both and by several common documents or IFLA's documents, such as manifestoes or recommendations, which were endorsed or supported by the General Conference of UNESCO.

As it seems, UNESCO's strengths for documentary heritage associations like IFLA are especially:

- its strong brand,
- its ethical mandate based on its Constitution (the 1945 Convention) and its role in the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- its global outreach and intergovernmental character, and, consequently,
- UNESCO's convening power with governments and other stakeholders, and UNESCO's standard setting capacities.

At the same time, cooperation with such associations as IFLA with its enormous expertise in the fields of libraries and documentary heritage is inexorable for UNESCO to properly fulfil its mandate. The UN 2030 Development Agenda and SDGs seem to provide an important context for furthering that cooperation.

An important framework related to documentary heritage emerged with the adoption by UNESCO, in 2015, of the Recommendation concerning the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage including in digital form. This Recommendation is the first legal instrument of global reach devoted specifically to documentary heritage in its entirety. Let me say a few words more about it in my presentation regarding Poland's engagement in UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme.

I am really glad that WLIC 2017, in the year of IFLA's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, is held in Poland. It is an important year for Poland's engagement in favour of safeguarding, accessibility and promotion of the heritage of humanity, its different, however interlinked in various ways, kinds. Just slightly over a month ago, in July, the 41<sup>st</sup> session of World Heritage Committee took place in Krakow. And now, this so important congress devoted to libraries and information, under the so timely slogan *Libraries. Solidarity. Society*, is being held in Wrocław, in the area of the Centennial Hall – a UNESCO World Heritage site.

It is sometimes emphasised that the heritage of humanity needs to be treated as a whole in spite of the distinct character of its various kinds which are defined from different aspects and whose protection and management calls for different measures, methods and legal regulations. The separate "parts" of the heritage are interconnected in manifold ways, both on a practical level and in reflection upon the significance of the heritage and of its individual sites, elements, and objects. The 2015 Recommendation concerning the documentary heritage encourages such synergies "in order to

assure further coherence of actions". Obviously, synergy should not mean uniformisation or blurring of the distinctions between the conventions, programmes, or principles of managing the heritage lists. Instead, it should show the mutual relations and complementarity of the diverse pieces of evidence and testimonies of humanity's various achievements and experiences. The revealing of the connections between the heritage items listed within the frameworks of different legal instruments and programmes would certainly serve to arouse an interest in heritage, to disseminate and develop knowledge of humanity's legacy, and to facilitate a better understanding of the world. Advances in digital technology and hypertext seem to be highly conducive to initiatives of this kind.

However, in our dynamic times of conflicts and crises in several places in the world, when vast parts of humanity's heritage are being lost irrespective of their kind, we are all reminded in this dramatic way that common action to save it and comprehensive approaches are necessary; and such initiatives as UNESCO's #unite4heritage Campaign can be regarded as efforts leading in that direction. And, again, IFLA's cooperation within its Cultural Heritage Programme has important achievements in this field.

I am very much looking forward to our debate as an opportunity to share views and experiences related to different initiatives aiming to ensure the safeguard of our heritage for future generations, a task that perhaps can be understood as securing its long-term, "physical" accessibility, but also as empowering people, by education and raising awareness, to access it, to understand it, and thus to appreciate it. Personally, I am involved in Polish cooperation with and within UNESCO MoW Programme. So, I expect I can learn particularly much from the presentations of Ms Ingrid Parent and Ms Genevieve Clavel-Merrin the themes of which concern in my view vital topics for that programme.

Presently, I am pleased to share with you some Polish experiences related to UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme. I am grateful to the organisers for giving me this opportunity.