

To the President, Director General and Executive Board of ICOM:

The committee of ICOM UK, after taking time to reflect, would like to formally voice its concern regarding the recent resignations from the ICOM Secretariat and wider concerns about communication with National Committees. The sudden and unanticipated resignation of so many colleagues, including the President Suay Aksoy, with little explanation of the causes and reasons behind their departures, for us, raised fundamental questions about ICOM's ability govern itself and focus on the important conversation about the future of museums.

At this critical time when COVID-19 threatens the future of the sector, the global museums community needs strong and stable leadership. This has to be the very moment when the purpose and value of ICOM becomes patently clear to the sector alongside Governments, politicians and funders. At the present time however we believe this is not happening.

ICOM UK believes it imperative that ICOM rebuild confidence as a matter of urgency and we welcome the letter received this morning outlining proposed changes. ICOM UK would like to send our similar proposals for change, which are detailed below as a contribution to building the way forward. ICOM UK would welcome the implementation of the following:

- **A detailed report of the events around the resignations**

We welcome ICOM Executive Board's decision to conduct an internal review of its decision-making process but what is needed is a full and transparent report on the events and actions that precipitated the resignations. The announcement of Suay Aksoy's resignation via social media, without mention of other resignations, has resulted in damaging speculation. Subsequent communications from the ICOM Executive Board has not provided a clear account of events.

- **The establishment of regular and direct contact with national and international committees**

ICOM UK also asks the ICOM Executive Board to establish regular, direct contact with National and International committees. The controversy surrounding the new museum definition over the past year has revealed weaknesses in the way the ICOM Executive Board communicates with its committees. The discussion about the new museum definition garnered attention not only from ICOM members, but the museum profession generally. It has been damaging not to be able to provide clear sense of direction of travel on this issue to our UK stakeholders.

If, for example, the ICOM Executive Board had circulated the proposed new definition to ICOM UK prior to public dissemination, we could have flagged language

and terminology issues that distracted members from engaging with the content of the definition. Regular and direct communication would also help us understand which initiatives are being instigated by the ICOM Executive Board versus other committees. Since the Kyoto Triennial, ICOM UK has been asked to take part in workshops and conduct surveys related to the museum definition without an understanding of how these might fit into the formal process of developing a new definition. Neither was ICOM UK informed of the Executive Board's intention to establish a new museum definition working group nor asked to recommend members.

- **The ICOM President's communication of key committee decisions**

ICOM UK proposes that, after each Executive Board meeting, the ICOM President or Director General write to ICOM Committee Chairs summarising key points, decisions and actions, *in addition* to publishing the summary and decisions from each meeting on the website. This will ensure important information is not missed and that there is a transparent and accountable course of action following each meeting.

- **Additional online meetings**

ICOM UK also proposes that ICOM should convene online Committee Chair meetings 2-3 times a year to supplement, and take the pressure off, AGMs.

- **Establishes new relationships with the national committees and the EB**

Overall, ICOM UK recommends the ICOM Executive Board rebuilds its relationship with National Committees and establishes them as key partners and collaborators in delivering the mission of ICOM. We are the main conduit between the members and the Executive Board, and we have successfully increased membership over many years.

We want to assure you of the support of the ICOM UK committee to help repair the reputational damage we believe ICOM has suffered at this critical time.

We believe the points detailed above will support a successful future for ICOM, and the ICOM UK committee, and its growing membership, would welcome a response on the five points.

We look forward to working together and look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Chair and Board of Trustees of ICOM UK

14 July 2020