Siracusa Declaration on the submarine cultural heritage of the Mediterranean Sea

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The experts of several countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, attending the International Conference "Means for the Protection and Touristic Promotion of the Marine Cultural Heritage in the Mediterranean", held in Palermo and Siracusa, Italy, on 8-10 March 2001,

concerned by the fact that the submarine cultural heritage is threatened by activities of uncontrolled exploration and appropriation not respecting the need for conservation and research, increasing commercialization of the objects discovered, damages resulting from other marine activities,

looking forward to the early conclusion of the negotiations at UNESCO for a Convention on the protection of underwater cultural heritage,

acting in their personal capacity,

adopt the following

Siracusa Declaration on the submarine cultural heritage of the Mediterranean Sea

I. OBJECTIVES

1. The Mediterranean basin is characterized by the traces of ancient civilizations which flourished along its shores and, having developed the first seafaring techniques, established close relationships with each other.

2. The Mediterranean cultural heritage is unique in that it embodies the common historical and cultural roots of many civilizations. It is also an integral part of the cultural heritage of humanity and an important element in the history of peoples and societies.

3. The Mediterranean countries have a special responsibility to ensure that the submarine cultural heritage they share is made known and preserved for the benefit of humankind.

II. PRINCIPLES

4. Activities directed at the Mediterranean submarine cultural heritage should take place only if full respect of the fundamental principles of scientific archaeology is ensured, as reflected in the 1996 ICOMOS Charter and other relevant instruments.
5. Objects of any kind belonging to the Mediterranean submarine cultural heritage should not be acquired, sold, bartered or exploited for commercial purposes or private benefit.

Economic use of sites and objects belonging to the Mediterranean submarine cultural heritage should be conducted only under strict public supervision.

6. States should avoid the dispersal and fragmentation of components of archaeological contexts.

7. Without prejudice to the rights of the coastal State, activities directed at the Mediterranean submarine cultural heritage should be carried out ensuring prior information and the possible involvement of countries having a verifiable link with the objects in question.

8. Without prejudice to the rights of the coastal State, consultations on how to ensure the appropriate investigation, effective protection and, if they are not preserved in situ, final destination of the objects belonging to the Mediterranean submarine cultural heritage should be held between the countries having a verifiable link with the objects in question.

9. Activities directed at submarine cultural heritage should avoid any damage to the surrounding environment and, when necessary, environmental impact assessment and measures for restoration should be undertaken.

III. CONSEQUENCES

10. In view of their special responsibility, the Mediterranean countries should cooperate in protecting the submarine cultural heritage from natural and man-made risks. They should study the possibility of adopting a regional convention that enhances cooperation in the investigation and protection of the Mediterranean submarine cultural heritage and sets forth the relevant rights and obligations.

11. Mediterranean countries should promote the conclusion of bilateral or multilateral agreements incorporating the objectives and principles of this Declaration and relating to specific components of the Mediterranean submarine cultural heritage, such as wrecks or single objects.

12. Mediterranean countries should establish submarine protected archaeological sites or parks. They should consider means for the establishment of a list of submarine protected archaeological sites or parks of Mediterranean importance. Appropriate measures should be taken to protect submarine archaeological sites from dangerous activities.

13. The establishment of a network of museums where objects of Mediterranean submarine cultural heritage are conserved and displayed should be encouraged and properly publicized.

14. Mediterranean countries should exchange information on, and cooperate in, the training of marine archaeologists.
15. Mediterranean countries should encourage the cooperation of their competent authorities with local governments, scientific institutions, non-governmental organizations, associations of fishermen, seafarers, divers and other professions in the protection and promotion of submarine cultural heritage.

Siracusa, 10 March 2000.