

## **Guiding principles and practical goals towards preserving memory and information for future generations in the context of sustainable development**

The May 2019 workshop in Stockholm could become the venue to help formulate and communicate a chart of guiding principles and practical goals to inform future work in the area of RK&M preservation concerning legacies that present society may bequeath to future generations. A draft future chart is suggested for discussion.

### Preamble

As expressed in the 1997 UNESCO Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations, *“the present generations have the responsibility of ensuring that the needs and interests of present and future generations are fully safeguarded”*. That is why today we are concerned with sustainable development and with which legacies we leave behind, from hazardous waste to cultural heritage. Our responsibility extends over centuries and millennia, for as long as these legacies will last. We will help safeguard the needs and interests of future generations if we can provide access to intelligible records and to exploitable knowledge, as well as by propagating the memory of past actions and decisions. The present chart of guiding principles and practical goals is meant to inform future work in the area of preservation of Records, Knowledge and Memory (RK&M) for the wellbeing of future generations.

### Principles

- Enabling future members of society to make knowledgeable decisions is part of responsible, ethically sound management of environmental legacies in the context of sustainable development. It is also in line with a prudent approach regarding safety.
- The relevant institutions ought not to plan the ending of oversight, whereas the potential loss of oversight needs to be anticipated and planned for.
- Any strategy for the preservation of RK&M should integrate the possibility of discontinuities in the future.

### Practical Goals

- Institutional and non-institutional players should to determine and communicate their role in preserving RK&M and take relevant, coordinated actions. Ideally, law helps identify roles and goals and regulation guides practice.
  - Regulatory guidance and supervision should be developed to support RK&M preservation.
- Preparing for future RK&M preservation is best addressed while a project leading to a legacy is being designed, implemented and funded.

- The operational phase of some of these projects creates an opportunity for the development of inclusive and workable RK&M strategies.
- During the operational phase, institutional stakeholders must prepare for the ending phase, when their own roles will be reduced and new roles will be played increasingly by other stakeholders – especially in the area of RK&M preservation. Responsibilities ought to be determined ahead of time.
- During the operational phase, the institutional stakeholders can facilitate the preparation and implementation of archives; administrative restrictions on land use; regular reporting by governments under one or more international mechanisms or agreements, etc.
- There is no single best means of RK&M preservation over all timescales. All available communication channels should be explored and a few retained for the final preservation strategy.
  - RK&M preservation approaches should include provisions for knowledge reconstruction and for providing information to future generations with and without requiring the involvement of intermediate generations.
  - Records will be used mostly by future members of society and attention should be given to the needs of these users in terms of facilitating readability and intelligibility, providing, in particular, relevant information on the context in which the legacy and the records were created.
  - The various components of the RK&M system should apply robust, simple and understandable techniques and support materials, and should not rely on technological provisions alone.
  - Overall, a multi-faceted approach should be formulated for the RK&M preservation of each project whereby the various components of the RK&M system complement each other, provide for redundancy and maximize the chances of survival of a recognizable and comprehensible message.
- Synergies should be sought with other societal institutions and international bodies.
  - There are important benefits to be gained from partnerships and collaborations between different players and sectors in society.
  - Agreements should be reached that are likely to survive beyond the end of the operational phase and can thus contribute to RK&M preservation.
  - A concerted approach at the international level may contribute further to the development of national strategies.
  - Synergies and lessons to be learned should be sought wider than just the specific legacy of concern.