

Draft Ohrid Declaration

Sustainable Cultural Models for the Future

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations, gathered today on 12 December 2025 in Ohrid, within the framework of the Council of Ministers of Culture of South East Europe (CoMoCoSEE), under the presidency of the Republic of North Macedonia,

Reaffirming respectively the contents, objectives, activities and principles included and determined in the Charter of the Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe signed on 31 March 2005 in Copenhagen, the Appendix and Second Appendix to the Charter approved on 15 April 2011 in Bucharest and on 28 June 2014 in Ohrid respectively;

Confirming our commitment to the implementation of the Joint Declarations approved in Mostar (2004), Venice (2005), Ohrid (2006), Varna (2006), Tirana (2006), Sofia (2007), Zadar (2007), Bucharest (2008), Zagreb (2008), Athens (2009), Cetinje (2010), Bucharest (2011), Belgrade (2012), Brdo pri Kranju (2013), Istanbul (2016), Tirana (2017), Sarajevo (2018), Sofia (2019), Rijeka (2020), Athens (2021), Herceg Novi (2024) and of the Regional Strategy for Cultural Cooperation in South-East Europe approved in Ohrid (2014);

Guided by the priorities highlighted in the 2022 MONDIACULT Declaration, the 2025 MONDIACULT Outcome Document and the Pact for the Future, especially Action 11, which aims to protect and promote culture as integral component of sustainable development, and to place culture at the heart of global policymaking, while confirming its cross- sectoral role in advancing the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

Acknowledging that culture, in all its expressions, is powerful enabler for cultural awareness and expression, inclusion, social cohesion, resilience and peace, and as such essential for the sustainable development of our societies;

Expressing deep concern over increasing threats to the values of cultural heritage and its preservation for future generations, caused by human induced hazards, especially intentional destruction and environmental degradation, unplanned urbanization and disruption of the integrity of cultural heritage and protected urban nuclei, and impacts of climate change, and recognizing the need for

sustainable management and use, risk mitigation, crisis management, increasing resilience to risks, against natural and manmade disasters and fighting illicit trafficking of cultural property.

Reiterating the key role of the regional cooperation in all its dimensions for the prosperity and sustainable development of South-East Europe, we reaffirm today our commitment to preserving our cultural diversity and valuable cultural heritage.

Thanking UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the European Union for their support in advancing cooperation through regional projects and activities in the field of culture in South-East Europe;

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations, express our commitment to the following:

1. Protection, conservation, safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage (in all its forms) through integration in the development policies of the countries of the region recognizing culture as one of the main drivers and enablers of sustainable national and regional development.
2. Enhancing resilience of the cultural heritage to intentional destruction, the impacts of climate change and other development related pressures including unplanned urbanization and inadequately regulated and unsustainable tourism development, by integrating culture-based and traditional knowledge systems, and creativity into policies and actions to strengthen resilience, social equity, and community engagement.
3. Advancing the use of digital technologies in safeguarding, documenting and promoting the cultural heritage, fostering digitization of cultural heritage and application of digital tools to create digital data bases, with the aim to advance presentation and visualization of cultural heritage thus enhancing promotion of models for sustainable management of cultural tourism, as well as sustainable use and economic valorization of cultural heritage, with the aim of developing of cultural and creative industries – including ICT products, architecture, design, multimedia and revitalization of traditional crafts.

4. Promoting the ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI) and inclusive application of emerging technologies in the creation of digital databases and archives, but also in the promotion of cultural heritage, ensuring respect for cultural diversity, data sovereignty, and intellectual property rights.
5. Strengthening engagement of local communities, including vulnerable groups in the decision making processes related to the safeguarding of heritage, the youth education through innovative methods and the implementation of media campaigns to promote the richness and diversity of cultural heritage.
6. Introduction of contemporary policies and practices, such as green innovations in conservation and revitalization processes, including fostering the transmission and application of traditional knowledge systems to address present and future needs.
7. Intensifying regional and international cooperation aimed at protection, revitalization, digitization, promotion, presentation and education related to cultural heritage, through joint projects, capacity building activities, and exchange of experiences among countries in the region.

Recognizing the need for regional solidarity and cooperation in developing and implementing sustainable cultural policies, aiming at providing responses to common (environmental, urban and technological) challenges the heritage is facing, we, **as the Ministers and Heads of Delegations, are thanking the Republic of Bulgaria for initiating the process to create a Cultural Cooperation Fund (CCF) in cooperation with UNESCO**, as expressed in the Declarations adopted in Sofia in 2019, Rijeka in 2020, Athens in 2021 and Herceg Novi in 2024 and welcoming further advancement of the discussion on its final creation and operationalization. We invite the Republic of Moldova as the next CoMoCoSEE chair, to continue further work in cooperation with UNESCO and other CoMoCoSEE Member States to complete the preparation of the text of the Agreement on the establishment of the Cultural Cooperation Fund.

We thank the host country - the Republic of North Macedonia for its excellent presidency of the CoMoCoSEE and we welcome the Republic of Moldova as the new Chair of the CoMoCoSEE.

Adopted in Ohrid, on 12 December 2025