



COLLECTIONS 2030 & BEYOND

Activating heritage collections for
sustainable development through
cross-sector partnerships

DAILY DIGEST – DAY 1 - COLLECTIONS AND PEOPLE

Today, we examined the importance of heritage collections and collections-based organizations in contributing to the People dimension of sustainable development.

The United Nations **Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights** shared with us a powerful message. In an increasingly polarized world, characterized by growing hostility towards the most vulnerable and marginalized people, and loss of empathy, cultural resources and collections acquire more importance. They allow us to understand the past and history not only of those close to us, but also of those farther away, and they foster interactions. The Special Rapporteur stressed that to counter the current global trends, it is necessary to enforce the state responsibility to protect cultural rights. This means ensuring the participation of different segments of the population, and the true and effective inclusivity of collections, by applying a bottom-up approach, as opposed to the often-prevailing top-down one. The narrative of minorities and Indigenous Peoples need to be seen in the exhibits and interpreted in the correct way, or else, their exclusion will be an obstacle to sustainable development. Instead, Indigenous Peoples and other minorities must take the lead. Lastly, the Special Rapporteur expressed hope that cultural rights will have more recognition in the 2030 Agenda.

The **keynote speakers**, by sharing their real-life story as survivors of the earthquake that stroke Japan in 2011, told us that in contexts of natural disaster, rescuing heritage can contribute to psychosocial support, by relieving the stress deriving from the crisis and promote resilience. This is not only true for 'big heritage', but also for 'small heritage', that is the individual memories of people.

The importance of heritage collections in people's identity, but also for their spiritual and mental well-being, came across several contributions today. The findings of a global survey carried out by ICCROM a couple of years ago are clear: heritage collections matter very much to people and losing them would have a huge impact on our lives. This is because collections are closely related to people's identities and roots, but also because they connect the past with the future. In fact, through collections, knowledge travels from our ancestors to future generations, inspiring new ways of wellbeing. Not only do collections give purpose to our lives and make us feel connected to the broader humanity, but we have evidence that heritage, art and creative engagement can contribute to reduction of anxiety and depression and improvement of mental health, activating our wellbeing.



While cultural institutions are uniquely positioned to contribute to the People dimension, they must be supported by, and at the same time nurture, innovative, high-impact partnership. Effective partnerships should be cross-sectorial, and they can span across academia, the human rights sector, the technological sector, donors including private foundations, monitoring and evaluation organizations, and social media.