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Museums around the world are facing great challenges. How do you see their future?

Museums must remain relevant. They are indicators of social and cultural change. The future role of museums in local and global cultural contexts is being radically reshaped, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In a time of constant dynamic change, traditional methods are becoming obsolete and ineffective. In order to survive and thrive, museums must adapt to meet the needs of their audiences and provide a critical framework for innovative solutions without losing sight of their mission.

Crises are always inspiring, so this period presented an opportunity to review the situation in the field of culture. Cultural institutions have done very well, but efforts must be directed towards greater investment in new programme content and digitalisation. It has been proven once again that, besides the items kept by museums, the audiences are also highly significant for their work and existence.

What are the most important challenges that museums are facing today?

Research conducted by ICOM shows that the pandemic had a negative impact on the operating budgets of many world museums. As public investment in museums' operating funds has declined significantly in the last decade, museums have been forced to adopt a "mixed economy" business model. With this approach, in addition to public investment, operating budgets are replenished from various other sources as well. But this approach too has proven insufficient. COVID-19 has showed us how fragile this business model can be and that the museum sector is now more vulnerable than ever.

ICOM and the Shanghai University created the ICOM International Museum Research and Exchange Centre (ICOM-IMREC). You have been appointed a member of the ICOM-IMREC Academic and Programme Committee.

First of all, I must say that the idea of forming ICOM IMREC is wonderful. It is my great honour and pleasure to be a part of this exciting new initiative.

It is especially important now, in times of a global and internal crisis, to deepen the dialogue, transparency and cultural exchange. Evaluation and research are vital parts of the strategic plans of today's museums.

I will certainly invest my professional experience, concentrate my efforts on achieving the goals of the new ICOM strategic plan, carry on promoting the key principles of our association, and direct my activities towards strengthening and expanding international and regional cooperation.

The aim of this Centre is to develop a global think-tank, to establish an international network focused on research, and to address critical theoretical and practical issues that the museum community is facing.

How do you see the role of ICOM in the time ahead?

ICOM is currently at an important crossroads. We are facing not only internal changes and challenges, but also an emergency of planetary proportions.

This is the time to recognise both the results of our collective impact on the society and the opportunities we have to reach solutions for a better future. Our mission is to create advocates for a global network of museum experts. And it is our joint action, transparency, efficiency and creativity that are crucial in that sense.

The period ahead of us must show how our actions can contribute to the development and advancement of society. One thing is, however, is certain: museums are now needed more than ever before.

