YAOUNDE DECLARATION

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PRESERVATION OF AND ACCESS TO ANALOGUE AND DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHIC AND FILM ARCHIVES IN CAMEROON

Premises
Cameroon is a country notable for its rich and diverse historical and cultural heritage ranging from buildings, monuments, photographs, works of art, artefacts, music, folklore, traditions, language, and knowledge. Cultural heritage is often unique and irreplaceable, and places the responsibility for its preservation on the current generation. However, much of this heritage is highly endangered through harmful environmental influences, lack of awareness, lack of a regulatory framework and neglect, and if no action is taken threatens to disappear irretrievably. Particularly affected is the country’s visual heritage, namely photographs and film. At a time of rapid developments in information technology analogue photography and photo archives as well as film archives are as much concerned as, only apparently contradictory, their digital complements.

The subscribers of the YAOUNDE DECLARATION wish to generate a greater understanding of the inescapable value of photographs and films and analogue as well as digital archives for the future of studies in historic, human and social sciences. They call on the government and other stakeholders to make every effort in order to protect and make accessible for public use the country’s photographic and cinematographic heritage.

Preservation of analogue photo archives
With respect to the preservation of analogue photo archives, the YAOUNDE DECLARATION refers to and gives full support to the concerns raised and recommendations formulated by the FLORENCE DECLARATION (see), which has been launched by the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut in 2009.

Preservation of digital archives and access
Only integration between the analogue format and the digital format can guarantee the correct conservation of the photographic and cinematographic heritage for future studies and at the same time the implementation of digital instruments. However, while it is fully recognized that the digital archive is a complement but not an alternative for the analogue archive, the sustainable conservation of digital photo and film archives and the associated databases need to be ensured as well.

Considering the obsolescence and instability of the digital format a sustainable conservation of digital data poses many challenges which can only be met in collaboration with national and international institutions and experts.

In order to facilitate continued and future research, open access to databases and digitized photographs and films on line or in-situ is regarded as an important objective.
General Recommendations
The government and all stakeholders are strongly encouraged to promote

- the application of the Cameroonian legislative framework (2013/003 law on Cultural Heritage in Cameroon from 18 April 2013) stipulating the protection and proper conservation of (analogue and digital) photo and film archives.
- the use and accessibility of photo and film archives in their analogue and digital forms for researchers, universities and schools, and the general public.
- the definition of standard archive procedures which maintain a balance between conservation and consultation of photographs and films, thus maintaining access while securing the holdings for the future.
- the elaboration of clear and non-restrictive copyright and licensing policies.
- collaboration and knowledge sharing with local and foreign institutions insofar as this can be supportive to the recommendations mentioned above.
- the setting up of an inventory of photo and film archives (state, para state, private, cooperative), a prioritization with regard to their vulnerability and the subsequent development of a respective action plan.
- the provision of the necessary financial and human resources so that these objectives can be realised.

Specific Recommendations
To the government and all stakeholders

- Particular attention should be paid to the protection and sustainable conservation of the Buea Press Photo Archives in its analogue and digital forms. The holdings of these archives have been partially digitized and a database has been established. All digital data have been handed over to the Ministry of Communication.
- As a basis for the implementation of the foregoing recommendation, the signatories of the YAOUNDE DECLARATION commend the recognition by the Ministry of Arts and Culture of the Buea Press Photo Archives and the Yaoundé Press Photo Archives as cultural property as intended in the law on Cultural Heritage in Cameroon from 18 April 2013.
- The material of the Buea Press Photo Archives should be relocated to a place where its sustainable conservation and management by a team of qualified personnel can be ensured.
- The digitized photographs and the database of the Buea Press Photo Archives should be made accessible online. The British Library as a major donor of the digitization project of the Buea Press Photo Archives is offering its website for the digital photographs and the database. Disposing of the respective human and technical resources, the British Library guarantees for sustainable access and secure conservation of the material it hosts.
- Copies of the digitized photographs and the database of the Buea Press Photo Archives should be given to all Cameroonian universities for research and consultation purposes. A survey on the holdings of the Press Photo Archives in Yaoundé should be carried out and a strategy with regard to digitalization, conservation and access developed.

Cameroon, November 2016

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