

The Role of UNESCO in the Great Silk Road Program

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ABSTRACT

Today, cooperation between Uzbekistan and UNESCO is developing in a progressive manner and contributes to the preservation of the rich spiritual and material culture of our country, the study of the unique heritage of the Great Silk Road.

Keywords: UNESCO, Dialogue, Civilizations, Collection, Architectural mosaics, The Silk Road, Museum, Intangible cultural heritage.

Introduction

Uzbekistan with its centuries-old history, huge cultural and spiritual heritage has always aroused great interest from UNESCO. In 1993 Uzbekistan became a member of this organization, and in 1994 the National Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan for UNESCO was established.

For many years, by the decision of UNESCO, an international project for the comprehensive study of the Great Silk Road has been carried out. It provides for two programs: “Human Environment, Land and Sea Resources” and “Culture and the Future”. Former Director-General of UNESCO Federico Mayor said in one of his speeches: “The Silk Road, passing through the steppes, seas and deserts, presented an excellent opportunity for establishing contacts and dialogue, contributed to the possibilities of mutual enrichment of outstanding civilizations. The aim of the project for a comprehensive study of the Silk Road is to help the peoples to realize the need to resume dialogue today, to take advantage of the historic opportunity of mutual understanding and mutual enrichment of civilizations located along this road” [1].

Discussion

Through its activities, UNESCO promotes cooperation between nations in the fields of science, education and culture, and on this basis contributes to the strengthening of peace and security in the world, strengthening universal principles in society, regardless of language, religion, race or origin. More than 190 countries of the world are united in this organization for such noble purposes. The National Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan for UNESCO, established in December 1994, is actively working to develop this sector in our country. These educational institutions have successfully participated in a number of international programs, promoting the Education for All goals and the United Nations Decade for Sustainable Development Education. In addition, the organization's activities in the field of education include such areas as inclusive education, education in the field of information and communication technologies, public education centers, vocational training institutions, healthy lifestyle education.

The identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage is one of the main activities of UNESCO. In 2001, UNESCO conducted a public consultation between states and non-governmental

organizations on the issue, and in 2003, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted. To date, 300 masterpieces from 88 countries, which have been passed down from generation to generation for centuries - customs, traditions, holidays, food, folklore, songs, dances - are included in the list of intangible cultural heritage of mankind.

In 1995, UNESCO carried out a technical study in accordance with a UN-funded project for the integrated conservation and development of four tourist cities on the Silk Road - Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand. Proposals included exploring opportunities for renovation, building reinforcement and acceptable use of monuments, modernizing public water supply and sewerage systems, rehabilitating traditional neighborhoods, and providing conditions for the development of handicrafts. In particular, UNESCO allocated 90 thousand US dollars for the conservation of historical monuments Chor-Minor in Bukhara and Tillya-Kari in Samarkand.

With the assistance of UNESCO, centers for the development of crafts: wood and stone carving, ironwork, weaving, ceramics, embroidery, mosaic production, which demonstrate the diversity of cultural traditions of the region, are organized today in the historical places of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Kokand, Margilan and Tashkent. For example, one of the projects – “Blue Samarkand” - aims to restore the traditional alkaline production based on local glaze, which is necessary for the creation of ceramics and architectural mosaics.

In Bukhara, under the auspices of UNESCO, in the ancient mosque Eshoni Pir, a carpet weaving workshop was opened, where ancient methods and recipes are used in the manufacture of dyes and yarns. Collection and restoration of old looms is organized in nearby villages. The same activity has begun in Khiva, where unique carpet ornaments are being recreated today from old photographs, memories of older people.

Uzbekistan takes an active part in the activities of UNESCO and was twice elected to the Executive Board of the Organization: in 1997-2001 and 2009-2013. UNESCO experts pay attention to the development of craft schools in other regions, supporting their non-typical, unique features. Since 2001, UNESCO has funded a project to revive the famous Samarkand paper (Center for the Development of Crafts, in cooperation with the French Institute for Central Asian Studies (IFEAC) [2].

The Central Asian region, with its historical tolerance, occupies a special place in the activities of UNESCO. With its support, in June 2001 in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) an international round table meeting was held, the participants of which discussed issues related to spiritual pluralism in Central Asia, the place and role of the region in world civilization [3]. This meeting was also organized with the assistance of the UNESCO International Scientific Committee, responsible for the publication of the “History of Civilizations of Central Asia” [4]. One of the important achievements of the UNESCO world project for the study of the Silk Road was the creation of a network of scientific institutes in different parts of the continent: the Center for the Study of the Maritime Silk Road (Fuzhou, China), the Buddhist Science Center (Colombo, Sri Lanka), the Institute for the Study of the Silk Road in Nara (Japan), the National Arts Center. Indira Gandhi (New Delhi, India), Taxila International Institute for the Study of Civilizations (Islamabad, Pakistan), International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations (Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia).

In Uzbekistan, in the city of Samarkand, by the decision of the UN and UNESCO, the International Institute for Central Asian Studies (IICAI) was founded. The idea of creating this Institute arose during the work of an international scientific expedition organized within the framework of the project “Comprehensive study of the Silk Road - the path of dialogue”, and passing along the steppe route of Central Asia.

UNESCO is actively working in the cultural life of Uzbekistan. In Samarkand, which in 2001 was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List as the “Crossroads of Cultures”, the Sharq Taronalari International Music Festival is held every two years. The Director General of UNESCO Koichiro Matsuura, who visited our country in September 2000, signed an agreement between the Republic of Uzbekistan and UNESCO on the establishment of the UNESCO Sharq Taronalari Prize.

The organization takes an active part in celebrating the anniversaries of our great ancestors on a global scale. The list of UNESCO anniversaries includes the dates of celebrations in the cities - pearls of the Silk Road - Khiva, Bukhara, Samarkand, Karshi, Termez, Shakhrisabz.

At the initiative of UNESCO, many historical and architectural monuments of Uzbekistan are included in the list of pearls of the world cultural heritage. This list includes the historical center of Bukhara, the Ichan Kala complex in Khiva and the city of Shakhrisabz, which are now considered the common heritage of the peoples of the world. They have been taken under the protection of the international community.

A UNESCO project has been developed to preserve the original form of the Buddha Temple in Fayaztepa, to create an open-air museum. French architects headed by the head of the Central Asia branch of UNESCO, Michael Barry Lane (until 2008) worked here. With his help, the issue of investments from Japan for the implementation of the project was resolved. This museum will display finds from Fayaztep and Karatepa, ancient Buddhist cities on the Silk Road [5]. The list of pearls of the oral and intangible heritage of UNESCO includes unique manuscripts stored at the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Raikhan Beruni of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan (25,621 volumes in total) [6].

It should be especially noted the special contribution of our country to the development of cooperation between UNESCO and Uzbekistan. In November 1998, the final meeting of the 155th session of the UNESCO Executive Committee was held, where the Resolution “Culture of Peace and Activities of the UNESCO Member States” - “Tashkent Declaration” was adopted.

In 2001, Uzbekistan was awarded a special UNESCO prize “Column of Peace”. In November 2007, at the 34th session of the General Assembly of UNESCO, a Resolution was adopted on the celebration of the 2,200th anniversary of the city of Tashkent. Celebrations dedicated to this date were held on April 8, 2009 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. In the capital of France, UNESCO organized an exhibition “Crafts and applied arts of Uzbekistan”. The head of the UNESCO office in Uzbekistan, Jorge Espinoel, emphasized at the international conference dedicated to the anniversary: “Tashkent, which was formed over millennia simultaneously with the Great Silk Road, has an ancient and rich history that feeds its modern development, and today it plays an outstanding role in expanding intercultural dialogue, international cooperation”. Among the new directions of cooperation between UNESCO and Uzbekistan, the joint work of this organization with

the Fund “Forum of Culture and Art of Uzbekistan”. For the first time in the history of UNESCO, in the spring of 2007 a memorandum of cooperation was signed with this public organization. A representative office of the Foundation was opened in Paris.

Results

In October 2008, UNESCO co-founded the international round table “The path of development and popularization of cultural tourism in the countries of the Silk Road” [7]. A year later, in October 2009, Uzbekistan became a member of the Executive Committee of this organization, which indicates an increase in the authority of the republic.

One of the latest developments in the field of culture is the ratification by Uzbekistan in November 2019 of the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. This is a great achievement of the country, as well as the institutions and organizations involved in the ratification process, such as the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Culture, as well as our Representation, which has worked for many years to promote the ratification of the 2005 Convention.

Conclusion

Respect for the national values, civilizations and a cultural center of more than 190 member states of UNESCO is the main criterion of the organization. Education, science and culture have been advocating that humanity should be led to goodness and enlightenment, and that the peoples of the world should unite around a single supreme desire - the idea of friendship and peace.

Humanitarian and peace-loving Uzbekistan fully supports this noble goal of the international organization and is committed to further expanding cooperation. The UNESCO program “The Silk Road - the Road of Dialogue” provides, in particular, a comprehensive study of the history of civilizations of the peoples of Central Asia. But its main goal is to establish closer cultural and economic contacts between East and West, improve relations between the numerous peoples inhabiting Eurasia.

Declarations

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Competing Interests Statement

The author declares no competing financial, professional and personal interests.

Consent for publication

Author declares that he/she consented for the publication of this research work.

Availability of data and material

Author is willing to share the data and material according to the relevant needs.

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