

NOTO STATEMENT
ON THE FUTURE OF UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION AND
PRESERVATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

At the “*Euploia*” conference (*Euploia: Implementing underwater cultural heritage ‘best practices’ in a Mediterranean context*), held 17-19 October 2013 in Noto, Sicily, participants identified three general areas of ongoing concern related to the protection and preservation of underwater cultural heritage (UCH) in the Mediterranean region: (1) consideration of the practical implementation of the 2001 UNESCO Convention and its Annex Rules, (2) expansion of public and community outreach, and (3) development of national legal mechanisms for the implementation of UCH protection. This Statement represents a summation and elaboration of key needs that emerged during discussions at the conference, and as such is intended as a guidepost for future research and action.

1. *There is a need to consider how to implement best practices in the research and study of UCH under the 2001 UNESCO Convention and its Annex Rules.*

- While the 2001 Convention and its Annex Rules provide a general template for good archaeological and heritage practices, site-specific assessment is critical for the development and implementation of management plans and all stages of archaeological projects.
- Case studies should be documented where *in situ* preservation is not deemed advisable as best practice and possible conditions under which the preference for *in situ* preservation might be superseded.
- Research frameworks need to be developed that foreground the inherently interdisciplinary qualities of UCH research. Environmental research questions should also be integrated into UCH project designs since shared methods, technologies, and tools may benefit both environmental protection and UCH preservation.
- Additional forums for collaboration and communication regarding successes and failures of best practices in the field of Mediterranean UCH are warranted and desirable.

2. *Public and community outreach remains an area that needs to be addressed for the effective protection, preservation, and promotion of UCH.*

- Public outreach should be premised upon mutual respect for all stakeholders interested in the protection and preservation of UCH.
- A transition is occurring from a model in which UCH sites are hidden from public view to a new model of protection that engages stakeholder communities in site preservation. Additional case studies are needed to develop best practices in this specific area.
- Volunteers are key stakeholders in protection, preservation, and promotion of UCH. Because volunteers act as multipliers who spread interest and inspire ownership, there is a need to

understand the conditions in which volunteers can effectively participate in active research and site promotion as active partners in the protection of UCH.

- There is a need to engage in effective public outreach in order to control the message about UCH. New technologies and media may assist in such efforts.
3. *Although the 2001 UNESCO Convention and its Annex Rules provide a framework for UCH protection, research, and preservation, there is still a need to develop additional state-specific laws and governance in many parts of the Mediterranean as well as formal cooperative agreements for research in non-territorial waters.*
- There is a serious gap between the theory of the 2001 UNESCO Convention and its practical implementation alongside and through national and local law. Maintaining ethical standards is vital for research to continue and to prevent exploitation and looting in the absence of formal law.
 - Competent national authorities and clear regulations are needed for Mediterranean states that currently lack effective means for protection in their waters.
 - There is a need to create cooperating international networks to support UCH protection alongside collaborative efforts for research and investigation.
 - Site protection zones or parks may be effective in both protecting and promoting UCH. Additional case studies are needed to understand the comparative effectiveness of regulations and initiatives to encourage the reporting of sites.
 - There is a need for coordination between archaeological authorities charged with oversight of maritime and terrestrial cultural heritage, particularly in the case of submerged sites and shipwrecks preserved on land.
 - There are acute limitations to the 2001 UNESCO Convention and its implementation, particularly concerning the protection of UCH at the local and state levels, in non-territorial waters, the definitions of “antiquities,” and the provisions for commercial activity.
 - Continued efforts are necessary to increase awareness and effective implementation of the ideas expressed in the Convention and its Annex for signatory and non-signatory states.

The ideas expressed in this document reflect positive outcomes associated with the implementation of ideals expressed in the 2001 UNESCO Convention and its Annex Rules as they apply to the future of UCH management in the Mediterranean and beyond.

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