

**Resolution adopted by the ICOM-CC membership at the  
15<sup>th</sup> Triennial Conference, New Delhi, 22-26 September 2008**

**Terminology to characterize the  
conservation of tangible cultural heritage**

Considering that

- (a) our aim is to hand on tangible cultural heritage to future generations while ensuring its current use and respecting its social and spiritual significance,
- (b) any measures and actions taken result from an inclusive interdisciplinary decision-making process,
- (c) the decision-making process always includes documentation and investigation (historical, art historical, scientific or technical), and takes into account the past, present and future context of the item,

And that, since the creation in 1967 of the international Committee for Conservation of ICOM (ICOM-CC),

- (d) our professional community has grown significantly in size and in the variety of professions and cultures represented,
- (e) the public has increasingly become an essential partner in safeguarding our shared cultural heritage,
- (f) there has been a sometimes haphazard multiplication of terminology\*, resulting in confusion and misunderstanding,

ICOM-CC, which represents through ICOM a wide international professional network, in order to facilitate communication amongst its membership, the ICOM membership, the world heritage professional community, and with the general public, sees the need for a clear and consistent terminology.

ICOM-CC adopts the following terms: “preventive conservation”, “remedial conservation”, and “restoration” which together constitute “conservation” of the tangible cultural heritage. These terms are distinguished according to the *aims* of the measures and actions they encompass.

The definitions of the terms are as follows:

**Conservation** - all measures and actions aimed at safeguarding tangible cultural heritage while ensuring its accessibility to present and future generations. Conservation embraces preventive conservation, remedial conservation and restoration. All measures and actions should respect the significance and the physical properties of the cultural heritage item.

- **Preventive conservation** - all measures and actions aimed at avoiding and minimizing future deterioration or loss. They are carried out within the context or on the surroundings of an item, but more often a group of items, whatever their age and condition. These

measures and actions are indirect – they do not interfere with the materials and structures of the items. They do not modify their appearance.

*Examples of preventive conservation are appropriate measures and actions for registration, storage, handling, packing and transportation, security, environmental management (light, humidity, pollution and pest control), emergency planning, education of staff, public awareness, legal compliance.*

- **Remedial conservation** - all actions directly applied to an item or a group of items aimed at arresting current damaging processes or reinforcing their structure. These actions are only carried out when the items are in such a fragile condition or deteriorating at such a rate, that they could be lost in a relatively short time. These actions sometimes modify the appearance of the items.

*Examples of remedial conservation are disinfection of textiles, desalination of ceramics, de-acidification of paper, dehydration of wet archaeological materials, stabilization of corroded metals, consolidation of mural paintings, removing weeds from mosaics.*

- **Restoration** – all actions directly applied to a single and stable item aimed at facilitating its appreciation, understanding and use. These actions are only carried out when the item has lost part of its significance or function through past alteration or deterioration. They are based on respect for the original material. Most often such actions modify the appearance of the item.

*Examples of restoration are retouching a painting, reassembling a broken sculpture, reshaping a basket, filling losses on a glass vessel.*

Conservation measures and actions can sometimes serve more than one aim. For instance varnish removal can be both restoration and remedial conservation. The application of protective coatings can be both restoration and preventive conservation. Reburial of mosaics can be both preventive and remedial conservation.

Conservation is complex and demands the collaboration of relevant qualified professionals. In particular, any project involving direct actions on the cultural heritage requires a conservator-restorer (ref. ICOM-CC definition of the profession, Copenhagen, 1984, and ICOM code of ethics).

*For the purposes of international meetings and multilingual publications, the translation into French of the Terminology is: Conservation-Restauration (for Conservation), Conservation preventive (for Preventive conservation), Conservation curative (for Remedial conservation) and Restauration (for Restoration)*

*For the purposes of international meetings and multilingual publications, the translation into Spanish of the Terminology is: Conservación (for Conservation), Conservación preventiva (for Preventive conservation), Conservación curativa (for Remedial conservation) and Restauración (for Restoration)*

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\* Examples “non-interventive conservation”, “indirect conservation”, “passive conservation”, “collection care”, “preservation”, “preventative conservation”, “maintenance”, “indirect preservation”, “active conservation”, “conservation”, “direct conservation”, “interventive conservation”, “remedial conservation”, “curative conservation”, “stabilisation”, “treatment”, “direct preservation”, “repair”, “rehabilitation”, “renovation”, “conservation-restoration”, etc.