

The CIDOC Board at its meeting in Geneva, Switzerland (13-16 February 2020) has adopted the following statement concerning the discussion in ICOM about a new museum definition:

Because of the nature of our work, CIDOC has carefully followed ICOM's progress and updates surrounding its internationally important definition of "museum". Good and relevant definitions are, obviously, a core issue for any statistical endeavour and this is especially true for CIDOC and within its participating countries.

In the light of all this, CIDOC would like to bring to the attention to ICOM the following observations:

We feel that the newly proposed ICOM definition of "museum" contains valuable statements and observations on the comprehensive cultural role of museums. However, we would like to propose that the text offered here serves best as a vision statement, a statement of guiding principles for museums worldwide, rather than as a purely technical definition.

Nevertheless, such a technical definition, in our opinion, is also needed at the centre of ICOM's principal document(s). It should be as short as possible, emphasizing nothing but the most essential features of its object(s), with features that clearly distinguish it from neighbouring and other entities (in the case of museums, these may be community centres, libraries, archives, education centres, etc.). This is essential for establishing clarity at the outset, and is indispensable for any work that needs to ascertain, precisely identify, and count, its objects. We should also not forget that in some countries and contexts, a definition obeying to a set of formal characteristics, and to some degree of formal precision (without engaging in political statements) will be essential, particularly where the definition forms part of a country's national legislation or is otherwise acknowledged in a legal context.

Conforming to this, we would prefer to see the present ICOM museum definition to be carefully adapted, and to see the text of the presently proposed new definition incorporated into ICOM's basic documents at an appropriate place as a mission statement, or as a general statement, for museums.

Thanking you sincerely for your attention to our observation, we should not like to conclude without expressing our sincere wishes for a good, fruitful, and successful continued work of ICOM and the most successful use, and employing, of its „museum“ definition in all relevant contexts.”