

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE PRESERVATION
OF MOVING IMAGES OF CULTURAL VALUE

(22-26 September 1975, Berlin)

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

I. BACKGROUND

1. The General Conference of Unesco, at its eighteenth session, invited the Director General of Unesco by Resolution 3.422 to draw up a programme for the purpose of salvaging and conserving moving images, which might include in particular :

(i) the conduct of studies, in co-operation with the non-governmental organizations concerned and, as necessary, with the competent inter-governmental organizations, on the problem of the destruction of moving images;

(ii) a study of the desirability of establishing an instrument to protect moving images from being destroyed;

and to include this programme in the work-plan for 1977-1978 and the Medium-Term Outline Plan for 1977-1982; (the full text of Resolution 3.422 is given in Annexe I).

2. In implementation of this resolution, the Director General has, in co-operation with the National Commission of the German Democratic Republic and the non-governmental organizations concerned, convened the present Committee experts to examine the technical, legal and administrative aspects of the preservation and conservation of moving images and other audio-visual recordings such as video-tapes, video-cassettes, video-cartridges, video-discs, etc., and to advise the Secretariat on the future activities to be included in Unesco's programmes for the period 1977-1982. In particular, the experts are invited to discuss the scope and content of a possible future international instrument (recommendation to Member States or Convention) for the safeguard of moving images, and the questions which need to be studied more specifically in view of such an international regulation.

3. To prepare the present meeting, the Secretariat of Unesco, in co-operation with the International Film and Television Council, held several informal working sessions in order to review the various questions connected with the preservation of moving images, and to outline the programme of the meeting. The present note is based on

the recommendations of the participants in these meetings and the analysis of responses to the questionnaire on the systematic preservation of films sent to Member States by Unesco in 1971-1972. It is intended to draw the attention of the participants to the main issues on which their advice is sought and to facilitate the discussions. Document SHC.75/CONF.619/3, entitled "Memorandum on the preservation of the cultural heritage of moving images" was prepared by the International Film and Television Council at the request of Unesco, with the aim of providing preliminary suggestions at the professional level.

II. POINTS FOR DETAILED DISCUSSION

4. The experts are invited to discuss the following points and to recommend concrete measures which are needed, at the national and international levels, to increase the means available for the preservation of moving images:

(a) Definitions

In view of the largely varying usage of terms and the constantly growing array of recording techniques it is important, at the out-set, to define as precisely as possible the main categories of audio-visual works, the preservation of which needs to be ensured. A commentary on terminology can be found in document SHC.75/CONF.619/3, page 2 and 3 and its Annexe III.

(b) Causes of destruction

A general review of the causes of destruction of moving images, physical and economic causes, inadequate legal protection, lack of awareness on the part of authorities and the public in general of the nature and urgency of preservation, etc., could provide a useful introduction to the discussion of the ensuing specific questions.

(c) Technical problems of conservation

The special conditions necessary for preserving moving images (problems of storage, special installations like air conditioning, humidity control, fire prevention, etc., the techniques and processes of conservation and restoration) and questions of staff and financing should be outlined with a view to formulating recommendations on the most urgent measures which are necessary at the national level, and on how Unesco could best contribute towards improving the technical conditions of preservation. The technical implications on the selection of moving images for preservation should be given due consideration in this context.

(d) Legal and administrative problems of preservation

The legal and organizational structures which exist in different countries for the preservation of moving images need to be carefully examined; to what extent are national laws and regulations adequate (the system of legal deposit, copyright law); a general survey on

the legal protection of cinematographic works (which is extracted from the Unesco Document LA/ICIC/II/3) is shown in Annexe II. Which types or organizations can best ensure the preservation of moving images (film archives, film museums, cinemathèques, national deposit centres, etc.,) their status and financing, and their relations with film creators and producers; which are the main problems of utilization of the moving images which are being preserved (commercial and cultural aspects).

The experts are invited to analyse the advantages and disadvantages of the existing structures and legal framework, and to indicate as concretely as possible the legal and administrative improvements necessary to guarantee adequate protection and conservation of moving images. The scope and content of a possible future international regulation could be discussed in this connection.

(e) Future action by Unesco in this field

When formulating their recommendations which flow from the preceding discussions the experts should bear in mind that only a small budget and staff will be available to carry out the suggested tasks. These contingencies are not likely to change in the near future. The experts should, therefore, weigh carefully the relative urgency of tasks and establish an order of priority so as to enable Unesco to gradually carry out the preliminary in-depth studies which are necessary to build up a comprehensive body of proposals for the effective preservation of the cultural heritage of moving images which could take the form of a recommendation to Member States or of an international convention.