

**Joint Policy Framework for Co-operation in the field of
Mutual Cultural Heritage of Ghana
and the Netherlands**

I. Introduction: The History and Role of Mutual Cultural Heritage

The Republic of Ghana and Kingdom of the Netherlands share a long history of which tangible and intangible evidence remains. The shared cultural heritage of the two countries, which is identified at present as *Mutual or Common Cultural Heritage*, is an integral part of the prevailing bi-lateral relations. It is a reminder of the shared history of the two countries and constitutes an important element of the cultural cooperation between the two countries and of that in the field of cultural heritage in particular. It refers to both movable and immovable cultural objects that are an expression of the long historic ties between the two countries making the objects significant to the history and culture of both countries.

Article 3.9(4) of *the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992* states that " the State shall endeavour to preserve and protect places of historical interest and artefacts." In concert with this constitutional provision, *the Cultural Policy of Ghana, 2002* specifies that " in the effort to promote Ghanaian culture internationally and foster a healthy people-to-people relationship between Ghana and other countries, Ghana shall seek and develop contacts with friendly countries and external relations" by any " means likely to promote mutual understanding, growth and development" (section 5.4,3d) among others.

In 2000 The Netherlands drew up a general policy framework on mutual cultural heritage. In this framework the principle aim of the Netherlands' mutual cultural heritage policy is defined as the joint conservation of mutual cultural heritage. Co-operative efforts of this kind are dependent on political goodwill and the commitment of all parties concerned. In order to stress the importance the mutuality in this area, it was thought desirable to develop more specific policy frameworks of cooperation with each of the countries with which The Netherlands has a shared heritage.

This Joint Ghana-Netherlands Mutual Cultural Heritage Policy Framework is the outcome of the desire and effort of Ghana and The Netherlands to cooperate and develop in the field of mutual cultural heritage. It acknowledges that cultural heritage is the most relevant feature of the cultural bilateral relations. The policy framework contains a set of joint principles and priorities for cooperation in the field of the shared cultural heritage of the two countries. Mutual cultural heritage embraces many facets of physical and socio-cultural features resulting in distinctive influences on both tangible and intangible heritage of the countries. It includes memories of the transatlantic slave trade as well as the good relations between Ghana and The Netherlands in the more recent past.

An understanding of the past is of vital importance to a country's quest for a national cultural identity. The (mutual) cultural heritage indisputably plays a role in this process. In both countries the issue of mutual cultural heritage is regarded with caution and interest at the same time. Caution, because it also represents memories of difficult times in history such as that of slavery. Interest because it can be a stepping-stone for future co-operation and a tool in rewriting history. The role of this policy framework, signed by the governments of Ghana and The Netherlands, is basically to facilitate a structured and workable bilateral cooperation in the area of mutual cultural heritage of the two countries.

The challenge of this dynamic framework for bilateral cooperation in the area of mutual cultural heritage lies in linking the past with the future, taking all historical, social, economic and cultural aspects into consideration.

II. Policy objectives and basic principles

Although the mutual cultural heritage has been the subject of co-operation over a number of years, an institutionalised form of cooperation is still lacking. This policy framework aims to structure cooperation between Ghana and The Netherlands in the area of Mutual Cultural Heritage of the two countries. The overall goal of this policy framework is to structure the cooperation on the sustainable preservation and management of the mutual cultural heritage in Ghana and The Netherlands. It contains the main objectives of cooperation as well the priorities for cooperation in the near future. It is also an instrument for assessing project applications.

The **primary objective** of the policy framework is to foster the sustainable preservation and management of the Mutual Cultural Heritage in Ghana and The Netherlands. Therefore activities with a clear social and economic impact shall have priority.

In view of its magnitude and relevance for society and culture in general, this aim cannot be achieved merely by spending vast sums of money for **physical preservation**. Therefore a number of **secondary aims**, indirectly contributing to the overall goal of sustainable preservation and management have been formulated:

- a. Exchange of knowledge, both technical and policy-related. It could take the form of training, exchanges, seminars, workshops, etc.
- b. Strengthening local support for and increasing local awareness of common heritage.
- c. Education and training;
- d. Cooperation shall focus on both the tangible as well as the intangible aspects of the common cultural heritage.
- e. Strengthening public support and public awareness of the mutual cultural heritage among the Dutch and Ghanaian populations.
- f. Promotion of cultural heritage related activities, preferably in cooperation with, and supported by, the tourism sector.
- g. Introduction of new legislation and guidelines, if necessary, and formulation of new project proposals leading to the promotion of Mutual Cultural Heritage.
- h. Technical and institutional strengthening of public bodies and intermediary NGO's that directly or indirectly support the related activities.
- i. Proper co-ordination, resulting in better cooperation among the relevant local and international institutions in the two countries.
- j. Sharing information, experiences and research on:
 - Oral tradition
 - Slavery issues
 - Record management, electronic archiving and digitalisation of collections;
 - Restoration issues.
 - Management of (world) heritage sites

III. Priority Areas of Mutual Cultural Heritage Co-operation.

Ghana and The Netherlands will focus their cooperation on 3 major sectors of mutual cultural heritage.

- **Built Heritage**
- **Museums**
- **Archives**

Projects in all 3 sectors are culturally and historically important for both Ghana and The Netherlands.

Built Heritage

Conservation and management of historical built heritage, including especially the Dutch Fortifications in Ghana and other Dutch influenced public utility buildings, such as market buildings and churches, shall receive priority attention.

Museums

Museums play a key role in the public understanding and awareness of mutual cultural heritage. Planning and implementation of mutual heritage projects by museums will lay a solid base for sustainable museological development.

Archives

The cooperation in the field of archives shall focus on the exchange of information by making archives, available in one country, accessible to archival institutions, researchers and the public in general in both countries. Cataloguing, microfilming and digitising of archival information can achieve this. The preservation and conservation of archival materials of mutual cultural importance should also be enhanced.

Evaluation

The policy framework shall be subject to an evaluation within a period of five years.

Projects

In both Ghana and The Netherlands, mutual cultural heritage initiatives have been or are being developed. Annex 1 of this framework contains a list of possible projects for future cooperation at the time of signing. These projects will have priority in the processing of project-applications.

Annex I

Built heritage

- Archaeological surveys in and around the forts and castles identified as being part of mutual cultural heritage;
- Preservation, conservation and development of management plans of forts and castles identified as being part of mutual cultural heritage;
- Revision of the legal framework for adequate protection, conservation and management of mutual cultural heritage sites;
- Delineation of boundaries of world heritage sites within the mutual cultural heritage;
- Training programme for local decision-makers involved in the management of the forts and castles in the world heritage list;
- Training and exchange of experts and technical personnel in the field of built heritage.

Museums

- Digitisation of Museum collection in the National Museum of Ghana with special focus on **Object ID**;
- Facilitating preservation of movable museum objects belonging to mutual cultural heritage
- Training and exchange of experts and technical personnel in the field of museology

Archives

- Exchange of information between archival institutions in Ghana and The Netherlands focusing on the shared history of the two countries.
- Training and exchange of experts in the field of archives.

Signed at Elmina, Ghana on 31st May 2004

For the Republic of Ghana

For the Kingdom of the Netherlands

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