

Report on Proposed Future Actions from the Experts Meeting on Safeguarding Sudan's Cultural Heritage Tokyo Kyoto and Osaka Japan 24–27 February 2026

Based on the discussions held during the Experts Meeting in Japan for Safeguarding Sudan's Cultural Heritage, convened in Tokyo and Kyoto from 24 to 27 February 2026, the participants hereby set forth the following recommendations to guide future cooperation for safeguarding Sudan's cultural heritage. These recommendations are grounded in the fundamental principle of understanding and supporting Sudan's cultural heritage from Sudan's own perspectives and through the agency of Sudanese experts.

1. Strengthening Emergency Protection and Documentation of Cultural Heritage

- 1.1. In response to the formal request made in 2025 by the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM), priority is to be accorded to the emergency protection and assessment of the Gezira Museum and Khalifa House, both of which have been affected by the ongoing war. All emergency actions are to be undertaken under the leadership of the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM), recognizing its statutory mandate and central role in safeguarding Sudan's cultural heritage as governed by the Antiquities Protection Ordinance of 1999.
- 1.2. Documentation efforts are expected to focus on the creation of a digital database to record the current condition of collections, buildings, and exhibition spaces.
- 1.3. Documentation activities are to be led by Sudanese experts, with NCAM serving as the primary coordinating institution, and Japanese partners providing technical advice, equipment, support, and assistance in data organization as needed.
- 1.4. The digital database for museum collections and heritage sites is intended to serve as a foundation for future rehabilitation planning, coordination of international cooperation, and long-term preservation.

2. Supporting the Rehabilitation of Museums and Cultural Institutions

- 2.1. Rehabilitation planning for the Gezira Museum and Khalifa House, both impacted by the war, is expected to be supported through measures to ensure structural safety, safeguard collections, and improve exhibition environments.
- 2.2. The rehabilitation process is to encourage the participation of local authorities and communities and position both institutions as centers for cultural revitalization.
- 2.3. All rehabilitation support is to be implemented in close coordination with NCAM, which serves as the principal national authority overseeing planning, prioritization, and decision-making throughout the rehabilitation process.
- 2.4. Within this framework, the UNESCO Sudan Office is expected to serve as an implementing partner, providing technical expertise in conservation planning, risk-informed recovery strategies, and heritage protection frameworks, while facilitating coordination and acting as a bridge between national institutions and Japanese experts.

3. Enhancing the Capacities of Sudanese Experts and Expanding Training Opportunities

- 3.1. Training programs for Sudanese experts are expected to be expanded in the fields of conservation science, museum management, cultural heritage disaster risk reduction, and digital archiving and database development, with NCAM guiding the identification of training needs and priority areas.
- 3.2. Collaboration with the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan and the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties is to be strengthened to establish a sustainable training framework.
- 3.3. Training programs are to be aligned with Sudanese requirements and field realities, with particular emphasis on practical skills related to digital documentation and data management.
- 3.4. The UNESCO Sudan Office is expected to contribute to providing technical advisory support, facilitating expert exchanges, and ensuring that training initiatives are consistent with international conventions and best practices while remaining grounded in Sudanese priorities. ICESCO may likewise support capacity-building efforts through its heritage programs and expert networks, ensuring that training opportunities benefit from diverse international expertise.

4. Promoting Community-Based Cultural Heritage Protection

- 4.1. Community-led initiatives, including the Kassala Community Peace Park, independent of NCAM's institutional mandate, are considered important models for cultural heritage protection.
- 4.2. Cooperation is to emphasize the preservation of everyday cultural practices, traditional skills, and local cultural identities.
- 4.3. Cultural heritage activities are expected to contribute to social inclusion, community resilience, and peacebuilding.

5. Strengthening Coordinated Collaboration with International and National Institutions

- 5.1. Cooperation with UNESCO, the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan, and the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties is to be continued, ensuring complementary and non-duplicating support.
- 5.2. Support is to be extended to the implementation of UNESCO's Emergency Action Plan for Sudan 2025–2027, including priority actions for safeguarding Sudan's tangible and intangible cultural heritage, combating illicit trafficking, and strengthening the capacities of Sudanese cultural institutions and civil society through contributions to the UNESCO Special Account for Sudan, while commending the Sudanese authorities for their successful efforts in restoring looted and missing antiquities as a testament to their leadership and commitment to heritage protection.
- 5.3. The UNESCO Sudan Office, as the operational entity present in the country, is expected to play a coordinating and facilitating role in aligning international assistance with Sudanese priorities, avoiding duplication, and ensuring coherence with national recovery strategies, in close collaboration with other international partners, including ICESCO. NCAM is to coordinate national-level inputs and ensure that all international cooperation aligns with Sudan's heritage protection priorities and institutional frameworks.
- 5.4. A tripartite Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between NCAM, ICESCO, and the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties is under consideration, and this MoC is intended to serve as a basis for further concrete collaboration.
- 5.5. Mechanisms for coordinating international cooperation are to be explored, ensuring alignment with Sudanese priorities, with NCAM serving as the central national counterpart for all heritage-related coordination.
- 5.6. Collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan is to be pursued to explore opportunities for international funding and policy support.

6. Ensuring Cooperation Grounded in Sudan's Perspectives and Agency

- 6.1. All cooperation is to respect the leadership of Sudanese experts, institutions, and communities, and is to be guided by the principle of understanding Sudan's cultural heritage from Sudan's own perspectives. In this regard, NCAM's institutional leadership is essential for ensuring that cooperation reflects Sudan's priorities and cultural contexts.
- 6.2. Cooperation frameworks are to avoid external, top-down approaches and instead be shaped by Sudanese priorities and decision-making.
- 6.3. All initiatives are to be designed with full consideration of Sudan's cultural contexts, historical backgrounds, and regional diversity.

7. Establishing Frameworks for Future Cooperation

- 7.1. Building on the insights gained through this meeting, the establishment of ongoing expert meetings or working groups is to be considered.
- 7.2. Regular information exchange between Sudanese and Japanese experts is to be facilitated to monitor progress and coordinate future activities.
- 7.3. Long-term cooperative relationships are to be pursued through sustained efforts in cultural heritage protection.

The participants reaffirm their commitment to advancing cooperation for the protection and recovery of Sudan's cultural heritage in line with these recommendations.

Adopted on 27 February 2026, Osaka, Japan.

Participants

Dr. Abdelrahman Ali (Head of the Culture Unit, UNESCO Sudan Office/ former Director General, National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM))

H.E. Mr. Khalid Fathalrahman (Director, ICESCO Center for Civilizational Dialogue)

Dr. Shadia Abdrabo (Deputy Director, Museums Sector, National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM))

Mr. Elnzeer Tirab (Director, National Ethnographic Museum)

H.E. Mr. Elrayih Mohamed Elawad Hydoub (Ambassador, Embassy of the Republic of Sudan in Japan)

Mr. Ali Mohamed (Counselor, Embassy of the Republic of Sudan in Japan)

Dr. Tomo Ishimura (Director, Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties)

Ms. Yoko Futagami (Head, Cultural Properties Information Section, Department of Art Research, Archives and Information Systems, Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties)

Mr. Tsuyoshi Chiba (Researcher, Center for Conservation Science, Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties / Researcher, Center for Cultural Heritage Disaster Risk Management)

Ms. Naoyo Sekihiro (Senior Archaeological Director, Kyoto City Archaeological Research Institute)

Dr. Nobuhiro Shimizu (Associate Professor, Faculty of Engineering, Hokkai Gakuen University)

✂The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of the organizations or the governments they represent.