



## The International Symposium *"Museums Uniting a Divided World"*

The symposium is associated with the International Council of Museums' celebration of International Museums Day (IMD 2026)

**Date:** May 20, 2026 **Venue:** Grand Egyptian Museum, Cairo, Egypt

### • INTRODUCTION

This year, International Museums Day (IMD 2026) highlights the significant role that museums serve as facilitators of cultural, social, and geopolitical connections. They promote dialogue, understanding, inclusion, and peace among communities globally. As reputable public spaces and centers of education, museums contribute to the advancement of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. In an era characterized by social fragmentation, polarization, and disparities in access to knowledge and culture, museums play a crucial role in reconstructing connections across generations, communities, and borders. They cultivate environments in which narratives, artifacts, and individuals converge, providing opportunities for reflection, exchange, and shared understanding.

The theme *"Museums Uniting a Divided World"* highlights the capacity of museums to facilitate respectful dialogue while acknowledging and preserving differences. By safeguarding cultural heritage and collective memory, providing environments conducive to learning and reflection, and amplifying a diverse range of voices, museums enable societies to engage constructively with complexity. By remaining open and accessible to all, museums promote diversity, sustainability, and social cohesion.

In celebration of the 80th Anniversary of ICOM, the ICOM International Committee for Museums and Collections of Archaeology and History (ICMAH) and ICOM Egypt National Committee reaffirm their dedication to enhancing the global museum community and advancing its societal role. Following the ICOM Strategic Plan aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for International Museum Day 2026, ICOM advocates the following SDGs:

- **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities** – Reducing inequality within and among countries.
- **SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions** – Promoting just, peaceful and inclusive societies.
- **SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals** – Revitalizing global partnerships for sustainable development.

In the heart of civilization, at the world's largest museum of archaeological and historical collections, which encompasses a significant assembly of ancient Egyptian civilization artifacts at the Grand Egyptian Museum, The ICOM International Committee for Museums and Collections of Archaeology and History and ICOM Egypt Regional Committee invites museum professionals to submit proposals for presentations to be presented during the symposium, addressing the following themes:

- **Theme A: Decolonization of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museums.**

Museums are shifting from being static showcases of the elite to active platforms for **social equity**. To reduce inequalities, these institutions are **decolonizing** their galleries by returning looted artifacts to their countries of origin and rewriting labels to include the perspectives of the colonized, not just the colonizers. Locally, they are dismantling barriers to entry through **community co-creation**, where marginalized groups help tell their own stories, and by offering **sliding-scale admission** to ensure financial status doesn't limit access to heritage. By highlighting the histories of everyday people rather than just the powerful, museums transform into inclusive spaces that validate the identity of every visitor. This theme invites papers that explore critical case studies and theoretical reflections on how museums can move from spaces of passive preservation to dynamic, inclusive hubs of cultural equity and shared authority in a complex, 21st-century landscape.

- **Theme 2: Museums: A Place for Peaceful and Inclusive Societies.**

Museums serve not only as institutions dedicated to preserving history and culture but also as essential civic spaces that facilitate dialogue, understanding, and mutual respect. In an increasingly diverse and interconnected global landscape, museums possess a unique ability to unite individuals across various generations, cultures, and communities. By promoting a shared sense of heritage, encouraging critical reflection, and amplifying diverse perspectives, museums significantly contribute to the advancement of peaceful and inclusive societies. As "contact zones," they provide environments for diverse communities to engage with conflicting narratives in a mediated context, thereby working to reduce social distance and counteract prejudice. This discussion will explore how strategic museum practices—ranging from exhibition design to participatory governance—can be effectively utilized to support reconciliation, foster empathy, and contribute to the establishment of a more just and inclusive society.

- **Theme 3: Introducing the Concept of Sustainable Development Within Museum Practices.**

Museums are undergoing a significant transformation, evolving into proactive agents for social and environmental change. The integration of **sustainable development principles** will fundamentally influence the governance philosophy of museums, alongside their operational practices and public engagement strategies. This transition necessitates a comprehensive approach, which includes the implementation of **environmentally sustainable facility management** and **ethical procurement practices**, as well as the collaborative **design of exhibitions** aimed at enhancing climate literacy and civic participation. This session will explore the strategies, institutional frameworks, and best practices that enable museums to take a leadership role in fostering more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable societies for the future.

- **IMPORTANT NOTICE.**

- The language of the conference is **ENGLISH/ARABIC**.
- **For the Proposal Presentation submission**, please submit through the form in the link below: [International Symposium "Museums Uniting a Divided World" IMD2026 ICOM ICMAH, ICOM EGYPT – Fill in form](#)
- Participation in the symposium is free of charge. **Registration is MANDATORY** through the link below: [International Symposium "Museums Uniting a Divided World" IMD2026, ICOM ICMAH, ICOM EGYPT – Fill in form](#)
- The presentations will be in PowerPoint format during the conference
- The article format will be communicated for accepted papers.
- A digital publication will be ensured on the ICOM ICMAH Website <https://icmah.mini.icom.museum/publications-2/our-publications/>.

- **IMPORTANT DATES**

- Abstract submission deadline : April 30, 2026.
- Notification of acceptance of abstracts : May 5, 2026.
- Conference date : May 20, 2026.

- **CONTACTS & INFORMATION**

For information, queries, and Abstract Submission, please contact: [Chair.icmah@icom.museum](mailto:Chair.icmah@icom.museum)

Or visit: <https://icmah.mini.icom.museum/>

Cordially,

**ICOM ICMAH Board**  
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