Underwater Archaeological Museum, Campeche, Mexico.

Presented by (State Party): MEXICO

Location: SAN FRANCISCO DE CAMPECHE, MEXICO

Brief Description of the Underwater Cultural Heritage Site concerned:

The National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) of Mexico, through its Vice Directorate of Underwater Archaeology (SAS), counts with a representative office in the city of San Francisco de Campeche, in the Southeast part of the country.

This office is in charge of developing projects and activities related to the protection, conservation, research and dissemination of the Underwater Cultural Heritage in marine and continental waters of the Yucatan Peninsula: Gulf of Mexico, Mexican Caribbean, cenotes (sinkholes), flooded caves, rivers, lakes, lagoons, springs, and land claimed by the sea.

Derived from the work carried out in these aquatic spaces, more than 900 elements have been recovered, including: skeletons of humans and animals who inhabited the Yucatan Peninsula during the Late Pleistocene period; findings of pre-Hispanic vestiges of the Mayan culture in cenotes and caves; a significant collection of pieces coming from shipwrecks related to the Colonial period, and wrecks from the industrial era focused on the technology of steam navigation.

This unique collection, product of projects undertaken by INAH over 37 years, will be exhibited, for the first time, at the Underwater Archaeological Museum, expected to be inaugurated during 2017. This museum will have two locations: the first one in San Jose el Alto, a 18th century redoubt in the port of San Francisco de Campeche, a city declared World Heritage by UNESCO in 1999.

The second location will be in the area of Playa Bonita, in the city of Lerma, State of Campeche. This space will be focused on strengthening the visibility of Underwater Cultural Heritage through playful activities, where visitors may live the experience of being in a maritime accident (a replica) through diving, snorkeling, and glass bottom boats, among other mechanisms.
Brief Description of the Best Practice in responding to the criteria set by the Meeting of State Parties (see above):

One of the goals of the Underwater Archaeological Museum is to promote the visibility of the Underwater Cultural Heritage through a space that will contain more than 900 pieces non exhibited before and which were recovered from marine and continental waters through SAS/INAH's projects, also presenting a replica of an 18th century maritime accident —part of the hull and cargo as well as artillery and an anchor.

This initiative seeks to trigger, in a ludic way, the sensitivity of the public aimed to understand the importance of protecting this legacy, its appreciation and appropriation.

Another objective is to share with the public this unique collection as a sample of the richness of the Underwater Cultural Heritage of Mexico, and thus generate, through an educational process, the appropriation of this patrimony and the sense of belonging.

Also, this exhibition at two locations will serve to promote the UNESCO 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage through diverse academic, dissemination and creative activities, as a possible mean to develop people's skills at a regional level.

How is the site protected legally?

The redoubt of San José el Alto, main site of the Underwater Archaeological Museum, is part of the walled defensive system of Campeche, a World Cultural Heritage, UNESCO (1999). It is currently under the custody of the National Institute of Anthropology and History, depending on the Ministry of Culture. This 18th century building will house the collection of materials from the different paleontological, archaeological, and historical underwater contexts that have been identified and registered in Mexican waters.
What practical measures have been implemented to ensure the protection of the site?

The National Institute of Anthropology and History is the official guardian of the Underwater Archaeological Museum with headquarters in San José El Alto, San Francisco de Campeche, Mexico.

To ensure the protection of the collection, the museum will have permanent security guards and cameras, metal detectors, and a hurricane and storm shelter system.

How is responsible and non-intrusive public access to the underwater cultural heritage encouraged? What special and outstanding effort has been made to make the site accessible to the public?

The Underwater Archaeological Museum is an initiative of INAH’s Vice Directorate of Underwater Archaeology and the Campeche State Government in order to enable visibility and easy access to knowledge about this national legacy in a way that the public can enjoy and learn at the same time, raising their consciousness about the existence, importance and need to research, preserve, and protect the UCH. This effort is aimed to bring visitors to the information scientifically obtained and to have the possibility to admire materials recorded and recovered in more than 450 submerged archaeological sites.

How is public awareness, appreciation and protection of the heritage increased?

Through this innovative local exhibition of more than 900 pieces recovered from submerged contexts, to be shown at several rooms at the San José el Alto redoubt in Campeche City, as well as through the recreation of an 18th century shipwreck’s remains in the area of Playa Bonita, also in the State of Campeche, it is expected to raise public awareness and their appreciation for this legacy, especially because this will be the first time that such a museum exist is both locations. Among complementary activities courses will be offered for the creation and strengthening of capacities in the area for the benefit of the region, as well as to make visitors aware of the existence and international importance of the 2001 UNESCO Convention, above all among public from Latin America and the Caribbean.
How does the example support scientific research and appropriate conservation in accordance with the Rules of the Annex to the 2001 Convention?

Partial results related to the scientific research will be integrated into the museographic script, which will generate public access to information and knowledge.

Equally, the conservation of the Underwater Cultural Heritage will be underlined throughout the whole exhibition so visitors can get a clear idea of how archaeologists are the only authorized ones to present a project to INAH’s Archaeological Council in order to get a permit to explore, record, recover and conserve cultural artifacts found in submerged contexts. Also, to make public aware on how important is not to touch or remove any object located in an aquatic body.

Visitors will be able to know different aspects related to the underwater cultural patrimony: research, conservation, dissemination, site management, and protection.

Another intention is to achieve equal and democratic access.

Please describe briefly the management plan designed for the site:

The Underwater Archaeological Museum will be administered by the National Institute of Anthropology and History, with resources from the Government of the Campeche State. Both exhibit locations will be part of a single circuit which can be accessed by public transport.

This Management Plan will include outreach activities for children and adults related to awareness raising for the safeguarding of Underwater Cultural Heritage. The main focus will be the creation of public awareness in the surrounding communities of fishermen and sports divers, as well as in national and foreign tourism.

It will have continuous dissemination activities for middle and high schools.

There will be ludic workshops on various aspects of Underwater Cultural Heritage for the community.
Have local, national and international stakeholders been involved in the process of identifying the Best Practices example? If so, please list them.

- Vice Directorate of Underwater Archaeology (SAS), National Institute of Anthropology and History, INAH, of Mexico.
- SAS/INAH representation in the State of Campeche.
- Government of the State of Campeche.

UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM, CAMPECHE, MÉXICO
San Jose el Alto, a 18th century redoubt in the port of San Francisco de Campeche.

Replica of an 18th century maritime accident.
Replica of an 18th century maritime accident, part of the hull and cargo as well as artillery and an anchor.
Please attach documents giving evidence for the information provided and any other documents you may consider relevant.

The forms are to be submitted in English or in French, electronically or in hard copy. They are to be signed and sent to the following address:

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DE ANTROPOLOGÍA E HISTORIA

Signature(s):

Name of the signatory(ies):
ARQLGA, MARÍA ELENA BARBA MEINECKE
MÉXICO
UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY VICEDIRECCION, NATIONAL OF ANTROPOLOGY AND HISTORY INSTITUTE, MÉXICO

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