

BHUBANESWAR DECLARATION ON MUSEUMS, ACCESSIBILITY AND THE DISABLED

The delegates, who participated in the all India Museums Conference on “Museums, Accessibility and Differently-abled Visitors” organised by the Museums Association of India and the National Museum of Natural History in the Regional Museum of Natural History (Bhubaneswar) during 15-17 January 2011, recommend the following, which may be called as “Bhubaneswar Declaration on Museums, Accessibility and the Disabled”:

1. **National instruments on Museums, Accessibility and the Differently-abled Visitors:** Recognizes the Mysore Declaration on Museums and Disabled, (which was released during the National Workshop on Museum Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities organized by the Regional Museums of Natural History, Mysore during 31 January to 2 February 2007) and the Chennai Declaration on Museums and Persons with Disabilities (which was released during the National Conference on “Enabling Museums” held in the Tamil Nadu Science & Technology Centres (TNSTC) in Chennai during 14-16 February 2008, as the earliest national instruments in the subject of Museums, Accessibility and Disabled,
2. **Museum as examples of public spaces/buildings:** Requests the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (Government of India) to include Museums as examples of public spaces/ buildings in all existing/ future relevant national instruments related to Persons with Disabilities,
3. **Accessible Responsibilities:** Museums shall have the following policy responsibility with respect to accessibility:
 - 3.1. Accessibility to be included in the policy or mission statement of Museums,
 - 3.2. Access audits of Museums shall be a regular feature,
 - 3.3. Museums shall designate one staff as Accessibility Coordinator,
 - 3.4. Museums shall undertake regular sensitization programmes for staff regarding the Accessibility,
4. **Accessible policies to be pre-requisite for funding to Museums:** Requests funding agencies of Museums including the Government, to include Accessible Responsibilities mentioned above to be pre-requisite for funding of Museums
5. **Accessible Museum Buildings and Physical Infrastructure:** The following recommendations are submitted:
 - 5.1. Universally accepted signages/ orientation boards be made available at the entrance itself
 - 5.2. Wheel chairs (small, medium and large) must be made available for the benefit of mobility impaired visitors
6. **Accessible Museum Communication / Exhibition:** The following recommendations are submitted:
 - 6.1. Universal design shall be one of the underlying principles for Museum communication/ exhibition,
 - 6.2. Shall provide inclusive labels (E.g. Braille) along with normal labels.
7. **Accessible Museum Education / Programmes:** The following recommendations are submitted:
 - 7.1. While planning for education /programmes for Persons with Different abilities, the requirements of Visitors as well as Non-visitors may have to be considered equally well
 - 7.2. Regular Visitor Studies shall be undertaken to understand the specific requirements of Persons with Disabilities and the reasons for their non-visitation
 - 7.3. Museums should arrange a variety to activities to suit the various requirements of Persons with Disabilities with the help of NGOs and other organizations working in the field of disability
8. **Museum accessibility Studies to be part of training programme:** Professional agencies in Museums in India, training institutions, University Departments of Museology, Major Museums and other stakeholders may include Museum Accessibility Studies in their training programmes/ syllabi.
9. **Requirement of a National Centre for Museum Access Studies:** In order to undertake the above-mentioned recommendations and to prepare guidelines, it is recommended to the Government of India, and all other stakeholders dealing with Museums and Persons with Different abilities, to establish a National Centre for Museum Access Studies (NC-MAS).

Sd/-

Signed on behalf of the participants in Bhubaneswar in 17-1-2011 by:
Dr. B. Venugopal, Coordinator, All India Museum Conference,
Dr. P.K. Sharma, President, Museums Association of India,
Dr. K.K. Basa, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar,
Mr. Supreo Chanda, University of Calcutta, Kolkata.