

Attn:
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Memory of the World Program
December 2, 2015

Reform Proposal for the UNESCO Memory of the World Program

Over the course of 2015, we have continued to express our views regarding China's nomination of the "Nanjing Massacre" (ID Code: 2014-50) to the UNESCO Memory of the World (MOW) Program. In light of the fact that this inscription has caused significant consternation among the citizens of Japan, we would like to suggest specific, actionable proposals that we believe would further enhance the integrity and trust in the UNESCO MOW Program.

Reform Proposal:

- A. The nominator should submit all nominations and supporting documents/materials in digital form to the UNESCO MOW Secretary. UNESCO MOW should display these materials on the UNESCO homepage such that the public is able to see the full nomination and any supporting documents.
- B. By allowing public access to the nomination and their supporting documents, UNESCO should allow interested parties, be it national governments or private organizations, to review, and if necessary, form a rebuttal to the nomination.
- C. If a third party poses claims or rebuttals against a particular nomination, the interested parties will negotiate a solution among themselves. The nomination should not be nominated until the negotiations conclude upon a solution. Furthermore, all discourse between the interested parties should be digitized and submitted to UNESCO. UNESCO should make this data available to the public on its webpage. The conclusion agreed upon between the interested parties should be one of the following three: "agree to inscribe original nomination", "inscribe both claims/narratives", "withdraw original nomination".
- D. All schedules and locations of meetings of the Register Subcommittee (RSC) and the International Advisory Committee (IAC) should be published on the UNESCO webpage. Furthermore, all research, minutes, and conclusions of the nomination/inscription process should be published on the UNESCO webpage.
- E. Clarify the selection process of all members of the RSC and the IAC.

We also request that all inscription criteria written in the "Memory of the World General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage" be applied in a strict manner in order to prevent conflict between interested parties, and to prevent the MOW from being used for political ends.

Co-Proposers

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Kenichi Ara	Researcher of Modern History
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The need for reform

■ Reasons for this proposal

- Research conducted by Japanese researchers over many years have shown that the “Nanjing Massacre” was a propaganda effort by the Chinese government during and after the war.
- Furthermore, we have pointed out through four rebuttals that the Chinese nomination of the “Nanjing Massacre” to the UNESCO MOW is itself a continuation of this propaganda effort.
- However, the documents of the “Nanjing Massacre” were inscribed to the MOW, seemingly without consideration to these facts.
- Through our research, we have had extensive interaction with the UNESCO MOW Secretary’s office, the Register Subcommittee (RSC), the International Advisory Committee (IAC), the State Archives of China (nominator), as well as the Japanese government. During this process, it had become clear that the UNESCO MOW will continue to be used for political purposes if certain reforms were not realized. We propose these reforms to the UNESCO MOW in the hope that UNESCO’s ideal to “build peace in the minds of men and women” can be enhanced.

■ Four concerns regarding the inscription of nominations to the MOW

1) Lack of public accessibility of the nominated materials

- Around March 2015, we contacted the UNESCO MOW Secretary’s office to request copies of materials nominated by China. We were told that UNESCO cannot divulge the contents of the nomination, and that we should contact the nominators for such copies. Our attempts at requesting copies from the State Archives of China were rebuffed with the explanation that the materials were not meant for foreign consumption, and they were under no obligations to respond to such requests. In addition, we were told that Chinese citizens would need a letter from the Chinese Foreign Ministry before copies can be obtained at the State Archives of China.
The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology also revealed that their attempts to request copies through diplomatic channels were similarly rebuffed.
As such, neither UNESCO nor the nominator were willing to make the nomination materials publicly accessible, while Japan, whose reputation was being threatened, was unable to see the contents of the nomination.
- The “Memory of the World General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage” explicitly states that the “IAC will also require that the documentary heritage be accessible”. It is clear that the nominator had not complied with this criteria.
- In order to avoid such problems, [we suggest, as written in section A\) of the reform proposal that the nominator digitize all materials and that the MOW Secretary’s office make them publicly accessible.](#)

2) Lack of public accessibility of the review process

- We have made several inquiries to the MOW Secretary's office to learn about the review process for the UNESCO MOW nominations. However, it had become clear that the review process undertaken by the RSC and the IAC, including details regarding research, consulted experts, and rationale for decisions are all confidential, and not open to the public. Furthermore, these crucial information were not included in the MOW minutes after the Director General made the final decision regarding inscription.
- This means that in its current form, the review process denies information to parties that may have their interests harmed without their knowledge. Furthermore, even if the interested party were to become aware of such a nomination, public inaccessibility to the materials means that the party is unable to conduct the research necessary to formulate a response. As such, the process denies interested parties the chance to respond, while allowing the nominator to present their case in full. This forms an environment where nominators are free to use the MOW as a medium for propaganda and with political motives.
- In order to address this problem, [we believe that, as written in section B\) of the reform proposal, that after the initial nomination is made, interested parties should be given adequate time to conduct their independent research and formulate a response.](#)

3) Lack of Authenticity and Uniqueness

- The Chinese nomination of the "Nanjing Massacre" included materials that consisted of a few pages extracted from a larger document, removing context needed to understand the true story behind the document. It was, therefore, difficult or impossible to ascertain whether the materials truly supported the narrative found in the Chinese nomination.
- In order to determine whether the narrative in the nomination is truly supported by the nominated materials, the complete material in its entirety should be submitted. The Chinese nomination lacked the authenticity of narrative, which also calls into question the uniqueness of the materials.
- In order to prevent such issues from occurring in the future, [we suggest, as written in section C\) of the reform proposal, that all materials be publicly accessible, and if there are claims and rebuttals from interested parties, the nominator and the interested parties should discuss the nomination until a solution or a compromise can be found. The nomination should not be inscribed until a mutually acceptable solution can be found.](#)

4) Lack of transparency in the review process

- During our research into the Chinese nomination, we have spoken to several members of the RSC and the IAC. While there were members who saw the conflicting views and narratives given by Japan and China to be troubling, there were also those who insisted that the review process will be based solely on the "historical significance" of the nominated materials.
- It is important to point out that the impartiality of the latter view is only assured if a thorough research/investigation into the nomination were to take place. However, as

has been pointed out in “2) Lack of public accessibility of the review process”, since the review process is conducted behind closed doors, those on the outside have no access to what research was conducted.

- During the final meeting of the IAC in Abu Dhabi, there were members who claimed that whether a nomination is “political” or not depends on who views it, and that the review will be based solely on the “historical significance” of the nomination. When one of our representatives posed “whether UNESCO is capable of taking responsibility to the political consequences of an inscription”, we were not given an answer. Other members stated that it was not the job of the IAC to give political interpretations. However, it is important to keep in mind that there are those whose interests are directly affected by the nomination.
- In light of the political impact (regardless of UNESCO’s intent) that an inscription has, we believe that reform is needed to further improve upon the transparency and the credibility of the review process. [We suggest, as written in sections D\) and E\) of the reform proposal that the review process, including meeting minutes, decisions, and the selection of members of the RSC and the IAC should be publicly accessible and transparent.](#)

We believe and hope that UNESCO’s ideal to “build peace in the minds of men and women” will be realized. As such, we request that this reform proposal be considered to make sure that the Memory of the World Program continues to live up to UNESCO’s ideal.