

ICOM SUSTAIN ANNUAL REPORT 2025

1.0 Introduction

The contents of this report document the second year of ICOM SUSTAIN's probationary period. During this period SUSTAIN has increasingly being accepted as the default International Committee within ICOM in regard to initiatives that address the global challenges outlined in the UN's Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the Convention of Biological Diversity. SUSTAIN has represented and supported ICOM's participation in international fora such as G20 meetings, Mondiacult and UN's COPs. Moreover, SUSTAIN has represented the ICOM organization itself in Culture for the Planet a three year project. SUSTAIN has thus contributed through its activities to the growing awareness that ICOM, as an independent global knowledge network, is increasingly acknowledged as an actor addressing and disseminating the challenges facing the planet and all its inhabitants, human and non human.

2.0 Membership

During 2025 SUSTAIN's membership grew rapidly. At the end of the year it had 226 individual members, 14 institutional members and 732 non voting members.

The SUSTAIN board's chosen means of contact with its members is through LinkedIn and newsletters. LinkedIn has been used to promote SUSTAIN's activities, encourage engagement with our work, recruit new members and support the wider work of ICOM. At the close of the year SUSTAIN had 660 followers and 30,000 post impressions of our content since the LinkedIn account was set up 10 months ago.

12 Newsletters were compiled during 2025 and distributed to all voting members/institutional contacts and interested individuals also posted on the website. Additionally the board created 3 member surveys in 2025: one to document member interest, one to encourage engagement in the Dubai triennial, and one to collect data for SUSTAIN-AVICOM session on building digital communities. At the close of our second year of the probationary period, SUSTAIN had establish a secure organizational foundation for its future development.

The SUSTAIN board's priority for the rest of our probationary period is to engage and activate our growing membership through a number of separate initiatives. These include a developing a number of digital meeting places: webinars, online workshops and through monthly more informal digital meetings. The board also realizes the importance of in person networking at conferences and the Annual General assembly in increasing membership.

3.0 Priorities for 2025.

One of our main priorities in 2025 was support for young or emerging professionals, especially those in category 4 and 5 countries. The 2024 young or emerging professionals grant winner was Prossy Nanyondo for a project at the Railways Museum in Uganda. However, after receiving the grant it turned out that she was unable to start her project due to ICOM's financial regulations. These specify that she couldn't receive any monies *before* submitting receipts as proof the monies had been used as described - an impossibility for a young professional in Uganda running a museum on a Ugandan shoe string. After a series of increasingly frustrating rounds with the ICOM secretariat, we eventually persuaded ICOM to allow us to transfer the funds in October 2025 without receipts, thus enabling her to begin the project. We therefore submitted a recommendation to ICOM's Advisory Council stating SUSTAIN's concerns about Young Member Grant policies and proposing to create a new procedure to ensure that successful applicants from Cat 4 and 5 counties receive funds from the grant to enable

the payment of project expenses. SUSTAIN funded the Prossy Nanyondo's very successful Uganda Railways museum project in 2025 with the funds eventually available from 2024 allocation.

A second main focus area in 2025 was the planning and implementation of SUSTAIN's participation at the ICOM General Assembly and conference in Dubai. This was the first time we were present at ICOM triennial and the board wished to offer our members, and those who might be considering membership, a comprehensive programme there. We collaborated with two other ICs on three scientific sessions and arranged a full days hybrid conference at the Museum of the Future, concluding the conference day with our Annual Assembly. To ensure that this programme could be fulfilled, 6 board members were present. SUSTAIN contributed to the funding for three of these board members.

SUSTAIN's Conference in 2025, entitled «Museums as Arenas for Action: Supporting Changing Communities in a Just Transition to a Sustainable Future», focused on three themes: Sustainable Development, From 2030 Goals & Beyond; Climate Justice, Equity, & Community; and Cultural Heritage & Sustainable Practice. Eleven conference papers were given together with a presentation by the recipient of SUSTAIN's young professional grant 2024. SUSTAIN's vice chair also presented a status report *live from Brazil* of SUSTAIN's activities at COP 30. ICOM's newly elected president, Antonio Rodríguez and the chair of the Dubai triennial organizational committee joined us for part of the conference, while former ICOM president Alberto Garlandini summed up the conference. Given this was our inaugural hybrid conference and General Assembly, the SUSTAIN board was encouraged by the unanimously positive feed back by those present regarding the the quality of the presentations and dialogue during the conference. The conference papers will be published in 2026.

4.0 Activities in 2025.

The full title of ICOM SUSTAIN is the International Committee for museums and sustainable development, and while each of the 17 sustainable development goals (sdgs) is important in its own right, there is much to support an argument that sdg17, *Partnership for the goals*, is perhaps the most important of all. Thus, SUSTAIN also made a priority in 2025 of co-operation with other ICOM Committees, National and International,, Regional Alliances, and other organisations outside ICOM.

Conferences, webinars and workshops

In addition to the three scientific sessions in Dubai, collaborating with ICOM AVICOM and ICOM NATHIST, SUSTAIN has provided a number of conference speakers and workshop leaders in 2025. These include participation at the following: an International symposium «Promoting Diversity and Inclusiveness» at Japan's National Museum of Nature and Science; SUSTAIN's secretary presented «Facing Twin Challenges of the 21st Century» at the Museum of English Rural Life w/ Rural Museum Network and International Association of Museums of Agriculture conference. At the ICOM-Europe and ICOM-Africa conference: «Heritage, museums, collections: Professionals' Sharing of Skills between Africa and Europe» in Rome, our board member from Senegal, presented: «Le rôle des communautés dans le développement des musées anticolonialistes en Afrique (The role of communities in the development of anti-colonial museums in Africa)». At the ICOM UK Conference 2025, SUSTAIN offered a practical workshop on the ICOM Action Plan for Sustainable Development and Museums delivered by three Sustain Board members. The session introduced ICOM's framework for sustainable development in museums, grounded in the UN Agenda 2030 and its five Ps. Moreover, ICOM SUSTAIN Vice Chair was part of the Conference Organising Committee. SUSTAIN also participated at a workshop "Sustainability Plans in Museums: Sustainable Development in Museological Practice" in connection with COP30 in Brazil with local partners including the Pará State Secretariat of Culture (SECULT Pará), ICOM Brazil, and Museu das Amazônias. SUSTAIN also

endorsed and actively supported "Weavers of the Future" at COP30. Prior to, and in preparation for, COP30, SUSTAIN contributed to the webinar «Make Your Voice Heard: Advocate for Culture-Based Climate Action at the national level». This webinar was convened by the Museums and Society Department of ICOM International, with representatives of the Group of Friends for Climate Action, alongside ICOM Director General Medea Ekner. Two sessions were held with presidents of National Committees to mobilize stronger climate action by museums within their respective countries, strengthening advocacy strategies and advancing the integration of culture-based climate action into national and international climate policy frameworks, building on ICOM's engagement with the Group of Friends for Culture-Based Climate Action and its continued work to position museums as key actors in global climate governance.

In 2025 ICOM SUSTAIN was given the unique responsibility of representing ICOM as an active inaugural member of the three year Culture for the Planet project, authorized by ICOM's president. SUSTAIN delegates have been active in contributing to the development of the global organization developing the project, board members have participated with presentations in events and at the inaugural summit in Lausanne, where a board member led the Masterclass, "Navigating the urgency of sustainability in the arts and culture sector - frameworks and policies». This focused on a broad canvas of sustainability and the arts; the presentation included sustainability frameworks, sectoral trends, and institutional responsibilities for the cultural sector. In the audience were representatives of all the founding institutions of Culture for the Planet together with students from the two Swiss universities at the heart of this project.

Other important collaborations that can be mentioned include participation at Mondiacult 2025 in Barcelona; at the International Congress of Culture in Climate Action conference; CIMAN's conference in Torino, and at a workshop at the First Biennial of Scientific Culture, Chile. The SUSTAIN board also initiated discussions with The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions Monitoring and Evaluating Climate Communication and Education (MECCE) project. This has a focus on documenting climate literacy to help museums transform non-formal education and lifelong learning engagement into climate and biodiversity learning spaces.

5.0 Participation in ICOM's recommendation and resolution processes.

The SUSTAIN board was also active in to the annual cycles of ICOM's recommendations and resolutions. We proposing two resolution proposals for the latter: «Utilizing the digital for sustainable development» and «Promoting Resilient Museums and Communities in a Rapidly Changing World». (These were both subsequently merged with others proposals and appeared as parts of the final approved resolutions).

The board also proposed 3 recommendations to ICOM's Advisory Council: «SUSTAIN recommends that ICOM ask all NCs to update their list of ICs and to monitor compliances, so all ICOM members have" accurate lists from which to select an IC to join or to note as an IC of interest when renewing or joining ICOM»; «SUSTAIN recommends increasing transparency during the Resolution drafting process by having the ICOM committee meet with chairs of committee's whose resolutions are in the process of consolidation»; «and a recommendation voicing SUSTAIN's concerns about Young Member Grant policies (creating a new procedure to ensure that successful applicants from Cat 4 and 5 counties receive funds ahead of expenses with the award funds a project).

6.0 SUSTAIN and ICOM's Strategic Plan 2022 -2028

SUSTAIN has actively contributed to highlighting a number of the objectives of ICOM's Strategic Plan: Global positioning; Climate change; Digital futures; and Leadership and of course, Sustainability.

6.1 Global positioning.

SUSTAIN provided delegates to advise the ICOM organization at: Culture 2030, G20 in South Africa, Mondiacult, COP30, Culture for the Planet. It has supported the ICOM Secretariat, contributing to papers and giving expert advice together with informing ICOM's advocacy strategies in addition to attending meetings. ICOM invited a SUSTAIN delegate to be part of the ICOM Steering Committee to advocate for culture as a key component of sustainable development.

6.2 Climate Change:

By active participation in: Culture for the Planet, Weavers of the Future, COP 30, Mondicult and providing the Chair of Jury for the inaugural ICOM Award.

6.3 Digital futures:

This is also a priority area for SUSTAIN. We introduce the resolution a "Positioning Museums for an Equitable, Ethical, and Sustainable Digital Future through Technologies" which was adopted as part of a final joint resolution in by the General Assembly in Dubai. The SUSTAIN board is also particularly interested in the ICOM organization's approach to AI. The board also taking the initiative to write to the ICOM secretariat regarding this important matter, and also the establishment of the Working Group on Digital Ethics and Artificial Intelligence. SUSTAIN will endeavour to continue to contribute to this important exploration of ICOM's future.

6.4 Leadership

Through its role as ICOM's representative in Culture for the Planet.

7.0 Conclusion

Hopefully, in this the second year of our probationary period, as the activities documented in this report illustrate, SUSTAIN has contributed to emphasizing the importance of sustainable development for the ICOM organization, and confirmed that addressing sustainable futures is one of ICOM's core activities. SUSTAIN, in the course of 2025, has increasingly been **sought** after, both within and outside of ICOM, and contributed to a wide range of initiatives, in addition to the initiatives launched by the SUSTAIN board itself. There is no reason to believe this demand will lessen in the future given the challenges that are facing the planet. As the inaugural board of a probationary IC, the learning curve has been steep, our inexperience in ICOM's organizational matters - though not the experience of the individual board members themselves - has likely resulted that we have erred toward over-extension. And while, in 2025, we have accomplished much of our ambitious agenda, there is a fundamental realism in noting the urgent necessity to engage our growing membership in more regular conversations on, and participation in, all the future activities and initiatives of the committee.

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