

4 - 7 May 2011
Montjuïc Castle
Barcelona, Spain



International Network of
Museums for Peace

Report of the 7th International Conference of Museums for Peace

The 7th International Conference of Museums for Peace took place 4-7 May in Barcelona; one of Europe's most attractive and popular cities, and one, moreover, with a thriving peace culture. The conference was hosted by the Barcelona International Peace Resource Center which is housed at the spacious and historic Mountjuïc Castle, with spectacular views over the city and sea below. Reflecting the recent, ongoing transformation of the castle from a site of war and violence in the past (until recently, the castle belonged to the Ministry of Defence, and also housed a large army museum) to a centre for civic engagement and peacemaking, the theme of the conference was 'the role of museums in the transformation of a culture of war & violence to a culture of peace & nonviolence'.

The deteriorating economic and financial situation in Spain in recent years has necessitated a slowing down of the conversion project, so that, exceptionally, the number of participants had to be limited to sixty. Peace museum experts and peace educators came from 15 different countries, the majority from Europe, but also from Asia (China, Japan, Korea) and the USA. The conference, consisting mainly of plenary and parallel sessions, and some workshops, addressed such issues as 'designing museums for peace and human rights', 'experiences with designing and exchanging travelling exhibitions', 'culture of peace and human rights education in museums', 'monuments and memorials as centres for building a culture of peace', 'from militarism to a culture of peace', 'possibilities for the transformation of fortresses (and war museums) into museums for peace', 'presentation of new museums for peace and renewal projects'.

Being prevented from opening the conference in person, Federico Mayor, president of the Foundation for Peace in Madrid (and former Spanish Minister of Education, and former Director-General of UNESCO) sent a warm video message that stressed the important role of museums in the development and promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence. In the following plenary session, entitled '5,000 Mayors for Peace – 5,000 Cities for Peace', the mayor of San Sebastian, the vice-mayor of Granollers, and the Commissioner of Cooperation, Solidarity and Peace of Barcelona City Council outlined the municipal peace initiatives of their respective cities. These excellent and inspiring presentations were complemented later by an impressive round table in which the directors of half a dozen leading NGOs working for peace and human rights in Barcelona and the Catalan region outlined the programmes and activities of their institutions and organisations.

Participants were offered an extensive visit in the castle with expert guidance from Jordi Capdevila who, as director of the Barcelona International Peace Resource Center, generously hosted and efficiently organised the conference. He also arranged an excursion by bus to the city's most important sites. Following the end of the conference, most participants also joined the whole day excursion to the beautiful and historic city of Girona, as well as to Figueres, home of the world-famous Salvador Dali museum. At the conclusion of the conference, brief but very welcome presentations concerning possible venues for the holding of the next, 8th, conference were made by the chairman of the No Gun Ri International Peace Park in Korea, and the director of the Swedish Museum of Peace.

It is intended that selected papers from the conference will be published, in the first instance in digital format, and to be made available on INMP's website (where also the video message from Federico Mayor can soon be seen).