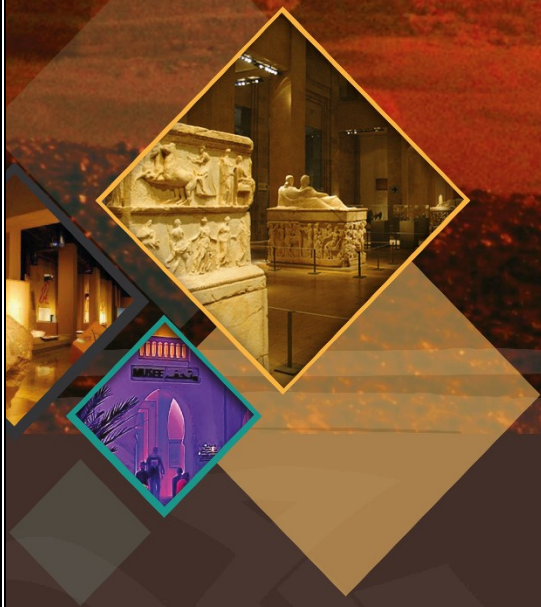
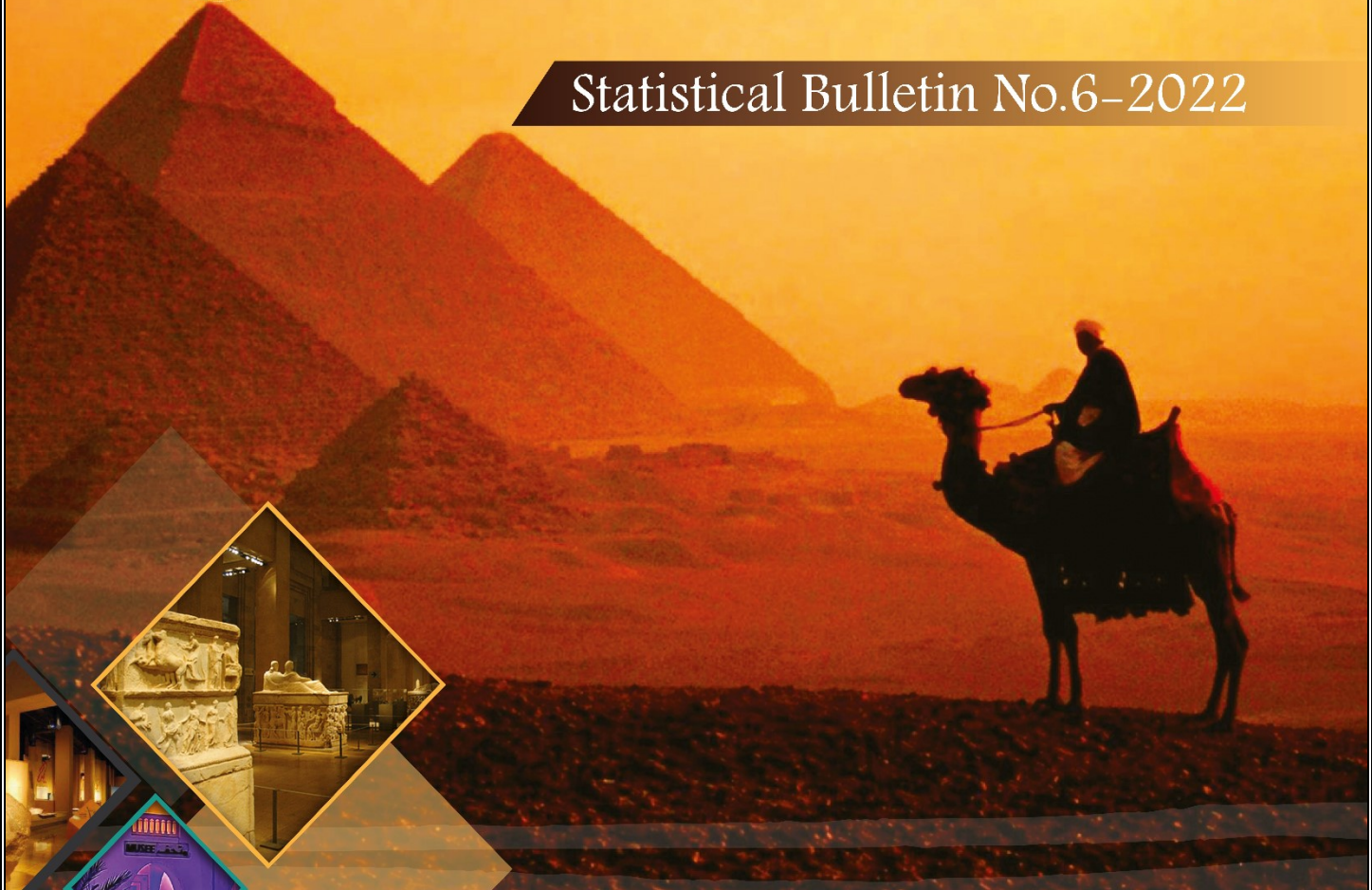




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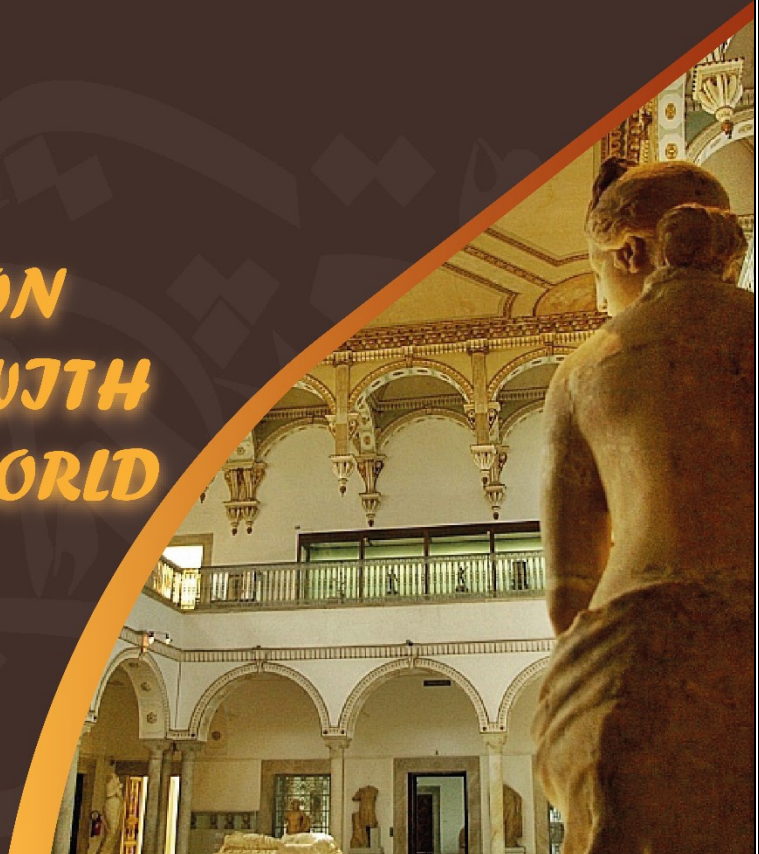


Statistical Bulletin No.6-2022



**MUSEUMS IN
THE ARAB REGION
IN COMPARISON WITH
THE REST OF THE WORLD**

MAY
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INTRODUCTION

With their precious and diverse cultural heritage collections, museums play a significant role in preserving national and cultural identities, spreading knowledge about cultural and civilizational heritage, strengthening social bonds, and shaping the future political and cultural landscape of States.

Museums are, in fact, closely linked to several of the goals contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially those pertaining to the protection and preservation of the world's cultural and natural heritage, as well as to the promotion of scientific research, cultural participation, and education for sustainable development.

Museums are more than places where objects are exhibited and conserved. They are institutions that play a key role in terms of preservation, restoration, research, and education. They are categorized into different types, including archeology museums, art museums, history museums, maritime museums, science museums, military museums, and others.

According to the 2015 UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, *“museums are not merely places where our common heritage is preserved; they are key spaces of education, inspiration and dialogue. They play an essential role in social cohesion and sharing collective references... They contribute to the quality of life of the communities and regions in which they are located.”*

During the Kyoto Conference held in September 2019, ICOM members recognized that *“museums are invaluable resources for engaging communities and are ideally positioned to empower the global society to collectively imagine, design and create a sustainable future for all”*, and that *“museums have a role to play in shaping and creating a sustainable future.”* They called for *“making positive contributions to achieving the goals and targets of the UN SDGs and using the 2030 ‘Transforming our World’ Agenda as the guiding framework to incorporate sustainability into internal and external practices and educational programming.”*

The present Statistical Bulletin provides estimates of the number of museums in the Arab region and around the world. Special focus is laid on the COVID-19 crisis and its serious repercussions on the museum sector all over the world. According to UNESCO estimates, museum revenues dropped by 80%, which resulted in the closure of a large number of museums around the world, being incapable of meeting maintenance and management expenses. A significant number of these museums reopened in late 2021.

1 - NUMBER OF MUSEUMS IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES AND AROUND THE WORLD:

A UNESCO field study conducted in March 2021 estimates the number of museums in the world at about 103,842, including 761 museums (i.e. 0.7%) in the Arab countries (see Table 1). North America ranks first with 35,327 museums (34%), followed by Western Europe with 28,402 museums (27.4%), Asia and the Pacific with 18,406 museums (17.7%), Eastern Europe with 11,366 museums (10.9%), Latin America with 8,716 museums (8.4%), and finally the countries of the African continent (not including Arab countries) with 864 museums (0.8%).

Table 1

Distribution of museums by world region

Region	Estimated nb of museums	%
Western Europe	28 402	27.4%
Eastern Europe	11 366	10.9%
Latin America	8 716	8.4%
Asia and the Pacific	18 406	17.7%
African Continent (not including Arab countries)	864	0.8%
Arab Countries	761	0.7%
North America	35 327	34.0%
Total	103 842	100.0%

Source : UNESCO

With regard to the Arab region, and as shown in Table 2 below, Saudi Arabia ranks first with 261 museums, followed by Egypt (86), Tunisia (80), Algeria (47), Jordan (46), Morocco (44), Palestine (33), Libya (27), Syria (26), Lebanon (21), Iraq (19), Sudan (16), UAE (13) and Oman (12). In the remaining Arab countries, the number ranges between one and four museums. Djibouti has no museums at all.

Table 2

Number of museums per million inhabitants

Country	Number of museums	Population (in millions)	Number of museums per million inhabitants
Algeria	47	42,228	1.1
Saudi Arabia	261	33,7	7.7
Bahrain	3	1,569	1.9
Comoros	3	0,832	3.6
Egypt	86	98,423	0.9
UAE	13	9,631	1.3
Iraq	19	38,434	0.5
Djibouti	0	0,959	0
Jordan	46	9,956	4.6
Kuwait	4	4,137	1
Lebanon	21	6,849	3.1
Libya	27	6,679	4
Morocco	44	36,029	1.2

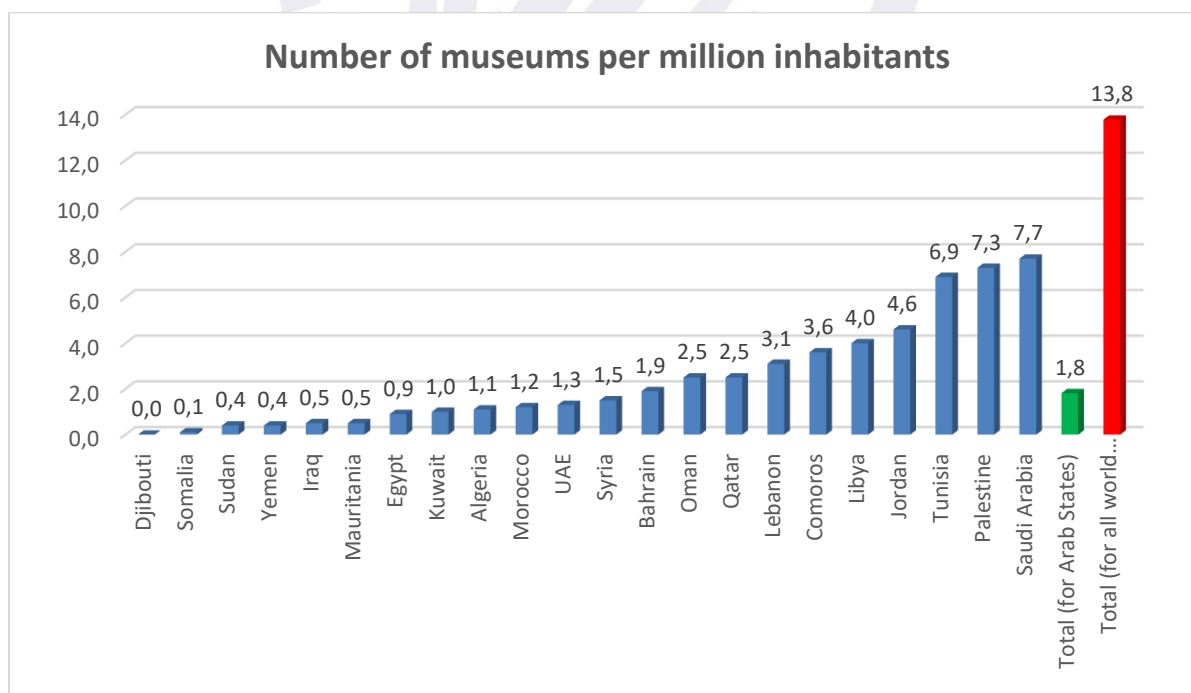
Mauritania	2	4,403	0.5
Oman	12	4,829	2.5
Palestine	33	4,543	7.3
Qatar	7	2,782	2.5
Somalia	1	15,008	0.1
Syria	26	16,906	1.5
Sudan	16	41,802	0.4
Tunisia	80	11,565	6.9
Yemen	10	28,499	0.4
Total (for Arab States)	761	419,763	1.8
Total (for all world countries)	103 842	7535,550	13.8

Source : UNESCO

As for the number of museums per million inhabitants, the Arab average stands at 1.8, compared to a global average of 13.8 museums.

In this indicator, Saudi Arabia ranks first in the Arab world with 7.7 museums per million inhabitants, followed by Palestine (7.3), Tunisia (6.9), Jordan (4.6), Libya (4), Comoros (3.6) and Lebanon (3.1). For the remaining countries, the number ranges between 0 and 2.5 museums.

Figure 1



Source : UNESCO

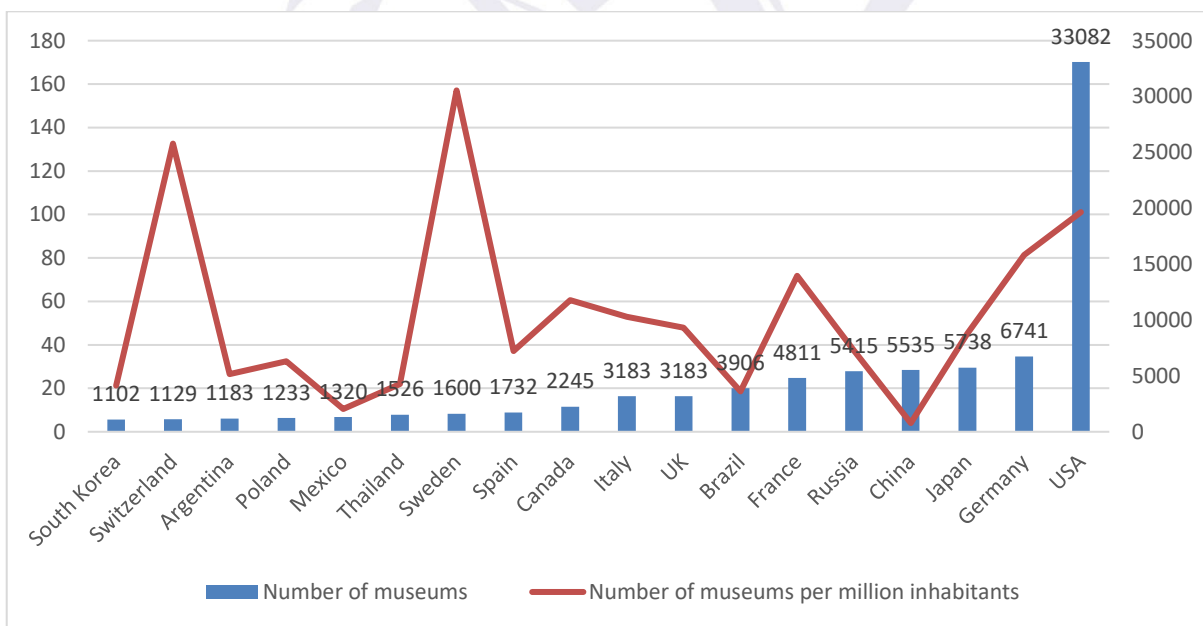
As shown by Figure 2 and Table 3 below, some countries have a large number of museums. The USA ranks first globally with 33,082 museums (101.1 museums per million inhabitants), followed by Germany (6741), Japan (5738), China (5535), Russia (5415) and France (4811). In these 6 countries, the number of museums amounts to 61,322, which represents 59% of the total museums in the world. Brazil, Britain and Italy

have over 3000 museums, followed by Canada with 2245 museums. In the remaining countries (Sweden, Thailand, Mexico, Poland, Argentina, Switzerland, and South Korea), the number ranges between 1100 and 1600.

With regard to the number of museums per million inhabitants, Sweden ranks first with 157.1 museums, followed by Switzerland (132.6). In the remaining countries, the number ranges between 4 and about 100 museums (Figure 2).

Figure 2

**Number of museums by country
(in countries having over 1000 museums)**



Source : UNESCO

Museums in these countries are an integral part of the educational system, with a strong relationship between museums and schools. The museum serves as an educational tool. All students make regular visits to museums. These visits, with their pedagogical content and purpose, are jointly conducted by teachers and museum supervisors.

Relevant experts indicate that educational experiments conducted as part of school-museum partnerships have enriched research in various disciplines, including life and earth sciences, chemistry, literature and history.

Table 3**Countries having over 1000 museums**

Country	Nb of museums	Population (in millions)	Number of museums per million inhabitants
South Korea	1 102	51,635	21.3
Switzerland	1 129	8,517	132.6
Argentina	1 183	44,495	26.6
Poland	1 233	37,979	32.5
Mexico	1 320	126,191	10.5
Thailand	1 526	69,429	22.0
Sweden	1 600	10,183	157.1
Spain	1 732	46,723	37.1
Canada	2 245	37,058	60.6
Italy	3 183	60,431	52.9
UK	3 183	66,489	47.9
Brazil	3 906	209,469	18.6
France	4 811	66,987	71.8
Russia	5 415	144,478	37.5
China	5 535	1392,73	4.0
Japan	5 738	126,529	45.3
Germany	6 741	82,927	81.3
USA	33 082	327,167	101.1

Source : UNESCO

2 – MUSEUMS IN THE TIME OF COVID-19:

Studies carried out by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the closure of about 90% of museums, large and small, public and private, for varying periods of time during the crisis. Still worse, nearly 13% of museums around the world are threatened with definitive closure, especially small, privately-owned ones and those located on tourist trails which rely essentially on the sale of visitor tickets and the organization of educational workshops to generate income.

In the same context, a UNESCO survey conducted in March 2021 on the impact of COVID-19 on museums indicates that the museum sector lost 80% of its annual revenues in 2020, due to the cessation of museum activities, especially school visits, guided tours, and educational workshops.

In response to this situation, new mechanisms were established, including virtual tours, digitization of museum collections, and use of Social Media to promote virtual exhibitions. However, the digital divide existing among regions and countries has posed a major obstacle to the museums' adequate performance of their functions.

The revenue losses suffered by the museum sector have reaffirmed the essential role of States in supporting and financing museums. In this context, relevant international and regional organizations, such as UNESCO and ALECSO, have a key role to play, today as never before, in supporting Member States to develop policies and visions for the museum sector, given the significant social and educational role of museums. These policies should focus, *inter alia*, on protecting cultural heritage, bridging the digital divide, and combating the illicit trafficking of cultural property.

In this regard, UNESCO has developed a platform for international dialogue and cooperation in the cultural sector, aimed at protecting museums, identifying their needs, and reflecting on their future. This platform is designed to set standards, recommend best practices, and disseminate the knowledge contained in museums all over the world, especially in regions where museum networks are still weak.

Museums should occupy a central place in the cultural policies of States, and should leverage public funding to adequately and effectively play their role in preserving and transmitting heritage, as well as in promoting and disseminating diverse cultural expressions.

CONCLUSION

Museums are not just spaces where ancient antiquities, rare artifacts, and masterpieces of art are displayed and preserved. More than that, museums play a key role in promoting universal cultural and civilizational heritage. They also contain historical and cultural information that helps researchers and scholars understand the history of peoples and nations. Museums serve as windows onto past cultures and civilizations, giving access to the history, heritage and traditions of various peoples.

Accordingly, it is necessary to support Arab countries to establish and develop museums, in terms of number and quality, and to improve the indicator related to the number of museums per million inhabitants in the Arab region, which remains low compared to the global average and to the average in other regions of the world.

Action should also be focused on developing forward-looking policies and innovative museum management methods that facilitate response to emergency situations. This requires identifying expected disasters and emergencies, and preparing adequate response mechanisms.

In response to museum closures during COVID-19, modern technology has offered the possibility of online access to museums, much to the delight of all lovers of culture, heritage and history. Some countries have organized virtual visits to several museums and archaeological sites, in order to make them better known and promote cultural tourism during and after the pandemic. Still, large populations remain deprived of access to culture and arts, due to the digital divide that exists among regions and countries, and that leaves a significant proportion of the Arab States' population with no access to the Internet.



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