

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,  
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE  
WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Twenty-first session

Naples, Italy  
1-6 December 1997

**Item 6 of the Provisional Agenda: Report on the decision of the 29th General Conference of UNESCO on the resolution adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its twentieth session (December 1996) with regard to monitoring and its implementation**

**SUMMARY**

The 29th General Conference of UNESCO adopted a resolution on the monitoring and reporting the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. It requested the World Heritage Committee to define the periodicity, form, nature and extent of the periodic reporting on the application of the World Heritage Convention and on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties and to examine and respond to these reports while respecting the principle of state sovereignty.

**Decision required:** The Committee is requested to take note of this resolution and to consider under agenda item 7.1 how to proceed with its implementation.

## Background

1. The Tenth General Assembly (November 1995) examined the monitoring and reporting of the state of conservation of World Heritage properties and decided the following (paragraph 31 of the Summary Record of the Tenth General Assembly):

'As a conclusion, the General Assembly decided to continue the debate on the systematic monitoring and reporting on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties at the Eleventh General Assembly of States Parties that will be held in 1997. The General Assembly requested the World Heritage Committee to prepare a report and a proposed resolution for the eleventh session of the General Assembly of States Parties taking into account the discussions and experiences gained over the past years as well as the documents that had been presented to the Tenth General Assembly and the discussions thereon.'

2. In response to this request, the World Heritage Committee submitted to the Eleventh General Assembly (October 1997) a working document WHC-97/CONF.205/5 which included a report and a proposed resolution. The Committee proposed in its report that the methodology and procedures of monitoring and reporting should be governed by the following principles:

- i) monitoring the state of conservation of World Heritage properties is the responsibility of the State Party concerned and is part of the site management;
- ii) the commitment of the States Parties to provide regular reports on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties is consistent with the principles of the World Heritage Convention and should be part of a continuous process of collaboration between the States Parties and the World Heritage Committee;
- iii) regular reports may be submitted in accordance with Article 29 of the Convention. The General Conference of UNESCO should be asked to activate Article 29 of the Convention and to entrust the World Heritage Committee with the responsibility to respond to these reports;
- iv) the World Heritage Committee should define the form, nature and extent of the regular reporting in respect of the principles of state sovereignty.

3. The Eleventh General Assembly adopted the resolution proposed by the Committee, as amended during the debate. This resolution ***suggests the General Conference of UNESCO to activate the procedures in Art. 29 of the Convention and to refer to the World Heritage Committee the responsibility to respond to the reports.***

## Decision of the 29th General Conference of UNESCO

4. Following the decision of the General Assembly, the 29th General Conference of UNESCO adopted the following resolution:

*The General Conference,*

1. *Noting that the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage has recognized that the cultural and natural heritage 'are increasingly threatened with destruction, not only by traditional causes of decay, but also by changing social and economic conditions which aggravate the situation with even more formidable phenomena of damage or destruction';*
2. *Considering the twenty-five years of experience in the implementation of the Convention;*
3. *Reaffirms that 'deterioration or disappearance of any item of the cultural or natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world';*
4. *While reaffirming the sovereign right of the State Party concerned over the World Heritage sites situated on its territory, considers that a well-reflected and formulated common policy for the protection of cultural and natural heritage is likely to create a continuing interaction between States Parties;*
5. *Emphasizes the interest of each State Party to be informed of the experience of others with regard to conservation methods and the possibilities so offered, through voluntary international co-operation, for the general improvement of all actions undertaken;*
6. *Reaffirms the standard setting role of the General Assembly as well as of the World Heritage Committee;*
7. *Concludes that monitoring is the responsibility of the State Party concerned and that the commitment to provide periodic reports on the state of the site is consistent with the principles set out in the Convention in*
  - (i) *the first, second, sixth, seventh and eighth preambular clauses,*
  - (ii) *Art. 4*
  - (iii) *Art. 6.1. and 6.2.*
  - (iv) *Art. 7*
  - (v) *Art. 10*
  - (vi) *Art. 11*
  - (vii) *Art. 13*
  - (viii) *Art. 15*
  - (ix) *Art. 21.3*
  - (x) *Art. 29;*

8. *Emphasizes that monitoring by the State Party is part of the site management which remains the responsibility of the States Parties where the site is located, and that periodic reports may be submitted in accordance with Article 29 of the Convention;*
9. *Recalls that Article 4 of the Convention provides that 'Each State Party....recognizes that the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage...situated on its territory, belongs primarily to that State';*
10. *Recalls that Article 6 lays down the concept of world heritage 'for whose protection it is the duty of the international community as a whole to co-operate', and that Article 7 requires the establishment of a 'system of international co-operation' and assistance 'designed to support States Parties' efforts to identify and conserve that heritage;*
11. *Emphasizes that periodic reporting should be part of a consultative process and not treated as a sanction or a coercive mechanism;*
12. *Notes that within the broad responsibility of the World Heritage Committee in standards setting, the form, nature and extent of the periodic reporting must respect the principles of State sovereignty and that the involvement of the Committee, through its Secretariat and/or advisory bodies, in the preparation of the periodic reports would be with the agreement of the State Party concerned;*
13. *Further notes that the States Parties may request expert advice from the Secretariat and/or the advisory bodies and that the Secretariat may also commission expert advice with the agreement of the States Parties;*
14. *Invites the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention to submit in accordance with Article 29 of the Convention, through the World Heritage Committee, via its secretariat the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, reports on the legislative and administrative provisions and other actions which they have taken for the application of the Convention, including the state of conservation of the World Heritage properties located on its territories;*
15. *Requests the World Heritage Committee to define the periodicity, form, nature and extent of the periodic reporting on the application of the World Heritage Convention and on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties and to examine and respond to these reports while respecting the principle of State sovereignty;*
16. *Requests the World Heritage Committee to include in its reports to the General Conference, presented in accordance with Article 29.3 of the Convention, its findings as regard to the application of the Convention by the States Parties;*

17. *Encourages States Parties to take advantage of shared information and experience on World Heritage matters and to contribute to the conservation of World Heritage properties, including through voluntary contributions to the World Heritage Fund;*
18. *Invites other States to become States Parties to the Convention.*