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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD
CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Twenty-eighth session

Suzhou, China
28 June – 7 July 2004

Item 25 of the Provisional Agenda: Other business

Proposed new voting mechanism for the election of the members of the World Heritage Committee

SUMMARY

This document provides background information on the proposal for new mechanisms for the election of the members of the World Heritage Committee raised by the Delegation of New Zealand.

Draft Decision 28 COM 25: see page 3

Introduction

1. In 2001 at the 13th General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, New Zealand was amongst a number of States Parties that expressed concerns about the **mechanisms** and **procedures** leading to the election of the members of the World Heritage Committee¹.

2. In 2003, improvements were made to the procedures for the presentation of candidatures to the World Heritage Committee following research by the World Heritage Centre² and the decision of the 27th session of the World Heritage Committee (**27 COM 18 A.2**). These improvements were included in revised *Rules of Procedure* of the General Assembly adopted by the 14th General Assembly (see Resolution **14 GA 4.2** below):

The General Assembly,

1. *Noting the decision of the 27th session of the World Heritage Committee on procedures for the presentation of candidatures to the World Heritage Committee (decision 27 COM 18A.2),*
2. *Decides to include the following text as new Rule 13 - Procedures for the presentation of candidatures to the World Heritage Committee:*

13.1 The Secretariat shall ask all States Parties, at least three months prior to the opening of the General Assembly, whether they intend to stand for election to the World Heritage Committee. If so, its candidature should be sent to the Secretariat at least six weeks prior to the opening of the General Assembly.

13.2 At least four weeks prior to the opening of the General Assembly the Secretariat shall send to all States Parties the provisional list of States Parties candidates. The Secretariat will also provide information on the status of all compulsory and voluntary contributions to the World Heritage Fund made by each of the candidates. This list of candidatures will be revised, as necessary, based on the evolution of the candidatures and of the payments received.

13.3 This list of candidatures shall be finalised 48 hours before the beginning of the election. No other candidatures nor payments of compulsory and voluntary contributions to the World Heritage Fund (for the purpose of presenting a candidature to the Committee) will be accepted after this time.

¹ See document *WHC-01/CONF.206/8*.

² The results of this research and a proposal for a more time-efficient and simplified voting system were presented to the 27th session of the Committee (Paris, 30 June - 5 July) in working document *WHC-03/27.COM/18A*.

Problems with the conduct of the election of the new members of the World Heritage Committee at the 14th General Assembly in 2003

3. Despite these improvements to the **procedures** for the presentation of candidatures to the World Heritage Committee, the election of new World Heritage Committee members at the 14th General Assembly in 2003 highlighted the fact that the **mechanisms** for conducting the elections still need to be addressed. Some difficulties arose because the General Assembly took place during the 32nd UNESCO General Conference at the same time as Commission IV (Culture) was completing its work and the UNESCO Executive Board had its closing session. These scheduling overlaps caused problems for Delegations and the Secretariat who needed to be in more than one place at one time – a particular problem for small delegations. Furthermore the overlapping meetings created an unforeseen demand for interpretation teams and for several hours interpretation was not available in the General Assembly during the election of the new Committee members. In addition, owing to the practical arrangements for the conduct of the elections, about 7 hours was required to elect 8 new Committee members at the expense of the General Assembly considering other issues of policy substance.

Proposal by the Delegation of New Zealand

4. On 24 November 2003, the Delegation of New Zealand wrote to the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee expressing its concern about the logistic problems that had arisen once again during the election of the new Committee members at the 14th General Assembly just as had occurred during the 13th General Assembly.

5. The Delegation of New Zealand wishes to propose concrete measures to improve the mechanisms for the election of members of the World Heritage Committee inspired by the existing mechanisms for the elections of members of the UNESCO Executive Board and the subsidiary bodies of the UNESCO General Conference (“UNESCO elections”). For example:

- a) Separate Voting Facility: in UNESCO elections, voting is usually held in a voting room which is separate to that where the General Conference plenary or commissions are continuing to conduct their business. This allows time-consuming elections to be conducted efficiently without delaying or diverting discussion of other issues on the agenda³.
- b) Timed Voting: UNESCO elections are conducted at specific, pre-arranged times. This allows delegations to schedule their attendance at both the elections and ongoing plenary discussion in the most effective and efficient way possible. It also means that delegations can prepare appropriately to attend an initial ballot and any number of subsequent ballots required on a pre-announced basis.

³ See Rule 11 of the Procedure for the election of Members of the Executive Board in Appendix 2 of the *Rules of Procedure of the General Conference*.
See Rule 95 of the *Rules of Procedures of the General Conference*.

6 In practical terms, these two modifications to the election mechanisms would mean that ballots would be conducted while the General Assembly continues its other business. The results of a ballot would be reported back to the Plenary; at that stage, as at present, delegations standing for elections could decide whether or not to maintain their candidatures, and the General Assembly would then agree on the timing for any subsequent ballot(s) required. These subsequent ballots would then similarly take place without disrupting the flow of the rest of the Assembly's business.

7 It is considered that easy and practical solutions can be adopted by the World Heritage Committee without amending the *Rules of Procedure* of the General Assembly of States Parties. However, a clear Decision of the World Heritage Committee would assist the Secretariat in reforming the election procedures.

Draft Decision: 28 COM 25A

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Recalling Resolution 14 GA 4.2 adopted by the 14th General Assembly (2003) on a new voting mechanism and revision of procedures for elections of the World Heritage Committee,*
2. *Taking into consideration the request by the Delegation of New Zealand for further improvements to the voting mechanisms for the election of the members of the World Heritage Committee,*
3. *Requests the World Heritage Centre, in consultation with the Secretary of the UNESCO General Conference, to schedule the General Assembly of the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention prior to the Commissions of the General Conference of UNESCO;*
4. *Further requests the World Heritage Centre to organize the elections of the members of the World Heritage Committee in a separate room from the main meeting room, equipped with voting facilities, and with ballots conducted on a pre-scheduled basis agreed by the General Assembly.*