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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD
CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

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Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda: Report of the Secretariat on its activities and on the implementation of the decisions of the World Heritage Committee

Report on the main International Conferences and Meetings related to World Heritage

SUMMARY

This document presents the outcomes of the following international Meetings and Conferences:

- I. Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-Related Convention** held in Gland, Switzerland, 10 May 2005
- II. International Symposium** “Conserving Cultural and Biological Diversity: The Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes”, Tokyo, Japan, 30 May to 2 June 2005

I. Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-Related Convention, held in Gland, Switzerland, 10 May 2005

A. Context

1. Five international conventions — the *World Heritage Convention*, Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands — that have biodiversity or some of its particular components as their primary concern. While each convention stands on its own — with its own specific objectives and commitments — inter-linkages between the issues each addresses, and potential complementarities in their monitoring and implementing processes, provide rationale for cooperation. With the target of achieving by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss, set by the Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and later endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the need to promote synergy among these conventions while reducing duplication of effort has become increasingly relevant. The Summit also highlighted the essential role of biodiversity in meeting the Millennium Development Goals. The 2010 targets address the following goals:
 - a) to protect the components of biodiversity;
 - b) to promote sustainable use;
 - c) to address threats to biodiversity;
 - d) to maintain goods and services from biodiversity to support human well-being;
 - e) to protect traditional knowledge innovations and practices;
 - f) to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of genetic resources; and
 - g) to ensure provision of adequate resources.

B. The Mandate for collaboration

2. The respective Conferences of Parties (COP) to the Biodiversity-related conventions, the World Heritage Committee and the General Assembly have each recognized the need for enhanced cooperation among the conventions. The Strategic Plan of the Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes that cooperation will be needed to achieve the 2010 target.
3. The mandate for establishing a liaison group was set out by the Parties to the CBD, in February 2004. In decision VII/26, the COP urged further enhanced cooperation between the CBD and all relevant international conventions, organizations and bodies, strengthening and building consistent on existing cooperative arrangements to enhance synergies and reduce inefficiencies in a manner consistent with their respective

mandates, governance arrangements and agreed programs, within existing resource. In this context, the COP requested for the invitation of the secretariats of the other four biodiversity related conventions (CITES, Ramsar, CMS and WHC) to form a liaison group to enhance coherence and cooperation in their implementation and to report on progress made to the eighth meeting of the COP.

4. In its decision **7 EXT.COM 9** adopted at the 7th extraordinary session held at UNESCO Headquarters, from 6-11 December 2004, the World Heritage Committee under paragraph 7 of its Decision “*Acknowledges the importance of ensuring an appropriate coordination between the Convention and global environment related conventions and programmes and welcomed to this regard the initiative to promote a liaison group among the secretariats of the conventions related to biodiversity conservation*”. The Committee further recalled “*the coordination between the 1972 World Heritage Convention and other conventions should apply at all levels, in particular when assisting States Parties in implementing such conventions*”. This is in line with the *Operational Guidelines* of the *World Heritage Convention* which carry provisions for strengthening of synergies with other agreements, including the other Biodiversity-related conventions. Memorandums of Understanding have been established between the World Heritage Centre and CBD, Ramsar and CMS and works closely with CITES.

	CBD	CMS	CITES	Ramsar	WHC
CBD		M J	M J	M J	M*
CMS	M J		M J*	M J	M
CITES	M J	M J*			
Ramsar	M J	M J			M
WHC	M*	M		M	

Table 1. Formal cooperation agreements established or in development among the biodiversity-related conventions; M = memoranda of cooperation/understanding, J = joint work programme/plan, and * = in development

5. Objective 5.1 of the CITES Strategic Vision (2000-2005) is “to ensure an optimal working relationship with UNEP, as well as close coordination and synergy with the other relevant multilateral environmental agreements”. Furthermore the Strategic Plan for the Convention on Migratory Species 2000-2005, under Operational objective 4.4 (Linkages) call for CMS to strengthen orderly institutional linkages with partner organizations. The Conference of the Parties to CMS, in Resolution 7.9 reaffirmed the interest of CMS to develop strong collaborative arrangements with other biodiversity-related instruments and international organizations. Ramsar, in its Strategic Plan (2003-2008) calls for stronger and formalized linkages between Ramsar and other international and/or regional environmental conventions and agencies, so as to advance the achievement of shared goals and objectives and objectives related to wetland issues. The Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-Related Conventions was established following a request of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of the Parties (Decision V/26) to enhance cooperation among the five biodiversity-related conventions.

Third meeting of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-Related Convention:

6. Cooperation and the 2010 Biodiversity Target : Within the framework of the above context and focusing on the 2010 target for Biodiversity, the third meeting of the Liaison Group of the Biodiversity-Related conventions was convened on 10 May 2005 in Gland, Switzerland, hosted by the Ramsar Bureau. The meeting was attended by representatives of the five global biodiversity-related conventions (*World Heritage Centre*, Ramsar, CDB, CMS, and CITES). The meetings provided a forum for the sharing of experiences and best practices, improved interaction among the five conventions, identify programmatic synergies between the conventions and improve the cooperation between the convention secretariats. At its second meeting held on 16 August 2004, the BLG had identified and agreed on two issues:
 - a) the 2010 Target on Biodiversity, and
 - b) the Global Partnership on Biodiversity.
7. It was also agreed to consider in this context the outcome of the issue concerning the harmonization of national reporting. The meeting provided an agenda and a platform under which to identify those areas where joint activities can most effectively achieve progress towards achieving the 2010 target, focusing particularly on synergies between the conventions. These areas included:
 - a) Cooperation in achieving the 2010 target where the BLG is invited to consider activities that can be carried out under the respective conventions to contribute towards the 2010 target and to identify common or strategic activities where BLG can play a facilitating goal;
 - b) Cooperation in assessing progress towards the 2010 target—the CBD Conference of Parties has invited related conventions to contribute reports and information that assist in the monitoring of progress towards the 2010 target and how the respective conventions can further participate in the process of monitoring progress towards 2010 target (by making use of, or adopting, relevant indicators in the CBD framework in contributing to indicator development; by facilitating the provision of relevant data and by providing additional inputs to the Global Biodiversity Outlook) and the strategic role of the liaison group in facilitating these contributions; and
 - c) Harmonization of National Reporting—the meeting considered actions required to improve harmonization of national reporting, based on the outcome of the UNEP-WCMC organized on the harmonization of national reporting to biodiversity-related treaties, held in Belgium on 22-23 September 2004 in which the World Heritage Centre was represented.
8. Considerations for global partnership on biodiversity: the main achievement of the third meeting of the BLG was the agreement reached to establish the Global Partnership for Biodiversity, and on its scope, size and structure. The emerging recommendation from the third BLG meeting was that the Global Partnership is the five biodiversity-related conventions themselves, facilitating of creation of partnerships on key themes, for example inviting from time to time people from relevant institutions and/or from reputable and supportive bodies and Intergovernmental organizations, in order to be informed of what biodiversity related

activities are being carried out by others.

9. Monitoring of progress towards the 2010 biodiversity target: A set of indicators (see Annex table 2) for assessing progress at the global level towards the 2010 target and for effectively communicating trends in biodiversity have been developed. The CBD Conference of the Parties has invited related conventions including the *World Heritage Convention*, assessment processes and relevant organizations to contribute reports and information that assist in the monitoring of progress to the 2010 target. Many indicators are relevant to the *World Heritage Convention* such as the indicators for the trends in abundance and distribution of selected species and the change in status of threatened species. The indicators will be used in reporting on progress towards the 2010 target through the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO) to be released in March 2006. The GBO will also report on the actions taken to achieve the 2010 target. In this regard, the BLG has been invited to consider how the respective conventions can further participate in the process of monitoring progress towards the 2010 target by:
 - Making use of, or adopting, relevant indicators in the CBD framework,
 - Contributing to indicators development,
 - Facilitating the provision of relevant data,
 - Providing additional inputs to the Global Biodiversity Outlook.

C. The strategic role of the Liaison Group in facilitating these contributions

Harmonization of National Reporting

10. The BLG underlined the importance of harmonizing the reporting in order to avoid duplication, increase efficiency in reporting and improve access to reported information. BLG proposed the need to identify common information modules and develop a modular approach to reporting. This is important as the 1972 *Convention* approaches the moratorium year 2007 to reflect on how to harmonize the reporting, not only within the regions, but also with other conventions. A reflection is required at the national level to identify what information is needed, how the information can be managed, and how information management is linked to reporting. At the Governing bodies level, the purpose of reporting, how the information will be used and what the Governments need now to focus on have to be clarified. At the level of Secretariat, the BLG proposes to establish a technical task force to promote and to streamline reporting. The harmonization on thematic issues was considered as a possible way forward.
11. On the Overall the conclusion and recommendations showed that:
 - a) There is need for input on the International Biodiversity Website Such as Joint press release showing how the five conventions are collaborating, giving visibility to the five conventions or better still the creation of a “Biodiversity Liaison Group” web site to be used as a communication tool among the BLGs;

- b) The BLG decided to leave the Task Force as it is with the five conventions to ensure efficiency and coherence in both the policy and direction, and to continue facilitating the creation of partnerships on key themes;
- c) BLG proposed that a strong message be delivered at each other's COPs and the World Heritage Committee on how the five conventions are collaborating;
- d) A joint paper should be developed, highlighting joint collaboration between the conventions;
- e) A dialogue should be initialized aimed at establishing future cooperation with the Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). These will be invited as observers in the future meetings. Establish a formal commitment with these conventions; and to explore on ways to contribute in the 17-28 October 2005 Desertification Control Convention Conference (DCCN) and for the FCCC Conference of the Parties in December 2005; and
- f) Promote studies and surveys that will provide information to enable to contribute information for the GBO.

II. **International Symposium “Conserving Cultural and Biological Diversity: The Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes”, Tokyo, Japan, 30 May to 2 June 2005**

**Declaration on the Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes
in the Conservation of Biological and Cultural Diversity**

We, the participants of the International Symposium on “Conserving Cultural and Biological Diversity: The Role of Sacred Natural Sites and Cultural Landscapes”, assembled at the United Nations University Centre in Tokyo (Japan) from 30 May to 2 June 2005:

Expressing our gratitude to United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations University (UNU), World Conservation Union (IUCN), the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) for providing a forum to discuss the links between nature and culture, and in particular extend our appreciation to UNU and its staff for hosting the Symposium;

Appreciating that the Symposium has been organized in the context of *The 2005 World Exposition Aichi* and has benefited from the support of the Japanese Government, the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs and the Christensen Fund;

Considering that sacred natural sites and cultural landscapes are of vital importance for safeguarding cultural and biological diversity for present and future generations;

Recognizing that many sacred natural sites have great significance for the spiritual well being of indigenous peoples and local communities;

Noting the need to promote and safeguard cultural and biological diversity, particularly in the face of the homogenizing forces of globalization;

Bearing in mind that sacred natural sites, cultural landscapes and traditional agricultural systems cannot be understood, conserved and managed without taking into account the cultures that have shaped them and continue to shape them today;

Noting the unprecedented species extinction rate, pollution, climate change, the world water crisis and pressures on cultural diversity, which call for the development and adoption of ethical principles to sustain biological diversity and freshwater resources for present and future generations;

Being convinced that conservation of cultural and biological diversity together holds the key to ensuring resilience in both social and ecological systems;

Acknowledging the important role of indigenous peoples and local communities as custodians of sacred natural sites and as holders of traditional knowledge, which is fundamental for the preservation of biological and cultural diversity;

Further noting the importance of respecting indigenous peoples rights to their lands and knowledge;

Acknowledging also the important role of spiritual traditions in the conservation of sacred natural sites and some cultural landscapes;

Taking into account the various international bodies, instruments, programmes, strategies and processes of relevance to the Symposium's theme, and the importance of their effective implementation, in particular:

- the International Bill of Human Rights (1966);
- the 1971 Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance;
- the 1972 *UNESCO World Heritage Convention*;
- the International Labour Organization Convention (No.169) concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, 1989;
- the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;
- the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992);
- the Seville Strategy for the World Network of Biosphere Reserves of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme (1996);
- the mandate of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) (2000);
- the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity;
- the 2003 UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention;
- the IUCN International System of Protected Area Categories and the outcomes of the IUCN Vth World Parks Congress 2003;
- the FAO initiative on “Globally Important Ingenious Agricultural Heritage Systems”;
- the UNU initiative on People, Land Management and Ecosystem Conservation;

Call upon national authorities, protected area and site managers, indigenous peoples and local communities, the international system, governments and non-governmental organizations, to consider and implement, where appropriate:

- the UNESCO/IUCN Guidelines for the Conservation and Management of Sacred Natural Sites;
- the CBD *Akwé: Voluntary Guidelines for the Conduct of Cultural, Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Regarding Developments Proposed to Take Place on, or Which are Likely to Impact on, Sacred Sites and on Lands and Waters Traditionally Occupied or Used by Indigenous and Local Communities*;

- the Yamato Declaration on Integrated Approaches for Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage;

Further call upon governments, protected area managers, the international system, governmental authorities and non-governmental organizations and others to respect, support and promote the role of indigenous peoples and local communities, as custodians of sacred natural sites and cultural landscapes, through the rights-based approach, in order to contribute to their well-being and to the preservation of cultural and biological diversity of such sites and landscapes;

Invite intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the scientific community and the private sector, to enhance cooperation and to continue collaborative work for safeguarding the cultural and biological diversity embodied in sacred natural sites and cultural landscapes, and to better understand nature-culture interaction through comparative research;

Request UNESCO to establish, in order to ensure the holistic protection of sacred natural sites and cultural landscapes, a mechanism of cooperation between the 1972 and 2003 Conventions, envisaging mutually reinforcing safeguarding measures under international assistance provisions, as established in both conventions;

Also invite intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, international financial institutions and the private sector to continue cooperating with governments, local authorities, and indigenous peoples and local communities, with their free, prior and informed consent and their full and effective participation, for safeguarding cultural, linguistic and biological diversity, through the protection of sacred natural sites and cultural landscapes;

Urge the development of holistic approaches that take into account and respect different knowledge systems and integrate ethical, social, technical and economic dimensions, recognizing the historical dynamics of cultures and landscapes, while acknowledging the need of indigenous peoples and local communities for their sustainable livelihoods;

Call upon governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, religious institutions, indigenous and local communities to work together to ensure respect for religious and spiritual traditions and practices linked to sacred natural sites, and to protect such sites against desecration and destruction;

Recommend the integration of actions to promote the protection of sacred sites and cultural landscapes of indigenous peoples in the Programme of Action for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People;

Further request the organizers of the Symposium, as well as all participating institutions and individuals, to make special efforts for the wide dissemination of this Declaration;

Also invite them to carry forward the outcomes of the Symposium through appropriate mechanisms, and to consider the development of a coordinated action strategy for the protection of sacred natural sites and cultural landscapes.