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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL
ORGANIZATION

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD
CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Thirtieth Session

Vilnius, Lithuania

8-16 July 2006

Item 13 of the Provisional Agenda: Working methods of the World Heritage Committee

SUMMARY

By Decision **29 COM 18C** adopted at its 29th session (Durban, 2005), the World Heritage Committee decided “to explore at its 30th session ways and means of optimizing the time-management of its sessions”.

Taking into account the views expressed by a number of States Parties to the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* regarding the working methods of the Committee, the present document was prepared by the Secretariat to contribute to the improvement of such methods.

Draft Decision: 30 COM 13, see Point V

I. Background

1. The issue of the working methods of the World Heritage Committee was dealt with several times in different contexts and settings.
2. At its 23rd session (Marrakech, 1999), the World Heritage Committee established a Task Force on the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention*, chaired by Canada, which reported to the Committee at its 24th session (Cairns, 2000). This Task Force identified several proposals for improving the working methods of the Committee. The report of this Task Force can be consulted at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2000/whc-00-conf204-inf7e.pdf>
3. At its 7th extraordinary session (UNESCO, 2004), the World Heritage Committee, by its Decision **7 EXT.COM 4B.3**, established an ad hoc working group to examine its working methods. The Committee decided that this working group should complete its mandate for the 29th session (Durban, 2005). On the basis of this report, the Committee adopted at its 29th session (Durban, 2005), Decision **29 COM 18 C** by which it decided “*to explore at its 30th session ways and means of optimizing the time-management of its sessions, including the need and convenience of increasing on a permanent basis the periodicity of its ordinary sessions, taking particularly into account*
 - i) *the importance of ensuring a manageable agenda; and*
 - ii) *the need to have enough time to examine the state of conservation of sites on the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger, as well as the nominations to the World Heritage List.*”
4. In December 2005 and during the first trimester of 2006, a number of States Parties (including several European countries as well as Australia and Canada) expressed, by letter addressed to the Director-General, their concerns about the working methods of the World Heritage Committee. Upon the request of a number of European States Parties, the Director-General received the representatives of Austria (in his capacity as Chair of the EU Presidency), the United Kingdom and Finland on 19 May 2006.
5. In light of the above, the following proposals have been drawn up to improve the working methods of World Heritage Committee and are submitted to the Committee for its consideration and possible adoption.

II. Working Methods of the Governing Bodies of the Convention

A. A clear strategy for the World Heritage

6. The General Assembly of States Parties should regain its strategic role by including in its agenda items related to strategic policy issues. In the same vein, resolutions of the General Assembly should have greater impact and result through appropriate follow-up.
7. This is why, in order to avoid numerous different strategies which can lead to inaction and confusion, it is recommended that once every two years an

additional full day of the World Heritage Committee would be devoted to strategic issues to be presented to the General Assembly for consideration.

8. Moreover, it is suggested to re-organize and simplify the election procedure to the World Heritage Committee to avoid using valuable time that could be better spent on discussing others items on the agenda. In this regard, document *WHC-06/30.COM/18B* proposes considering an improved voting mechanism for the election of Committee members. Furthermore, it is proposed to request candidates to the World Heritage Committee to define what they will achieve and the expertise they intend to bring.
9. Finally, requests for International Assistance under the World Heritage Fund submitted to the Committee should be made, and funds allocated, in line with strategic priorities. The results of the ongoing evaluations of the Fund will also contribute to this effort.

B. Reducing the Agenda of the sessions of the World Heritage Committee

10. With a view to streamlining the Agenda of the sessions of the Committee, it is proposed to reduce it to include only three main items: 1) the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger; 2) periodic reporting; and 3) nominations to the World Heritage List. Other items should be discussed on an exceptional basis during an Extraordinary Session of the Committee¹ or by a Group of Experts appointed by the Committee (Consultative Body according to Rule 20 of the *Rules of procedure of the World Heritage Committee*) with a view to enhancing the Committee's efficiency; this Consultative body could be modeled on the Group of Experts for Financial and Administrative Matters created by the Financial and Administrative Commission (FA) which meets during the Executive Board of UNESCO (see Annex 1);
11. Complex items could also be discussed by a Group of Experts (Consultative body), which should be designated by the Committee and report on its conclusions to the Committee.
12. Time management being an essential key for completing the agenda of the session, it is proposed to allow only two minutes for the second intervention. In the same vein, it could be envisaged that during the discussion on the Nomination item, States Parties intervene only in the event that they do not agree with the Advisory Body's recommendations (inscription, referral, deferral and rejection).
13. Furthermore, the following new methodology could be envisaged for discussing the State of Conservation of World Heritage Properties item:
 - i) Creation of a new category: "State of conservation of properties considered for inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger"
 - ii) Presentation of some State of Conservation Reports only once every two years
 - iii) Development of specific performance indicators in nomination dossiers to report on conservation management

¹ For information, an extraordinary session of the Committee has a rough cost of USD 100,000

- iv) Creation of a specific format for States Parties to present their State of Conservation Reports
- v) Presentation of State of Conservation reports using images and maps to enhance interest and understanding of the on-site data.

C. Improving Decision-making procedures

- 14. In order to enhance the decision-making procedures of the World Heritage Committee, it is recommended that the World Heritage Centre prepare shorter working and information documents using plain (non-technical) language as far as possible and that it develop a corpus of past Committee decisions and discussions on Outstanding Universal Value case-law approach.
- 15. With a view to facilitating decision-making during the sessions, the World Heritage Committee Members should be informed of the previous Committee's decisions as well as of the content of the major World Heritage Strategies / Policies (the 4Cs, the Global Strategy, the Global Training Strategy, etc...). Finally, delegations of States Parties to the Committee sessions should include experts in the fields of cultural as well as natural heritage in accordance with Article 9.3 of the *World Heritage Convention*.

III. Functioning of Advisory Bodies

- 16. Better coordination is needed between the Advisory Bodies (harmonization of evaluations of nominations / presentations of nominations during the Committee), as well as between these bodies and the World Heritage Centre. For information, it is worth noting that ICOMOS is currently reviewing its working methods (See Information Document WHC-06/30.COM/INF.6B). Furthermore, IUCN requested an external evaluation, which took place in December 2005.

IV. Improvements already implemented in 2005

- 17. It is recalled that the following improvements have been implemented in 2005:
 - i) Finalization of the revision of the Operational Guidelines in February 2005,
 - ii) Creation of a searchable online database of the World Heritage Committee's decisions in April 2005,
 - iii) Creation of a new publication which compiles the basic texts of the Convention (including the revised Operational Guidelines) in June 2005,
 - iv) Establishment of Performance Indicators for World Heritage,
 - v) Establishment of a regulatory framework for the PACT (Partnerships for World Heritage Conservation).

V. **Draft Decision**

Draft Decision: 30 COM 13

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-06/30.COM/13,*
2. *Recalling its Decision **29 COM 18C** adopted at its 29th session (Durban, 2005),*
3. *Decides to adopt the above-mentioned proposals related to its working methods on an experimental basis from the 31st session (2007) and to assess them at its 33rd session in 2009.*

Group of Experts on Financial and Administrative Matters

Composition

The Executive Board,

1. Bearing in mind 26 C/Resolution 19.3,

2. Referring to its decisions

137 EX/8.6,

142 EX/3.1.3,

143 EX/9.1,

144 EX/6.10,

148 EX/5.7,

153 EX/5.6,

158 EX/5.6,

163 EX/5.6

and 168 EX/5.6 on the Group of

Experts on Financial and Administrative Matters,

3. Decides to renew the mandate of the above-mentioned Group of Experts. For the 2006-2007 biennium, the Group of Experts will comprise 12 experts designated by 12 Members of the Executive Board, two from each group, as follows:

- Group I: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America
- Group II: Russian Federation and Slovenia
- Group III: Colombia and Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Group IV: India and Japan
- Group V(a): Namibia and South Africa
- Group V(b): Algeria and Morocco

4. Decides further that the methods of work and the terms of reference of the Group of Experts will remain as defined in 144 EX/Decision 6.10 reproduced below:

Mandate and working methods of the Group of Experts on Financial and Administrative Matters

The Executive Board,

1. Recalling paragraph III.6(b) of 26 /Resolution 19.3,

2. Recalling its previous decisions, and particularly 137 EX/Decision 8.6, which established an expert group on financial and administrative matters,

3. Decides that the mandate of this Group of Experts shall be as follows:

(a) to assist the Finance and Administrative Commission in its work with a view to increasing its effectiveness;

(b) to examine from a strictly technical point of view the administrative and financial aspects of the documents and issues that the Finance and Administrative Commission refers to it;

(c) to raise no matters of policy during its work;

4. Decides that the Group of Experts shall normally meet one week before each of the sessions of the Executive Board;

5. Renews its decision to finance the expenses of the Group of Experts, including the cost of travel and subsistence allowances for experts not living in Paris whose expenses are not borne by their respective

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- Group V(b):
Algeria and Morocco

governments, from the budget of the Executive Board;

6. Invites Member States to take the necessary steps for the experts designated as members of the group to attend meetings regularly;

7. Requests the Director-General to provide every assistance to facilitate the work of the group.