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# World Heritage

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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC  
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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF  
THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Thirty second Session

Quebec City, Canada  
2 – 10 July 2008

**Item 10 of the Provisional Agenda: Global Strategy for a representative,  
balanced and credible World Heritage List**

**10A. Point of information on Thematic Studies**

## SUMMARY

At the request of the World Heritage Committee at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007), this document contains a point of information on the on-going and proposed global thematic studies undertaken by ICOMOS and IUCN as well as information concerning the Expert Meeting on the recognition of heritage of science and technology in the *World Heritage Convention* (see also Document *WHC-08/32.COM/INF10A*).

**Draft Decision: 32 COM 10A, see Point V**

## I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Bodies undertake thematic studies, where relevant with partner organizations on different subjects in order to provide a context for their evaluations of new nominations to the World Heritage List. While preparing Tentative Lists and nominations, States Parties are encouraged to consult these thematic studies and to use them as a strategic tool to assist in the better identification of World Heritage properties of potential outstanding universal value and to improve the success rate of nominations to the World Heritage List.
2. As specified in paragraph 72 of the *Operational Guidelines*, thematic studies are different than the comparative analysis to be prepared by States Parties when nominating properties for inscription on the World Heritage List.
3. Annex 3 of the *Operational Guidelines* provides web addresses of the existing thematic studies, and should be updated annually to review any changes to the documents that exist. It should be kept in mind that existing thematic studies should be periodically updated, taking into account recommendations arising from the different World Heritage processes. However funding for such updating or for preparing new studies is very limited..

## II. Progress report on global thematic studies by ICOMOS

4. As part of its activities and budget proposals for World Heritage Advisory Services, ICOMOS carries out one or more thematic studies, on an annual basis, in the context of the Global Strategy for a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List.
5. In 2007, the study on Rock Art of Sahara and North Africa was delivered to the World Heritage Committee at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007) together with the Interim report on the Cultural Landscapes of the Pacific Islands.
6. Since, several activities started:
  - a) *Rock Art: Central Asia*. The study will gather data on regional characteristics of rock art, significant rock art sites, status of documentation, research, protection and conservation as well as threats to sites.
    - A brief on purpose, scope, process and schedule was prepared for the authors at the end of 2007;
    - Authors were approached at the beginning of 2008;
    - The study should be completed for the World Heritage Committee meeting 2008.
  - b) Update and development of the thematic study on *Potential Fossil Hominid Sites for inscription on the World Heritage List* to be finalized in 2008.
    - A brief on purpose, scope, process and schedule was prepared in 2007;
    - Authors were approached and several contributions received;
    - Edition of the updated study should be for 2008.
  - c) The thematic study *Cultural Landscapes of the Pacific Islands* was finalized in December 2007. It is for distribution to the World Heritage Committee at its 32nd

session (Quebec, 2008). This was resourced out of a specific contract (N° 4500034740).

7. The 2006 ICOMOS study *The World Heritage List – Filling the Gaps – an Action Plan for the Future* has allowed the identification of areas where thematic studies might be useful to States Parties and all actors of the *World Heritage Convention*. The list below identifies some which ICOMOS would be ready to prepare in the coming four years on the basis of resources allocated. These are as follows:
  - a) Thematic study of *Agro-pastoral Cultural Landscapes*. These are traditional cultural landscapes associated with agro-pastoral activities which during recent years, States Parties had nominated and the World Heritage Committee reviewed, particularly in the Mediterranean region. This thematic study has been motivated by the thematic expert meeting on agro-pastoral cultural landscapes in the Mediterranean, which took place 20 to 22 September 2007, in Meyrueis (France). It was attended by 44 participants, representing 9 countries of the Mediterranean basin, as well as UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS, IUCN, European Forum on Nature Conservation and Pastoralism (EFNCP), France and regional, local and departmental authorities. This expert meeting in particular, discussed potential serial nominations of transhumance phenomena and agro-pastoral landscapes and produced a report with a series of focused recommendations (documents are available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/489/>) addressed to UNESCO, to the World Heritage Committee, the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies (ICOMOS and IUCN) and the States Parties that wish to submit agro-pastoral cultural landscapes for inscription on the World Heritage List, or already have such sites inscribed, and more generally to all concerned by the management of such sites. The State Party of France proposed funding for an in-depth thematic study on the topic;
  - b) Thematic study on *Irrigation and Water Management Systems*. Irrigation and water management systems are an essential component of many agricultural systems and daily life supply. It is related to technology. Whilst there are some historic or traditional systems on the World Heritage List, a global thematic study would be useful in order to identify the various manifestations of these systems;
  - c) Thematic study on the *Heritage of Astronomy*. This thematic study would be developed in the context of the recent interest in the review of the relationship between heritage of sciences, traditional community knowledge and the *World Heritage Convention*. It would, as well, be associated to the UNESCO thematic initiative “Astronomy and World Heritage” within the framework of its Integrated Implementation Strategy (see Document *WHC-08/32.COM/INF.5C*). ICOMOS met on 23 April 2008 with the International Astronomical Union in order to set the basis of close cooperation in the preparation of the study. In June 2008, a brief would be prepared by ICOMOS in order to agree upon purpose, scope, process and schedule of the thematic study;
  - d) Cultural input to a thematic study on *Cultural and Natural Heritage of the Arctic Region*. The international expert meeting *World Heritage and the Arctic* (30 November-1 December 2007) encouraged IUCN and ICOMOS to consider this topic as a priority.

### III. Progress report on global thematic studies by IUCN

8. IUCN also continued its work in the field of global thematic studies, prepared a programme of priorities for future studies and started the preparation of three new studies:
  - 1) **Thematic Study on Volcanoes and Volcanic Landscapes:** This study responds to Decision **31 COM 8B.17** and will review the scope of volcanic values already represented on the World Heritage List and the potential and priorities for future recognition of volcanic landscapes and features in relation to the relevant World Heritage criteria. It will also comment on the requirements for integrity and management that should apply to volcanic landscapes and features on the World Heritage List;
  - 2) **Thematic Study on Caves and Karst:** This study responds to the need identified in Decision: **31 COM 8B.13** to advise States Parties on the scope of karst and cave values already represented on the World Heritage List and the potential and priorities for future recognition of karst landscapes and features in relation to the relevant World Heritage criteria. It will also comment on the requirements for integrity and management that should apply to karst landscapes and features on the World Heritage List;
  - 3) **Thematic Study on Deserts and Desert Landscapes:** The world's deserts, which cover about a third of its land surface and are found in every continent including Antarctica, are areas where there is a severe shortage of water and humidity. One consequence has been a wide range of unusual and spectacular landforms, sculpted by wind, occasional but strong rainfalls and ancient riverine systems. As a result of the aridity, the landforms and the processes that led to their formation remain clearly visible, uncovered by extensive vegetation. The fauna and flora that do live in deserts often show unusual, often extreme, adaptations to their arid habitats. The purpose of this study is to advise States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* on deserts as potential World Heritage sites of outstanding universal value.

The three studies are currently being prepared and, following a peer review process, will be presented to the World Heritage Committee in 2009.

9. IUCN's limited budget for global thematic studies (US\$ 14,500 per year) covers the cost of only one study per year and one year is usually not enough to properly complete the complex research, writing and review process which heavily relies on volunteer input from IUCN and the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) experts. However IUCN is in a position to commission further thematic studies from 2008-2009 if additional funds are available. IUCN is developing a strategic approach to its future thematic studies in order to set priorities for further work. IUCN's assessment of the greatest priorities for further work currently include Freshwater systems, Polar and subpolar regions and the application of natural criterion (vii) related to the aesthetic values of nature and exceptional natural phenomena. IUCN will endeavour to mobilize external funding to support this work, and to enhance the range of languages within which its studies are available, but also notes that greater financial support for this important area of work is required.
10. IUCN considers that studies in relation to the development of serial nominations are also important and should be linked with the development of thematic studies. IUCN also notes that work on thematic studies should be accompanied by support for effective communication and promotional activities for use by the States Parties, complemented by capacity building activities in relation to the preparation of nominations taking account of

identified thematic priorities.

#### **IV. Science and technology expert workshop within the framework of the global strategy**

11. At the 31st session (Christchurch, 2007), the Government of United Kingdom offered to host a workshop to explore further the opportunities, issues and additional guidance necessary to recognize and celebrate achievements of science and technology on the World Heritage List through combining inputs on the interpretation of science heritage in the context of the *World Heritage Convention* from the scientific community and World Heritage specialists. The Committee in its Decision **31 COM 9**, decided to accept this offer in the framework of the Global Strategy for a Balanced and Representative World Heritage List.
12. The meeting took place from 21 to 23 January 2008 at the Wellcome Collection Conference Centre, London, United Kingdom. The World Heritage Centre was associated to the preparation of the meeting, by giving advice on possible participants and contributors, the elaboration of the agenda, and the preparation of a background document. The United Kingdom Government also prepared a context paper. The meeting was attended by 45 experts from different regions of the world, including the Chairperson of the Committee, the Director of the Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences of UNESCO and representatives of all three Advisory Bodies (IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM). The terms of reference and agenda of the meeting, all background papers as well as the list of participants are available at [www.unesco.org.uk](http://www.unesco.org.uk).
13. The expert workshop recommended that filling the gaps associated with scientific and technical heritage be given priority status and that there is a need for an international framework study of science and technical heritage. This thematic study should identify where gaps in the World Heritage List are, and in particular, what other areas of scientific and technological heritage would benefit from further, specific, thematic studies. The recommendations of the meeting can be found in Document *WHC-08/32.COM/INF10A*.

#### **V. Draft Decision**

##### ***Draft Decision: 32 COM 10B***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC-08/32.COM/10A,*
2. *Recalling Decisions **31 COM 13** and **31 COM 17** adopted at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007),*
3. *Thanking the Government of the United Kingdom for having hosted the Science and technology expert workshop, which took place from 21 to 23 January 2008 in London, as well as all the experts who contributed to it,*
4. *Noting the results and recommendations of the Science and technology expert workshop within the framework of the Global Strategy,*
5. *Takes note of the progress report on the global thematic studies undertaken by ICOMOS and IUCN;*

6. *Requests IUCN and ICOMOS to continue to develop their work on thematic studies, in relation to priorities identified in Document WHC-08/32.COM/10A;*
7. *Takes note of the need for additional resources to be provided to support priority work by IUCN and ICOMOS on thematic studies, including updating existing studies and new initiatives, and to promote their effective use by States Parties;*
8. *Invites States Parties to the Convention to consider providing extra-budgetary assistance to support such work;*
9. *Thanks the government of France for its generous offer to fund a thematic study on Agro-pastoral Cultural Landscapes.*