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# World Heritage

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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL  
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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 11 of the Provisional Agenda: Periodic reports**

**11.B: Progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the  
Periodic Report for the Arab States**

## SUMMARY

This document summarizes the follow-up activities to the Arab States' Periodic Report, notably the progress achieved in the implementation of the Regional Programme adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 27th session (UNESCO, 2003) and reiterated at the regional consultation meeting in December 2005.

***Draft Decision: 32 COM 11B***, see item V

## **I. Background**

1. In 2000, the Arab region was the first to undertake the exercise of periodic reporting approved by the World Heritage Committee at its 24th session (Cairns, 2000). The analysis of the periodic report contributed to the elaboration of a Regional Programme, approved by the World Heritage Committee at its 27th session (UNESCO, 2003) (Document *WHC-03/27.COM/INF.20B and World Heritage Series n°11*).

## **II. Progress accomplished in the implementation of the Regional Programme**

2. The timetable for the implementation of the Regional Programme (2004-2009) included the organisation a consultative meeting between the Arab States Parties and the World Heritage Centre, in order to present its content and discuss its execution. The Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (United Arab Emirates) generously contributed to this meeting which was held in Abu Dhabi from 4 to 8 December 2005.
3. Several priorities were discussed, in particular the increase in the number of natural properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List, the strengthening of capacity building in information management, and the development of networks for the exchange of experiences and competences between the managers of Arab World Heritage properties. Among the approved recommendations and decisions, the adoption of the "Regional Action Plans concerning the Cultural and Natural World Heritage in the Arab Region" has provided a working framework developed and endorsed by the States Parties. Furthermore, the participants decided that these plans would serve as a basis for the preparation, before mid-2006, of « National Action Plans » for cultural and natural heritage, and would be elaborated by the national committees/focal points to be established. To date, only the Kingdom of Bahrain has defined a national action plan. Jordan (as well as the Palestinian Territories) have created National World Heritage Committees, while Bahrain is also in the process of doing so.
4. Between 2006, date of the last report presented to the 30th session of the World Heritage Committee, and today, several actions have been undertaken by the World Heritage Centre and its national and international partners, especially ICCROM, ALECSO, and the UNESCO offices in the region in an attempt to respond to these needs. The most significant of these actions are listed below:

### **A. Credibility and representativity of the List**

5. Three States Parties presented their first Tentative Lists between 2006 and 2008: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. Bahrain, Jordan and Syria revised their Tentative List, thereby including four potential new natural properties, a cultural landscape and a serial property. Libya and Tunisia, which do not have Tentative Lists, both indicated their intention to prepare one. In a similar spirit, a training workshop for the preparation of a Tentative List was organised by the World Heritage Centre in Muscat, Oman, in December 2006.
6. A meeting of the Coordination Committee for the project "Cultural Trans-Saharan Itineraries" to prepare transboundary nominations in North Africa was held in Nouakchott (Mauritania, 8-22 September 2006) with representatives from Algeria, Mali, Mauritania,

Morocco and Niger. However, it would appear that the States Parties concerned have not followed up the process.

7. Since 2006, several nomination files have been submitted or are under preparation in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. The Archaeological City of Samarra, in Iraq, was inscribed on the World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger at the 31st session of the World Heritage Committee (Christchurch, 2007). Two properties will be examined by the World Heritage Committee at its 32nd session, a natural property - Socotra Island, Yemen – and a cultural property – Mada'in Saleh in Saudi Arabia. However, no nomination for the region was submitted by 1 February 2008.
8. Moreover, at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007), and for the very first time, the World Heritage Committee had to take the decision, with regret, to remove a property from the World Heritage List, the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Oman, at the request of the State Party. The significant reduction in the size of the Sanctuary, oil prospection activities, and the decline in the wild population of the oryx have caused the loss of the Outstanding Universal Value and integrity of the property.

## **B. Conservation and management**

9. At the 30th session of the World Heritage Committee (Vilnius, 2006), two properties in the Arab region were removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger, namely, Ichkeul National Park in Tunisia and the Archaeological site of Tipasa in Algeria, following having demonstrated an improvement in their state of conservation and the preservation of their outstanding universal value.
10. Particular efforts have been made over the period under review in the field of site management, and they continue with assistance from the World Heritage Centre, especially with international assistance requests submitted by some States Parties. Special mention is made of Ksar Ait Ben Haddou in Morocco and Gebel Barkal in Sudan. The Sultanate of Oman has made progress in the preparation of a management plan for Bahla Fort, as well as Algeria for the properties of Tipasa and the Kasbah of Algiers, and Lebanon for the Qadisha Valley, whilst the Egyptian authorities have prepared those for Memphis (component of the Pyramid Fields from Giza to Dahshur) and Medinet Habou (component of the Ancient Thebes and its Necropolis). This work is also carried out in the framework of the preparation of nomination files for Meroe in Sudan, Gebel Qatrani in Egypt and the Ancient villages of Northern Syria. Also, the Libyan authorities have decided to prepare a management plan for Cyrene and Ghadamès. For the latter, a conservation, training and enhancement programme, encouraged by the World Heritage Centre, has been launched with, in particular, the International Centre for Earth Construction, CRATerre.
11. The World Heritage site of Byblos suffered damage following the oil spill that affected the Lebanese coast during the conflict in the summer of 2006. Thanks to a contribution from the Japanese Government, restoration activities to the North Tower of the Port and clean-up operations of the affected structures were undertaken.
12. Specific activities for the protection and preservation of the Palestinian natural and cultural heritage, initiated by the decisions of the World Heritage Committee in 2002 and implemented mainly by the UNESCO Office in Ramallah, continue and are reported on in Document *WHC-08/32.COM/12*.

13. The World Heritage Centre continues its work relating to the UNESCO Action Plan for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem. These activities are presented in Document *WHC-08/32.COM/7A*.
14. In the framework of the Retrospective Inventory which began in 2006 for the Arab States Region, the boundaries of 24 properties are now defined, while information concerning 39 properties is still incomplete.
15. Although not solely linked to the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention*, the World Heritage Centre, together with the UNESCO Office in Iraq, organised the Third Plenary Session of the International Coordination Committee for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of Iraq, which was held at UNESCO Headquarters from 12 to 14 November 2007.

### **C. Capacity building**

16. Between September 2006 and January 2007, in the framework of a project financed by the European Commission for the development of cultural tourism in Syria, the World Heritage Centre organised seven training sessions for Syrian staff from the Ministries of Culture and Tourism. Following this project, a workshop bringing together all the partners was held in the World Heritage site of Palmyra, and "Guidelines for the management of cultural heritage in Syria" were presented to the State Party.
17. At the request of the Omani authorities, a training workshop on the preparation of Tentative Lists was held in Muscat from 2 to 8 December 2006, with the aim of reviewing the Tentative List of the Sultanate of Oman.
18. In October 2007, a training workshop was held in Syria on the use of information management systems by the Antiquities and Museums Directorate for the management of World Heritage properties.
19. The preparation of management plans for the sites of Gebel Barkal in Sudan and Ksar Ait Ben Haddou in Morocco provided the opportunity to train the persons responsible for the properties at the national as well as at the local levels.
20. Finally, following a request for international assistance, the Ministry for Environment in Iraq organised, with the support of the UNESCO Iraq Office, a training workshop on improving knowledge on the *Convention* and for the preparation of nomination files for the inscription of natural properties.
21. The core of the training in the Arab region is ensured thanks to ICCROM's "Athar" Programme. In order to combine efforts and strengthen regional cooperation in this field, a tripartite agreement between the World Heritage Centre, ICCROM and ALECSO (The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization) is under preparation.
22. In 2007, the Kingdom of Bahrain initiated bilateral cooperation with UNESCO through the funding, for two years, of an advisory position with the Sector for Culture and National Heritage of Bahrain, to assist the State Party in the implementation of the *Convention* and to manage a cooperative programme proposed by the latter with the World Heritage Centre in order to strengthen the implementation of the *Convention*.

#### **D. Communication and information**

23. The Arabic version of the Education Kit for teachers, "World Heritage in Young Hands", was revised and reprinted. Moreover, in addition to the introductory manual for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Heritage in the Arab region, prepared in 2002 by ICCROM and UNESCO, a new manual has been prepared for the use of secondary school teachers and it has been published, in English and Arabic.
24. Three workshops were held in Beirut, Damascus and Petra, to train teachers of UNESCO associated schools in the use of the Kit.

#### **E. Community participation**

25. In the framework of the preparation of the nomination file for the Ancient villages of Northern Syria and of the management plans for Gebel Barkal in Sudan and Ksar Ait Ben Haddou in Morocco, specific efforts were made to adopt a participative approach, including all concerned parties, in particular through the holding of awareness raising workshops.
26. The State Party of Jordan recently signed an agreement with the United Nations Foundation to develop a pilot project with the World Heritage Alliance for community participation in the management and conservation of three Jordanian World Heritage properties.

### **III. Proposal for the establishment of a "Regional World Heritage Centre in the Arab States" in Bahrain**

27. The Kingdom of Bahrain, elected for the first time to the World Heritage Committee in 2007, presented to Director-General of UNESCO, in the presence of the Director of the World Heritage Centre and the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee, a proposal to establish a regional centre, in Bahrain, in order to reinforce the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention* in the Arab States region. Information concerning this proposal is contained in Information Document *WHC-08/32.COM/INF.11B*.

### **IV. Preparation of the next cycle of Periodic Reporting**

28. Article 29 of the *World Heritage Convention* stipulates that Periodic Reporting on the implementation of the Convention is a procedure by which States Parties, through the intermediary of the World Heritage Committee, transmit to UNESCO's General Conference the status of the implementation of the *Convention* in their respective territories. In this framework, and following the approval of the World Heritage Committee, the second cycle of Periodic Reporting shall be launched immediately following the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee, beginning with the Arab States, as was the case for the first cycle.
29. Consequently, the elaboration of this report will take place during the next two years and will be presented to the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session in 2010.
30. Certain concrete activities have been foreseen for the preparation of this exercise in order that the Periodic Report for the Arab States be submitted within the timetable and established deadlines.

A first regional meeting to launch the exercise is planned for October. It will take place in Bahrain, which has generously offered to host it. It is foreseen as a preparatory information and planning meeting with the participation of the focal points identified by the States Parties to guide this exercise in their countries, as well as the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies (ICCROM, ICOMOS, IUCN), and ALECSO in its capacity of regional cultural Organization.

31. The principal objectives of this meeting will be: (a) to present and explain to the representatives accredited by their countries the new format for the submission of the Periodic Reports; (b) obtain their adhesion and active participation in the programme ; (c) promote regional cooperation through the exchange of information and experiences in the framework of the application of the *Convention*, and more specifically, with regard to periodic reporting and follow up and (d) to provide guidance to States Parties on the drafting of the Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for properties in the region, where these statements are missing. This meeting will also identify the particular needs of the region regarding the assistance in preparing the Periodic Report. In particular, it is envisaged to identify a certain number of specialists as “mentors”, responsible for providing support to the focal points during the preparation of the national reports.
32. Following the first regional meeting in Bahrain, the timetable foresees, among others, the following activities:
  - February 2009: submission of questionnaires (Sections I and II) of the periodic report completed by the site managers and focal points.
  - March - May 2009: sub-regional meetings according to the needs and funds available, with a view to completing the information provided, if necessary, and to carry out a first analysis of the results.
  - November 2009: Final regional meeting.
  - December 2009 – March 2010: analysis and synthesis of the periodic reports by the Secretariat.
  - April 2010: final drafting of the regional report to transmit to the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session.

## V. Draft Decision

### ***Draft Decision 32 COM 11B***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC-08/32.COM/11B,*
2. *Recalling decisions **30 COM 11C**, **31 COM 7.3** and **31 COM 11D.1**, adopted respectively at its 30th session (Vilnius, 2006) and 31st session (Christchurch, 2007),*
3. *Also recalling the need for States Parties, as stipulated in Article 5 (e) of the World Heritage Convention, "to foster the establishment or development of national or regional centres for training in the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage and to encourage scientific research in this field ",*
4. *Takes note of the information provided by the World Heritage Centre on progress accomplished in the implementation of the Regional Programme for the Arab States;*

5. Encourages States Parties of the Arab region, in cooperation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, to continue with the implementation of the Regional Programme, especially the Action Plans adopted in Abu Dhabi in 2005, and develop them as operational national work plans;
6. Requests States Parties of the Arab region that have not yet responded to the questions raised in 2006 in the framework of the Retrospective Inventory, to provide all clarifications and documentation requested before **1 December 2008**;
7. Also requests States Parties of the Arab region to revise or prepare all the missing Statements of Outstanding Universal Value concerning properties situated in their territories and to submit them **before 1 February 2009** for examination at the 33rd session of the World Heritage Committee in 2009;
8. Urges States Parties of the Arab region to participate actively in the second cycle of periodic reporting and encourages them to take this opportunity to strengthen their management capacities for World Heritage properties;
9. Further requests the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to provide assistance to the Arab States in the preparation of the Periodic Report;
10. Warmly welcomes the proposal of the State Party of Bahrain to create a Regional Centre for World Heritage, encourages it to undertake a feasibility study and all necessary steps for its establishment as a Category II Centre under the auspices of UNESCO, and invites it to submit a progress report of the project to its 33rd session in 2009;
11. Also requests the World Heritage Centre to submit the results of the Periodic Report for the Arab States at its 34th session in **2010**.