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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-third session

Seville, Spain
22-30 June 2009

Item 14A of the Provisional Agenda: Reflection on the future of the *World Heritage Convention*

SUMMARY

Draft Decision: 33 COM 14A, see Point II



Chairperson's summary of the Workshop to reflect on the Future of the World Heritage Convention

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A. Background

1. The Workshop to reflect on the Future of the *World Heritage Convention* (25-27 February 2009, Paris, UNESCO headquarters) was organized by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre with support from Australia, Brazil, Israel, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the UNESCO "Aid to Developing Countries" Fund. The workshop provided a rich reflection on the achievements of nearly forty years of heritage protection through the *Convention* and addressed the challenges and opportunities presented by the success, growing complexity and diversity of the implementation of the *Convention*. This document provides a summary of the discussions at the meeting. The Chairperson wishes to thank the World Heritage Centre, the nine rapporteurs of the working groups convened during the workshop, as well as the Rapporteur of the World Heritage Committee, Mr. Antonio Ricarte, and the Vice-Chairman, Mr. Greg Terril, for their contributions to the drafting of this report.

B. Introduction

2. At the 32nd session (Quebec City, 2008), the World Heritage Committee decided, in view of the approaching 40th anniversary of the *World Heritage Convention* in 2012, as well as the inscription of the 1000th property to the World Heritage List, to convene a workshop to reflect on the future of the *Convention*. With a view to assist in the establishment of the agenda and preparation of materials for the workshop, World Heritage Committee members, States Parties and Advisory Bodies were invited to make written submissions. These papers, along with background material, were made available online prior to the workshop.
3. The participants of the Workshop to reflect on the Future of the *World Heritage Convention* which took place from 25 to 27 February 2009 at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, appreciated the financial support of the Australian Government and the governments of Brazil, Israel, Switzerland, the Netherlands and UNESCO for organizing this important event in collaboration with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.
4. The meeting was attended by 129 experts from 72 states parties (including 35 from developing countries), as well as by 10 representatives of IUCN, ICOMOS, and ICCROM, 29 representatives from non-governmental organizations, and 18 representatives from UNESCO.
5. The meeting provided a venue for rich debate, strengthened by the reflection of 44 written submissions from States Parties, Advisory Bodies, UNESCO and non-governmental and International organizations. On the basis of these written submissions, the agenda for the workshop addressed three key themes:
 - a. Values, messages and image of the *Convention*
 - b. Conservation and sustainable development
 - c. The World Heritage system

Keynote addresses were presented by a variety of experts, and the workshop utilized a mix of plenary and small working group formats. Keynote addresses as well as the reports of the concurrent working groups are available online at:

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/futureoftheconvention/>. The workshop reflected on several issues, which are summarized below.

C. Summary of key issues of reflection at the workshop

6. The workshop noted that in 1972, the negotiators of the *Convention* could not have envisaged the extent of its success. The markers of this success are well-known and include its longevity, its near-universal ratification and popularity. However, participants considered that the *Convention* faces growing challenges in view of the weight of its own success and is needing updating of its methods and concepts.
7. The emerging threats and challenges to the ongoing effectiveness and viability of the *Convention* are not new, however. The issues resulting from the growing complexity and diversity of the implementation of the *Convention* have been around for a while. They have been discussed and addressed by the Committee and expert taskforces in a variety of fora over the years. Participants reinforced the need to build on the past 37 years of work and noted that the tools to address these challenges are at hand.
8. Participants observed that the threats facing the *Convention* are opportunities for advancement. They noted that the *Convention* has at its roots an open-ended and evolutionary impulse, as the concept of OUV is not time-bound but reflects changing social values. The *Convention* is therefore truly visionary in its dynamism and vitality. Key to our success in ensuring that the *Convention* continues to protect and conserve the world's properties of outstanding universal value for the next forty years and beyond will be the participation of all with an interest in its implementation. This implies that new frameworks to achieve our goals for the future need to be transparent and that all players need to be involved in their development and commit to their implementation.
9. Participants recognized that their objectives for the future of the *Convention* are ambitious and will require a multi-year process to address. To that end, it was noted that over the next 12 months, the reflection on the Future of the *World Heritage Convention* should be opened for debate by all States Parties during the 33rd session of the World Heritage Committee (Seville, June 2009) and at the 17th General Assembly of States Parties. It was stated by many participants that this reflection meeting should be the first meeting in a long series of events leading to a 40th Anniversary in 2012. The General Assembly should discuss this matter and decide on a forward action plan in this regard.
10. The workshop discussed three key themes:
 - a. Values, messages and image of the *Convention*
 - b. Conservation and sustainable development
 - c. The World Heritage system

However, participants noted that all three themes were interconnected. Although there was no attempt made to reach agreed conclusions, the nine rapporteurs chosen to convey the issues raised in the parallel sessions provided concise and useful reports which are available online.

11. The debates during the meeting underlined that the key to ensuring the ongoing success and viability of the *Convention* is strengthening its credibility. It was recognized that credibility is the result of the rigorous, transparent and defensible application of outstanding universal value. Credibility is fostered by addressing the five key challenges currently facing the implementation of the *Convention*, as identified by participants:

- a. *Credibility*: credibility, as defined in the 5 strategic objectives, refers only to the World Heritage List as a representative and geographically balanced testimony of cultural and natural properties. Nevertheless, the concept of credibility was broadened by many participants to include the credibility of the *World Heritage Convention*, relying on the conservation of properties and on the communities' appreciation of and support for their own site, as well as the credibility of the World Heritage Committee, relying on its expertise and the consistency of its decisions;
- b. *Imbalances within the World Heritage List*: Participants noted the imperative of ensuring that the World Heritage List remains an inventory of properties of outstanding universal value. They noted that the universal is represented by diverse cultural units and that, despite past efforts to rebalance the List, gaps remain. *The following are some broadly shared views to improve the management of the World Heritage List*:
 - Development of strategies to slow the rate of inscriptions of well-represented themes and categories of heritage;
 - Re-examination and revision of the Global Strategy to focus on under-represented themes, rather than regions;
 - Review of existing Tentative Lists and coordination for the preparation of new ones in order to foster the strategic management/development of nominations;
 - Cooperation between well represented and non/under-represented States parties for the preparation of new nominations.*
- c. *Public perception and maximization of the brand value of World Heritage*: Participants noted that World Heritage sites were priceless, but that the value added to these sites from World Heritage inscription was sub-optimal. The keynote speaker from Brand Finance – a multinational firm specializing in evaluating the worth of global brands – rated the World Heritage brand as average at best and worth only US\$ 500m annually. Participants felt that the economic and other values of the *Convention* could be readily increased by:
 - Developing a pathway for the *Convention* to focus on its public image and build external awareness of World Heritage objectives and work
 - Increase the sharing of good practices, not only through expert meetings but also at the Committee and the General Assembly, for instance by instituting awards to identify best practices in different areas of common interest (e.g. conservation initiatives involving sustainable tourism at World Heritage sites; training and capacity building for conservation and conservation of biological diversity)*
- d. *Current focus on inscription to the detriment of conservation*: Conserving sites of outstanding universal value is the image and core of World Heritage work. Participants noted that poor conservation and monitoring devalues the World Heritage brand. Participants observed that the current monitoring system is under increased stress, ineffective and time- and resource- intensive. Particular concerns were raised with regard to the List of World Heritage in

Danger which, they assessed, has failed as a tool of conservation or, at least, is not understood as it was initially intended (i.e. a tool to mobilize international assistance). Participants argued strongly that World Heritage sites should play a stewardship role as sites of best practice knowledge transfer and community development for other heritage sites. They noted that World Heritage benefits were not always evident to local communities and do not always contribute to poverty alleviation due to inadequate public engagement. While participants were enthusiastic about sustainable development, of which conservation is a key element, they noted that the role of the *Convention* in relation to sustainable development (a concept introduced by the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992)) is not clear yet and needs to be further developed. Some possible areas which were suggested for further work include:

- Investigation of more effective management of conservation processes, including improved monitoring and corrective measures for the List of World Heritage in Danger
- Explore the possibilities of pilot projects on the relation between conservation and sustainable development as a way to reinforce conservation activities and the role of management plans, while at the same time strengthening participation of local communities*
- Capacity building/skills transfer through twinning, networks of World Heritage sites with some common features, sharing experiences on management planning, identifying best practices, exchanging personnel and holding meetings of their experts ;*
- Guidance on conservation indicators, impact studies, acceptable change from threats such as mining, tourism, infrastructure development, and human and natural disasters;*
- Adequate resources to develop Statements of Outstanding Universal Value for all properties as a matter of urgency;
- Wider distribution of the *Operational Guidelines* (not just online) to the concerned stakeholders to increase transparency and consistency of conservation requirements under the *Convention*.

- e. *Governance structures which are not participatory and are overloaded:* Participants acknowledged that the World Heritage system comprises many different stakeholders such as scientific and training institutions and universities, site Managers, local and national communities, Indigenous and traditional communities, local Governments and other public authorities, site visitors, private sector etc. They also noted that the World Heritage system, narrowly defined as the relationship between the World Heritage Committee, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies (IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM) was at a critical point. The breakdown in the effective functioning of the relationships between these bodies would negatively impact on the ongoing credibility of the *Convention*. Participants noted that the lack of time available within Committee meetings to meaningfully address substantive issues disadvantaged States Parties, Committee members, Advisory Bodies and observers and needed to be resolved as a matter of urgency. Participants stressed the importance of improving the definition of the respective roles of different players and methods of work. Several participants identified the need to strengthen the focus of the World Heritage Centre on its role as the secretariat of the *Convention*. Among possible ways of improving the functioning of the *Convention*, it was mentioned:

- Further investigation of the recommendations of the Audit Report of the World Heritage Centre, which would enable the Committee and the General Assembly to prioritize tasks, personnel needs and fund-raising possibilities in order to strengthen its role as the Secretariat of the *Convention*;
 - Investigating means to increase participation in the implementation of *Convention* other than through the electoral system (which is being addressed through the group being led by Ambassador Kondo (Japan)), including but not limited to increasing the strategic/policy setting role of the General Assembly of States Parties;
 - Investigating means to improve the quality of decision making within the Committee, including but not limited to prioritization of agenda items, time management strategies, increasing meeting frequency or duration, alternating meetings on state of conservation and inscriptions, introducing a sub-committee structure and re-examining state of conservation reporting mechanisms;
 - Increasing the transparency of Committee decisions through the development of clear criteria on inscriptions, referrals/deferrals and States Parties right of reply to Advisory Body recommendations;
 - Re-examining and suggesting improvements to the calendar of activities and deadlines for the implementation of the *Convention*;
 - Investigating secret ballots as a means to reduce overt politicization of decision-making.
- f. *Financing the implementation of the Convention*: participants were concerned by the increased demand on limited financial resources. They expressed particular concern that the ‘flagship’ of UNESCO was significantly under-resourced by the Organization. They noted that financial concerns impacted negatively on staffing levels within the secretariat and on the level of service available from the Advisory Bodies. They noted that an informal working group on finances was established at the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee (Quebec City, 2008). Some possible ways considered by the Participants include:
- Explore the possibilities opened by new Category 2 regional centres and by new regional funds, in particular training and capacity building activities which could be reinforced through the new centres in cooperation with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;*
 - Tasking the informal working group on finance of the Committee to investigate methods to:
 - i. Link Committee decisions to the budget;
 - ii. Prioritize activities and the allocation of resources, including through the development of a business plan/strategy;
 - iii. Increase financial support for the objectives of the *Convention*, including but not limited to voluntary State Party contributions, fund raising, partnerships, regional Centres and regional funds, bilateral and multilateral assistance and increased UNESCO support from the Regular Budget.

D. Next steps

12. The Chairperson suggests that issues marked with an asterisk could be considered for implementation, on an experimental basis, through pilot projects involving two or more States Parties, through some of their World Heritage sites.

13. The workshop called for a working group of States Parties be convened at the 33rd session of the World Heritage Committee (Seville, 2009) to continue reflection and discussion on the above issues with a view to identifying short and medium term possible actions to be taken by the Committee as well as strategic issues for consideration by the 17th and 18th General Assembly of States Parties.

II. Draft Decision

Draft Decision 33 COM 14A

The World Heritage Committee,

1. ***Having examined Document WHC-08/32.COM/14A,***
2. ***Recalling Decision 32 COM 10 adopted at its 32nd session (Quebec City, 2008) and thanking UNESCO and the States Parties of Australia, Brazil, Israel, Switzerland and the Netherlands for jointly hosting the Workshop to reflect on the Future of the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, 25-27 February 2009) in cooperation with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre,***
3. ***Welcomes the report provided by the Chairperson on the workshop which reflects on a wide range of issues relevant to meeting the current and future challenges and opportunities facing the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and further notes the reports and written submissions available on the website;***
4. ***Decides to establish an open-ended working group at the 33rd session to continue the reflection on the various issues identified and to propose draft decisions for adoption by the Committee and for discussion at the General Assembly;***
5. ***Requests the informal Working Group on finance to consider the issues raised in paragraph 11.f of the report.***