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# World Heritage

# 33 COM

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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**

**Thirty-third session**

**Seville, Spain**  
**22 – 30 June 2009**

**Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda: Examination of the State of Conservation**

**7.1 Progress report on the preparation of a UNESCO Recommendation on  
the Conservation of the Historic Urban Landscape**

## **SUMMARY**

This document has been prepared to inform the World Heritage Committee on the preparation of a UNESCO Recommendation on the Conservation of the Historic Urban Landscape, following Decision **181 EX/29** adopted on this issue by the Executive Board of UNESCO at its 181st session (April 2009) and in view of the forthcoming discussion on this matter by the General Conference at its 35th session (October 2009). It also includes a proposal related to the inclusion of the concept of the Historic Urban Landscape in the relevant sections of the *Operational Guidelines*.

**Draft Decision: 33 COM 7.1, see Point V**

## I. Introduction

1. After the discussions on the concept of Historic Urban Landscape held at the World Heritage Committee sessions to debate the impact of contemporary development inside or adjacent to World Heritage designated cities, and the relevant decisions adopted on the need to prepare a new UNESCO Recommendation on the conservation of the Historic Urban Landscape, the Executive Board at its 179th session requested the Secretariat to prepare a “full preliminary study of the technical and legal aspects of this issue” (Decision **179 EX/25**).
2. The World Heritage Committee, moreover, discussed at its 32nd session (Quebec City, 2008) this issue with special relevance to the need for the Committee to be provided with guidelines and tools on the management of historic urban World Heritage properties (Decision **32 COM 7.2**).

## II. Proposed new Recommendation

3. The Executive Board at its 181st session (April 2009) discussed a preliminary study on the technical and legal aspects relating to the desirability of a standard-setting instrument on the conservation of the historic urban landscape (*Document* 181 EX/29)<sup>1</sup>.
4. The study comprised the technical and legal aspects of the advisability of regulating internationally the conservation of the Historic Urban Landscape, through a new standard-setting instrument in the form of a Recommendation on the Conservation of the Historic Urban Landscape.
5. The study reviewed the existing UNESCO legal framework, composed by the four Recommendations covering the issue of urban conservation<sup>2</sup>. The study recalled that while such framework provided general principles and proposed policies to meet identified threats to the various components of historic urban areas, historic cities have over time become subject to new threats that were not present when the existing Recommendations were adopted.
6. In particular, it proposed a critical review of the standards and guidelines set three decades ago and proposed to formalize into a new Recommendation the new

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<sup>1</sup> The *preliminary study on the technical and legal aspects relating to the desirability of a standard-setting instrument on the Conservation of the Historic Urban Landscape (Document* EX 181/29) is available at the following web address:

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001811/181132e.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> These are: the *Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding of the Beauty and Character of Landscapes and Sites*, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO the 12 December 1962; the *Recommendation concerning the Preservation of Cultural Property Endangered by Public or Private Works*, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO the 20 November 1968; the *Recommendation concerning the protection, at national level, of the Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)*, adopted by the General Conference the 16 November 1972; and the *Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas*, adopted by the General Conference the 26 November 1976.

approaches and new dynamics in architecture and urban development, in order to meet the new challenges to urban heritage conservation and management, such as: growing pressure of urbanization, tensions between globalisation and local development, incompatible new development in historic urban landscapes, unsustainable tourism, and environmental degradation including climate change.

7. It was suggested to structure the proposed Recommendation along the following sections:
  - i. a **Preamble**, indicating the scope of the new text, the existing and the emerging challenges;
  - ii. the **Definitions** of the concept of Historic Urban Landscape and the of the values associated to it;
  - iii. the main **Challenges** for the conservation of the Historic Urban Landscape and their impact on its heritage values: the growing pressure of urbanization, the tensions between globalization and local development, the incompatible new development, the impact of unsustainable tourism and the environmental degradation including climate change;
  - iv. The **Policies** at local, national and international levels, that can support the Member States and local communities in conserving the Historic Urban Landscape;
  - v. The Legal, Planning and Technical **Tools** that can be used in the identification, listing and conservation of the values embedded in the Historic Urban Landscape;
  - vi. The **Capacity building, Research and Information** activities through which Member States can enhance their capacities for better conserving the Historic Urban Landscape; and
  - vii. The modalities to enhance **International Cooperation** so as to involve the communities and their role in the conservation of the values associated to the Historic Urban Landscape.
8. The Executive Board acknowledged the fact that the four existing Recommendations do not fully reflect the changes that modified the discipline and practice of urban heritage conservation over the past thirty years and unanimously supported the initiative of preparing a new instrument in the form of a Recommendation, so as to provide general principles that would better address the contemporary socio-economic transformations of historic cities and their broad setting, in respect of their authenticity and integrity as well as their social and cultural values.
9. The Executive Board also underlined the importance of the role of communities in the life of historic cities and highlighted the need to elaborate on integrated and innovative understanding of the intangible values associated to historic urban landscape.
10. It finally decided to include the discussion of the preparation of a Recommendation on the Conservation of the Historic Urban Landscape on the provisional agenda of

the 35th session of the General Conference (October 2009) and recommended that the General Conference decide to take action aimed at drawing up a new Recommendation on the conservation of the Historic Urban Landscape (Decision **EX 181/29**).

### **III. Process**

11. In accordance with article 5 of the *Rules of Procedure concerning recommendations to Member States and international conventions covered by the terms of Article IV, paragraph 4, of the Constitution*, the Director-General will communicate to Member States a copy of the preliminary study that was presented to the Executive Board together with its observations and decisions thereon. This will happen 70 days before the opening of the 35th session of the General Conference, that is by mid-July 2009.
12. Should the General Conference decide that the question must be regulated by a recommendation, a report, accompanied by a draft recommendation, could be submitted to the General Conference at its 36th session in the autumn of 2011.

### **IV. Inclusion of the concept of Historic Urban Landscape in the *Operational Guidelines***

13. In parallel to the preparation of a Recommendation on the Conservation of the Historic Urban Landscape, as recommended by the Executive Board at its 181st session and as previously recommended by the World Heritage Committee at its 29th session (Durban, 2005), the concept of Historic Urban Landscape shall be also included in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*. This would allow the World Heritage Committee to be better provided with the relevant tools so as to fully address some of the challenges that affect historic cities inscribed on the World Heritage List.
14. Furthermore, an updating of the *Operational Guidelines* in this respect would be coherent with the concept itself of Historic Urban Landscape, whose process of definition had began in the framework of the World Heritage Committee and its discussions on the impact of contemporary development inside or adjacent to World Heritage designated cities.
15. The inclusion of the concept of Historic Urban Landscape in the text of the *Operational Guidelines* would moreover fulfill one of the main recommendations of the three international workshops and the Expert meetings that were held in UNESCO Headquarters from June 2006 to November 2008 that provided the theoretic framework for the preparation of the above mentioned preliminary study on the preparation of the new Recommendation<sup>3</sup>.
16. The inclusion of the concept of Historic Urban Landscape in the relevant sections of the *Operational Guidelines* would also be the occasion for a broader reflection on its links with cultural landscapes, thus following the recommendations of several other

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<sup>3</sup> The main outcomes and full reports of these meetings are available at the following web address:  
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/cities>

workshops and roundtables of experts, such as the International Expert Workshop on Integrity and Authenticity of World Heritage Cultural Landscapes, that was held in Aranjuez (Spain) in December 2007, and the two Montreal Roundtables held in 2006 and 2008<sup>4</sup>.

17. It would, moreover, provide the World Heritage Committee with the new Orientation Guidelines on management of historic urban World Heritage properties including impact assessment tools, as requested by Decision **32 COM 7.2** adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 32nd session (Quebec City, 2008).
18. An expert meeting may therefore be convened in the year 2009 with the mandate to prepare a draft text for inclusion of the concept of Historic Urban Landscape in the relevant sections of the *Operational Guidelines*, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session in 2010.

## V. Draft Decision

### **Draft Decision: 33 COM 7.1**

*The World Heritage Committee*

1. *Having examined Document WHC-09/33.COM/7.1,*
2. *Recalling Decision **32 COM 7.2**, adopted at its 32nd session (Quebec City, 2008),*
3. *Taking note with satisfaction of Decision 181 EX/29 adopted by the Executive Board at its 181st session (April 2009), on the preliminary study on the technical and legal aspects relating to the desirability of a standard-setting instrument on the Conservation of the Historic Urban Landscape,*
4. *Encourages the General Conference to take action at its 35th session (October 2009) aimed at drawing up a new standard-setting instrument in the form of a Recommendation on the Conservation of the Historic Urban Landscape;*
5. *Requests the Director of the World Heritage Centre to report on this matter at its 34th session in 2010;*
6. *Welcomes the proposal to include the concept of Historic Urban Landscape in the text of the Operational Guidelines;*
7. *Also requests the Director of the World Heritage Centre to seek extra-budgetary funds with the aim to convene an Expert Meeting with the mandate to discuss in cooperation with the Advisory Bodies the inclusion of the concept of Historic Urban*

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<sup>4</sup> The main outcomes and recommendations of the 2007 International Expert Workshop in Aranjuez are available at the following web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/450> The main outcomes and proceedings of the Round Table of the Canada Chair in Built Heritage (University of Montreal) are available at the following web addresses <http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/events/documents/event-450-1.pdf> and [http://www.patrimoinebati.umontreal.ca/pdf/PV\\_Table\\_ronde\\_2008.pdf](http://www.patrimoinebati.umontreal.ca/pdf/PV_Table_ronde_2008.pdf)

*Landscape in the relevant sections of the Operational Guidelines, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 34th session in 2010.*