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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-fourth session

Brasilia, Brazil  
25 July – 3 August 2010

**Item 7.3 of the Provisional Agenda: Progress report on the implementation  
of the Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction in World Heritage properties**

## SUMMARY

As requested by the Committee through Decision **33 COM 7C** (Seville, 2009), this document summarises the progress made in the implementation of the *Strategy for Reducing Risks from Disasters at World Heritage Properties*, which the Committee had adopted in 2007. It also contains information on other related activities carried out by the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies since July 2007. Annex I contains a series of recommendations developed at a Workshop held in Acre (Israel) in November 2009.

**Draft Decision: 34 COM 7.3**, see Point IV

## **I. BACKGROUND**

At its 31st Session (Christchurch, 2007), the World Heritage Committee had adopted a “Strategy for Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties” (Decision **31 COM 7.2**), hereinafter “the Strategy”, with a prioritized list of actions (Document *WHC.07/31.COM/7.2*). The elaboration of the Strategy had been requested by the Committee at its 28th Session (Suzhou, 2006) (Decision **28 COM 10.B**).

The Strategy is structured according to the five objectives of the Hyogo Framework for Action, the key policy document on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) at the UN level (accessible online from: <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/hfa/hfa.htm>). For each of the five objectives, which were adapted to the specific World Heritage context, two priority actions were identified<sup>1</sup> within the Strategy.

Two of these objectives are of a general nature (i.e. strengthening institutional support, at all levels, for DRR; and use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of disaster prevention at World Heritage properties). The remaining three objectives concern action at site level, notably to identify, assess and monitor disaster risks; reduce underlying risk factors; and strengthen disaster preparedness.

In its Decision **31 COM 7.2**, the Committee also encouraged States Parties, the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre to implement the Strategy and recommended that a risk management component be incorporated in the Management Plan for World Heritage properties.

At its 33rd Session (Seville, 2009), in the context of a reflection on general trends on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties, the World Heritage Committee requested the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to prepare a report on the progress made in the implementation of the Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction at World Heritage properties and submit it for the examination by the Committee at its 34th session in 2010 (Decision **33 COM 7C**).

## **II. DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE 31st SESSION (Christchurch, 2007)**

Disaster Risk Reduction is not a formally established “programme” within the *World Heritage Convention* and no budgetary allocation has been made by the Committee to support related activities. Moreover, no specific responsibilities were set by the Committee to implement the “priority actions” identified within the above-mentioned Strategy. Despite this, since the 31st Session of the World Heritage Committee, a number of initiatives have taken place in the field of DRR, mainly related to Objectives N.1 and N.2 of the above-mentioned Strategy (strengthening institutional support and building capacities). Key developments include the following:

### **1. First International Workshop on Disaster Risk Management at World Heritage Properties, Olympia (Greece), October 2008**

An International Workshop on Disaster Risk Management at World Heritage Properties was held at Olympia (Greece) in October 2008, following the tragic fire that affected the area in the summer of 2007. The Workshop drew from a number of

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<sup>1</sup> The Strategy is accessible online from: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/31COM/documents/>

case studies and resulted in a document suggesting a series of activities that could be carried out by a variety of stakeholders, but principally by the authorities in charge of World Heritage properties, ideally in cooperation with other World Heritage sites and other partners, such as the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and ICOM. For this reason, the document was called the “*Strengthening Disaster Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties: The Olympia Protocol for International Cooperation*”<sup>2</sup>. While providing a methodological framework for the concrete implementation of the 2007 *Strategy*, the Olympia Protocol is for the time being more a list of actions that should ideally be implemented, and not yet an operative plan of action with clearly identified responsible stakeholders, resources allocated and a timeframe.

## **2. Second International Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction to Cultural Heritage, Acre (Israel), 14-17 November 2009**

A second International Workshop on “Disaster Risk Reduction to Cultural Heritage” was held at Acre, Israel, from 14 to 17 November 2009, and organised jointly by the Israel National Commission for UNESCO, the Israel Antiquities Authority and the World Heritage Centre, gathering experts and managers of World Heritage cultural properties from all regions, as well as representatives of ICOMOS, ICCROM and ICOM. This Workshop aimed to further develop the initiative on Disaster Risk Reduction and in particular to identify concrete opportunities for cooperation among World Heritage properties. It also aimed to make specific recommendations to be presented to the World Heritage Committee at its 34th Session in July/August 2010 in Brasilia. These are enclosed herewith in Annex I, and in part reflected in the Draft Decision contained in Section IV of the present Document.

The Acre Workshop built on the results of the Olympia meeting of 2008 and other strategic policy documents on subjects related to DRR, notably the *Policy Document on the Impact of Climate Change on World Heritage Properties*<sup>3</sup> adopted by the General Assembly of the States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* in 2007. With regard to Climate Change, the Acre Workshop clarified that, whereas not all the phenomena associated to it are relevant to DRR, some extreme weather events responsible for disasters appear to be linked to global warming as flash storms and flooding. Moreover, climate change impacts, such as rising water levels and moisture, constitute underlying risk factors that, in the presence of some primary hazards, may cause a disaster to happen or aggravate their consequences.

Following the Acre Workshop, representatives from several World Heritage properties expressed their interest in joining pilot initiatives to develop disaster risk reduction strategies at their sites, possibly through appropriate twinning arrangements and with support under the World Heritage Fund. The feasibility of these pilot projects – and the possible establishment of twinning agreements between sites - is currently being explored.

## **3. Survey on DRR**

With a view to begin establishing a baseline against which to measure progress, the World Heritage Centre disseminated (January 2010) to all States Parties a questionnaire on DRR. At the time of drafting of this report (20 March 2010), 23 States Parties (out of 186) had replied. To the first question, requesting whether

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<sup>2</sup> The Olympia Protocol is accessible from: <http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/events/documents/event-526-5.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> The Policy Document on Climate Change and World Heritage is accessible from: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/393>

management plans or systems of their World Heritage properties integrated a specific component on disaster risk reduction, around 40% of the States Parties replied negatively. This reply needs to be weighed against the number of World Heritage properties located within each of the respondent States Parties (some States Parties, moreover, had different policies in place at each of their World Heritage properties). To the second question, on whether or not general disaster risk reduction policies and procedures in their country integrated heritage concerns, only 31% of the States Parties said that they did not. Of course, a meaningful assessment of the situation will be only possible once more States Parties reply. It is possible, for example, that States Parties that replied to the questionnaire might be those where awareness of DRR is stronger. In other words, the sample obtained so far may not necessarily be representative of the situation in the totality of the States Parties. The World Heritage Centre, in the meantime, is conducting a review of World Heritage site management plans submitted by States Parties to identify aspects related to disaster risks as a basis to develop possible new initiatives.

#### **4. Resource Manual on DRR**

As requested by the Committee, a Resource Manual on 'Managing Disaster Risks for World Heritage' was prepared, in English and French, under the coordination of ICCROM and with inputs from the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and IUCN (accessible online from: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/resourcemanuals/> ). Rather than presenting specific techniques for addressing various types of hazards, this Manual is meant to provide site managers and heritage administrators with a strong methodological framework to identify, assess and reduce risks from disasters. Tested at some World Heritage properties, the Manual integrates some innovative approaches such as the consideration of the positive contribution that heritage can make to reducing disaster risks in general and the potential of using traditional knowledge in DRR strategies<sup>4</sup>.

#### **5. Establishment of web page on DRR**

The World Heritage Centre developed a web-page on the topic of DRR, containing information on the policies set by the Committee (e.g. the Strategy) and on all the activities carried out or under way. Links to the key documents are provided. This web-page is accessible from: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/disaster-risk-reduction/> .

#### **6. UNESCO Chair at the Ritsumeikan University of Kyoto**

A UNESCO Chair on Cultural Heritage and Risk Management was established in 2006 at the Ritsumeikan University, Research Centre for Disaster Mitigation of Urban Cultural Heritage, in Japan. In the framework of a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the World Heritage Centre and Rits-DMUCH, regular training courses on managing disaster risks for World cultural Heritage properties have been organised since 2007. These have benefited numerous managers of World Heritage properties from all regions, notably from Asia, and have recently been expanded to include field work (e.g. in Kathmandu). The World Heritage Centre and ICCROM have contributed to these courses by advising on their structure and contents and more directly through lectures and tutoring. The next course will take place between 13 and 26 September 2010 in Kyoto (Japan). More information on the structure and contents of these courses is accessible from: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/575> .

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<sup>4</sup> See also related Document on Global Training Strategy WHC-10/34.COM/9C

## **7. Capacity-Building Workshop on Assessment of Vulnerability of Cultural and Natural World Heritage Properties to Disasters and Climate Change (Beijing, 6-12 December 2009)**

A regional capacity-building Workshop on “Assessment of Vulnerability of Cultural and Natural World Heritage Properties to Disasters and Climate Change” was held at the Peking University of China from 6 to 12 December 2009, organised jointly by the World Heritage Centre, ICCROM and the World Heritage Training and Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific (WHITR-AP).

The Workshop, funded through the World Heritage Fund, the Regular Programme of UNESCO and WHITR-AP, targeted national officials and World Heritage site managers from 24 countries in the Asia and the Pacific Region, strengthening their understanding of the risks affecting their properties and of the possible methods to mitigate them. More importantly, the activity was intended as a pilot for the possible development of a regular training course on this topic that WHITR-AP would offer to heritage practitioners within the region, in cooperation with ICCROM and other institutions around the world, such as Rits-DMUCH.

Among the outcomes of the Beijing Workshop is a plan of action listing a series of follow up actions to strengthen the implementation of the Strategy in the Asia-Pacific region, and the “Beijing Appeal”<sup>5</sup>, a message addressed by the participants to the world leaders attending the United Nations Climate Change Conference at Copenhagen (COP15, 7-19 December 2009).

## **8. Proposed changes to the *Operational Guidelines* regarding Emergency Assistance**

As a result of the above initiatives, and drawing from concrete cases of requests of submitted by States Parties, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies embarked on a reflection on the current policies for granting emergency assistance under the World Heritage Fund. It was noted, in particular, that the current text in the *Operational Guidelines* contain some ambiguities notably on the possibility of obtaining this type of assistance after a disaster, if no demonstrable ‘imminent danger’ threatened a World Heritage property. Another point that was not entirely clear was whether emergency assistance could have been granted in cases where the imminent danger was related to human activities. For this reason, a proposal for a revised text of paragraph 241 of the *Operational Guidelines* will be prepared by the World Heritage Centre in close consultation with the Advisory Bodies.

In conclusion, the initiatives undertaken so far in the area of DRR appear to mainly contribute to the first two objectives of the Strategy adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2007. As regards the other three objectives of the Strategy, more focused on site-based activities, progress has been slower and much remains to be done. This is also what was highlighted during the Acre Workshop of November 2009, as reflected in many of its recommendations (see Annex).

## **III. LESSONS FROM HAITI AND OTHER DISASTERS**

In addition to the apocalyptic disaster of 12 January 2010 in Haiti, which caused some 230,000 casualties and immense human suffering among the population, a number of smaller but equally catastrophic events have taken place in the last few months, which affected World Heritage properties. These include earthquakes in

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<sup>5</sup> The Beijing Appeal is accessible online from: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/578>

Valparaiso (Chile); land-slides and floods in Machu Picchu (Peru) and Madeira (Portugal); structural collapse of part of a Mosque at Meknes (Morocco); fire at the Tombs of Buganda Kings in Kasubi (Uganda); a stampede at the Djingareyber Mosque of Timbuktu; etc.

While specific information on the impacts of some of these disasters on World Heritage may be found under Document *WHC-10/34.COM/7.B* (state of conservation of World Heritage properties), it is important here to emphasize some lessons of general nature that might be drawn from these tragic events.

The above events underlined, once more, the lack of preparedness against these disasters in some countries, including as regards the protection of World Heritage properties. This seems to be mostly associated with a lack of awareness, rather than with the availability of resources and technical know-how, both in the countries where the properties at risk are located as well as in the donor community. It appears, indeed, that it is much easier to mobilise political support and funding to address disaster risks *after* these have materialised through some major catastrophes (i.e. when it is often too late to prevent the worst impacts), rather than to intervene beforehand with an aim to reduce vulnerability and strengthen resilience.

Another important lesson drawn from the Haiti earthquake is the relatively good performance, in the face of the seismic event, of traditional buildings constructed in wood. These had been introduced in Haiti following another massive earthquake in the 18th century, but later abandoned and replaced by more 'modern' techniques as the memory of that tragic event faded among the population. This suggests, once more, that the built heritage often enshrines a precious knowledge which is not just interesting for historical and 'cultural' reasons, but relevant for addressing basic needs of present and future generations, including protection from disasters.

#### **IV. Draft Decision**

##### ***Draft Decision: 34 COM 7.3***

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Takes note, with satisfaction, of the progress made in the implementation of the Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties, since its adoption in 2007;*
2. *Welcomes the Resource Manual on 'Managing Disaster Risks for World Heritage' and the "The Olympia Protocol for International Cooperation: Strengthening Disaster Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties" as appropriate methodological tools for the implementation of the above-mentioned Strategy, and encourages States Parties to use them as a basis for developing cooperation among them and with other partners if necessary;*
3. *Also welcomes the proposed twinning arrangements among World Heritage properties to promote cooperation on Disaster Risk Reduction and develop pilot projects that could serve as best practices, and encourages States Parties to further develop similar mechanisms among them;*

4. *Endorses the actions proposed as a result of the Acre Workshop of November 2009 and requests the World Heritage Centre, Advisory Bodies and States Parties to implement them within the limits of their possibilities;*
5. *Further requests the World Heritage Centre to submit a report on the progress made in the implementation of the above-mentioned actions for examination by the Committee at its 36th Session in 2012.*

**Annex            Recommendations of the Second International Workshop on  
Disaster Risk Reduction to Cultural Heritage Acre (Israel), 14-17  
November 2009**

The Acre Workshop resulted in a document containing a list of proposed specific actions, aimed at further implementing the Strategy for Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties, adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2007. This 'Action Plan' is reproduced here below, structured according to the institution that would be responsible for implementation.

The World Heritage Centre, in consultation and close cooperation with the Advisory Bodies and other relevant organisations like ICOM, may:

- Develop a concise position paper on the linkages between heritage and disaster risk reduction, and present it to the UN-ISDR *Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction* in order to promote the integration of a concern for cultural and natural heritage as defined in the *World Heritage Convention* and other heritage categories such as movable properties, archives and documents, and intangible cultural heritage within global and national DRR policies;
- Seek extra-budgetary funds in order to organise – at the earliest possible time - an expert workshop with the Advisory Bodies, interested States Parties and other partners, aimed to develop specific proposals to revise the *Operational Guidelines* so as to mainstream DRR more explicitly into its provisions, including format for nominations, periodic reporting, reactive monitoring, evaluation procedures for International Assistance and nominations. The expert workshop should also explore opportunities for establishing synergies with other UNESCO Conventions, notably with regard to movable and intangible heritage and the protection of cultural heritage in the event of armed conflict;
- Develop, following the proposal contained in the Olympia Protocol, a feasibility study/proposal for the creation of a “World Heritage Disaster Risk Reduction Day”, aimed at raising awareness of the issue among the public and strengthen the preparedness of agencies in charge of World Heritage properties. A Draft of the feasibility study/proposal would be presented to the Committee for consideration at its 35th Session (July 2011), in view of the possible adoption of the proposal by the 18th General Assembly of the States Parties to the *1972 Convention* in the fall of 2011;
- Facilitate, together with the States Parties, the development of twinning arrangements among World Heritage properties where pilot projects could be implemented to develop disaster risk reduction strategies, based on the principles and methodology presented in the Resource Manual on “*How to Develop Disaster Risk Management Plans for World Heritage Properties*”.
- Propose that the next UNESCO Forum – Universities and Heritage prioritize the debate on DRR and coordinate the necessary activities.

The Advisory Bodies may:

- Ensure, in the framework of the evaluations of nominations for the inscription of properties on the World Heritage List, that a proper DRR component is integrated within their management plans or systems, developed based on the principles and methodology presented in the Resource Manual on “*How to*



*Develop Disaster Risk Management Plans for World Heritage Properties*" (ICOMOS and IUCN);

- Develop the methodology to implement the revised *Operational Guidelines* mainstreaming DDR as part of the nomination, evaluation and management of sites in the context of the World Heritage Convention (ICOMOS and IUCN).

If resources are made available, moreover, the Advisory Bodies, in cooperation with other relevant organisations like ICOM, may:

- Develop, together with the World Heritage Centre, best-practice materials on DRR based on the above-mentioned pilot projects carried out at World Heritage properties in the framework of twinning agreements, to be disseminated to a wider audience of professionals and administrators;
- Develop regional training courses on DRR based on the above-mentioned Resource Manual, including curricula and course materials, possibly to be organised in cooperation with World Heritage-related Category 2 Centres and University networks such as Forum UNESCO (ICCROM);
- Develop a template for short handbooks targeting Civil Defence departments to raise their awareness of cultural heritage issues in Disaster Risk Reduction, which may be translated and adapted by States Parties according to their contexts (ICCROM);
- Develop a Clearing House on Disaster Risk Reduction and World Heritage (ICCROM);
- Develop a template for documenting impacts of disasters on cultural and natural heritage and integrating such data in response operations and recovery planning.

The States Parties to the Convention may:

- Develop management plans and systems, which incorporate concern for disaster risk reduction;
- Establish twinning arrangements among World Heritage properties where pilot projects could be implemented to develop disaster risk reduction strategies, based on the principles and methodology presented in the Resource Manual on *Disaster Risk Management for World Heritage Properties*;
- Encourage and support greater research and DRR training and planning at Universities and institutions and prioritize national funding for these programmes.
- Integrate movable and intangible heritage, archives, museums and libraries included in or related to World Heritage properties in their DDR planning and seek specifically scientific assistance to specialised international and national organisations such as ICOMOS, IUCN, ICOM, ICA and IFLA.
- Develop, with support from the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, and if necessary with assistance under the WH Fund, 'debriefing' reports on World Heritage properties hit by a disaster, highlighting the lessons learnt, for dissemination among the WH community;