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NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Paris, UNESCO Headquarters
19- 21 November 2013

Item 11 of the Provisional Agenda: Summary and Follow-up of the Director General's meeting on "The World Heritage Convention: Thinking Ahead" (UNESCO HQs, 2-3 October 2012)

INF.11. Summary of the meeting "The World Heritage Convention: Thinking Ahead" between the Director-General of UNESCO, States Parties to the World Heritage Convention and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee (UNESCO HQs, 2-3 October 2012)

SUMMARY

This document contains a summary of the meeting "The World Heritage Convention: Thinking Ahead" between the Director-General of UNESCO, States Parties to the World Heritage Convention and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee which was held on 2nd and 3rd October 2012 in UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

This Document should be read in conjunction with Document WHC-13/19.GA/11.

Summary of the meeting “*The World Heritage Convention: Thinking Ahead*” between the Director-General of UNESCO, States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee

2nd and 3rd October 2012, UNESCO HQ, Paris

The Director-General of UNESCO convened a two-day brainstorming meeting titled "Thinking Ahead", on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the *World Heritage Convention*. The first day was devoted to consultations of the Director-General with the three Advisory Bodies - ICOMOS, IUCN, and ICCROM (including the President of ICOMOS and Director-General of IUCN) on the basis of the "non-papers" prepared by each of them. These papers were subsequently also shared with all the States Parties through the web-page specially created for the meeting (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/957> - Password: convention72). The issues highlighted in these papers and the results of the first day's discussions were presented at a joint meeting of the Advisory Bodies, the States Parties and the Secretariat on the second day.

All participants (States Parties and Advisory Bodies) expressed their gratitude and welcomed the initiative of the Director-General to facilitate dialogue, communication and transparency in all processes of the *Convention*. While 28 States Parties to the *Convention* submitted their written contributions prior to the meeting, some 40 countries expressed their views at the meeting. Some of those who could not send their written comments expressed their interest to do so later and requested that the web-page be kept open for such contribution to facilitate an ongoing dialogue.

The rich discussion that followed place is summarised in the following major conclusions:

1. Tentative Lists:

- The Advisory Bodies should be engaged with the States Parties in the very first step of the nomination process i.e. in the preparation and assessment of Tentative Lists, and their regional harmonisation. This would ensure that only those sites that have the potential to meet the criteria for outstanding universal value, and contribute to filling the gaps on the World Heritage List are added to national tentative lists.
- Tentative Lists that have been developed through such a rigorous screening process could be considered for some form of recognition, perhaps through a re-branding of the term "Tentative List" into "*national inventory of significant/potential World Heritage sites*" or as the "*World Heritage candidate list*".

2. Nominations:

- The support provided under the "upstream process" should be further strengthened, and also formalised within the *Operational Guidelines* to make it uniformly applicable to all needy countries.
- Provide focussed capacity building for preparing nominations, including through the organisation of the nominations development course as implemented in the Africa region, and by involving national and regional institutions and UNESCO

Category 2 Centres.

- As foreseen in the “upstream process”, a phased approach to nominations should be adopted that would comprise a first stage of assistance to establish the potential of the site to meet the criteria for outstanding universal value, followed by the next stages of support in the elaboration of the nomination dossier, and to ensure that the required conditions of integrity, authenticity and management requirements are fulfilled.
- A first-stage rigorous and critical national-level feasibility study process is necessary before it is decided to take nominations forward.
- There is need to reconsider the time-lines for submission and evaluation of nominations and their consideration by the World Heritage Committee, which are currently too short to allow adequate dialogue, including also the possibility of slowing down the submission of nominations.
- An effective dialogue should be maintained between the Advisory Bodies and relevant authorities and experts in the States Parties during the entire process of evaluation of nominations.
- Better communication, dialogue and transparency between the Advisory Bodies, the Secretariat and the States Parties can help resolve issues before the results of evaluation of nominations are presented to the World Heritage Committee.

3. Conservation of properties:

- The long-term preservation and state of conservation of sites should be given primacy in the work under the *Convention*, supported by a proactive approach to monitoring World Heritage Sites by the Advisory Bodies, as recommended by the recent Evaluation of the Global Strategy.
- All parties should promote a more positive use of the monitoring processes of the Convention to lead to solutions to conservation issues. The List of World Heritage in Danger (LWHD) in particular should be used to encourage international cooperation for ensuring the early removal of properties from this list.
- Consideration should be given to separating within the LWHD treatment of properties that are faced by developmental threats and neglect of management, where States Parties are more able to act quickly, and those suffering from natural and man-made disasters, including wars and conflicts, where long-term support is required.
- In the interest of transparency, Advisory Bodies and the Secretariat should be encouraged to consult with the State Party concerned, prior to proposing a property on the LWHD, in order to seek consensus and identify the actions required that will be supported by including a property on the LWHD.
- The Advisory Bodies should be enabled to provide direct technical support to States Parties for assessing and mitigating the impact of developmental projects on properties at the earliest possible opportunity, in order to reconcile conservation with development and to find practical solutions to pressing social and economic development issues while safeguarding the OUV of the property.
- There is a need to make use of the *Convention* as an engine for promoting sustainable development, focussing on local communities and incorporating poverty reduction aspects into management programmes.
- Transparency, dialogue and consultation in Convention processes by all parties is also a critical part of better enabling communities to participate as partners in the Convention, and secure benefits associated with listing of Sites on the World Heritage List.
- Open dialogue, transparency and ongoing communication between the Advisory

Bodies, the Secretariat and the States Parties are essential in all processes relating to monitoring the state of conservation of World Heritage properties.

4. **Capacity building:**

- There is need to focus capacity building activities especially on institutional strengthening at the national level in States Parties (including in relation to legal systems for protecting heritage) while also continuing to target efforts on building the capacity of national professionals and youth. There is need to develop targeted national capacity building strategies for this purpose.
- Make better use of national and regional training institutions and expertise, as well as UNESCO Category 2 Centres and relevant UNESCO Chairs in all capacity building activities.
- More practical guidance should be provided on all aspects of World Heritage conservation through training, resource manuals and sharing of best practice, in a wide range of languages and supported by appropriate training materials.
- A thesaurus of technical terms used in the implementation of the *Convention* should also be developed.
- New Committee members should be given comprehensive induction training, soon after their election, and not just through the half-day orientations session that is organised a day before the World Heritage Committee session.

5. **Roles of Advisory Bodies and Secretariat:**

- Further clarify the distinct roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Bodies (expertise, independent technical and analytical functions) and the Secretariat (regulatory and technical functions).
- The Secretariat should play a much stronger role in consistently reminding the World Heritage Committee of the *Operational Guidelines*, Rules of Procedure and its own past decisions.
- The Secretariat should serve as a facilitator between the States Parties and Advisory Bodies.
- The Advisory Bodies and Secretariat should function in a fully transparent manner, and should communicate clearly both current practices and scope for improvements.
- The Advisory Bodies should make use of national and regional expertise, and ensure balanced geographical representation in their staff and experts chosen. The Advisory Bodies have already begun a series of capacity building activities towards this end.
- Resources are required to enable the Advisory Bodies and Secretariat need to respond with greater promptness to the requests of States Parties, especially in relation to issues which require resolution between the sessions of the World Heritage Committee.

6. **Role of the Committee and governance:**

- The growing discrepancy between expert advice and decisions of the World Heritage Committee is negatively impacting on the credibility of the *Convention*.
- The World Heritage Committee should follow the *Operational Guidelines* and the rules that it has itself established. In case of any departure from them, the

- Committee must record the reasons for doing so.
- Different geographical regions should be equitably represented on the World Heritage Committee.
 - There is need to significantly enhance the role of local communities, indigenous peoples and the civil society in all processes of the *Convention*.

7. Resource constraints:

- Many of the points above related to tentative lists, upstream processes, technical advice on development projects, and capacity building have important resource implications. The necessary financial resources will need to be found in order to support these activities if they are to be fully implemented.
- States Parties must contribute adequate funds on a voluntary basis for effective implementation of the *Convention*.
- Create an innovative funding mechanism for financing the work of the *Convention* and ensuring sustainability of the World Heritage Fund.
- In view of resource constraints, the World Heritage Committee must prioritise and adopt an incremental approach to implementing priorities, and many of the requested actions, such as the introduction of the upstream process, will not be possible given current levels of resourcing.
- The Committee should consider the possibility of reviewing Article 16 of the *Convention* to enhance the limit of assessed and voluntary contributions of the States Parties.

Road map for follow-up:

In closing, the Director-General welcomed the open and frank dialogue on critical issues at the eve of the 40th anniversary of the *World Heritage Convention* in Kyoto, November 2012. She proposed to bring these issues forward to the 37th session of the World Heritage Committee (June 2013) and to the General Assembly of States Parties (November 2013). She warmly thanked the Advisory Bodies for the in-depth reflection in their non-papers and all States Parties for their contributions which offer concrete and practical suggestions for the future of this important instrument.

It was agreed that the report of the UNESCO External Auditor on the Evaluation of the Global Strategy and the PACT Initiative and the implementation plan prepared for its recommendations provides a very good framework and road-map to follow-up on the various suggestions that were made at the meeting. This is further complemented by the implementation plan prepared to follow-up on the Global Strategy and Action Plan, which was adopted by the General Assembly of States Parties. It was also agreed to harmonise the two implementation plans for better efficiency and to avoid duplication of effort. States Parties may also consider the preparation of a corresponding National Strategy and Action Plan for implementation of the *Convention* within their countries.