World Heritage

19 GA

**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

**NINETHEENTH 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**

<u>**Item 8 of the Provisional Agenda**</u>: **Determination of the amount of the contributions to the World Heritage Fund in accordance with the provisions of Article 16 of the *World Heritage Convention***

INF.8A: Audit of the Working Methods of Cultural Conventions

SUMMARY

This document contains the Audit of the Working Methods of Cultural Conventions prepared by the Internal Oversight Service of UNESCO.

This document should be read in conjunction with **Document WHC-13/19.GA/8.**

Audit of the Working Methods of Cultural Conventions

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Auditors:
Hir Purkait
Slavka Douet
Nicola Tabacchi

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Results

lOS conducted an audit of the working methods of the six conventions in the field of culture to assess the adequacy and efficiency of the working methods of UNESCO's standard-setting work in the Culture Sector. The audit found that the current situation is unsustainable as support from the regular programme budget decreases and the workload of the convention secretariats increases. There is thus a need to review the amount of secretariat work that can be executed and cost-saving measures should be considered. Potential measures include reducing the frequency, duration and agenda of the meetings of governing bodies, synchronizing the meetings of the general assemblies, temporarily suspending fresh nominations, and using more sponsors for meeting expenses, including for translation and interpretation. The audit also found that there is an opportunity for a common platform across the culture conventions for support services given the synergies and nature of functions. Finally, alternative funding structures, such as those employed by other United Nations multilateral environment agencies, should be considered.

Background

1. Promoting Standard-setting instruments is one of the five established functions of UNESCO. In the field of culture, UNESCO promotes cultural Conventions and Protocols as detailed below.

 2005 Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions

 2003 Convention on Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

 2001 Convention on Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage

 1972 Convention Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

 1970 Convention on Fighting Against the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property

 1954 Convention on Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1st Protocol and 2nd Protocol)

2. Implementation and support to these conventions forms a significant part of the UNESCO Culture Sector activities. In recent years, the total budgets of the six active conventions and protocols comprised about 80 per cent of the overall Culture Sector budget.

3. The importance of these conventions can be seen from the increasing ratification of (State) Parties as shown in the graph below.

Graph 1
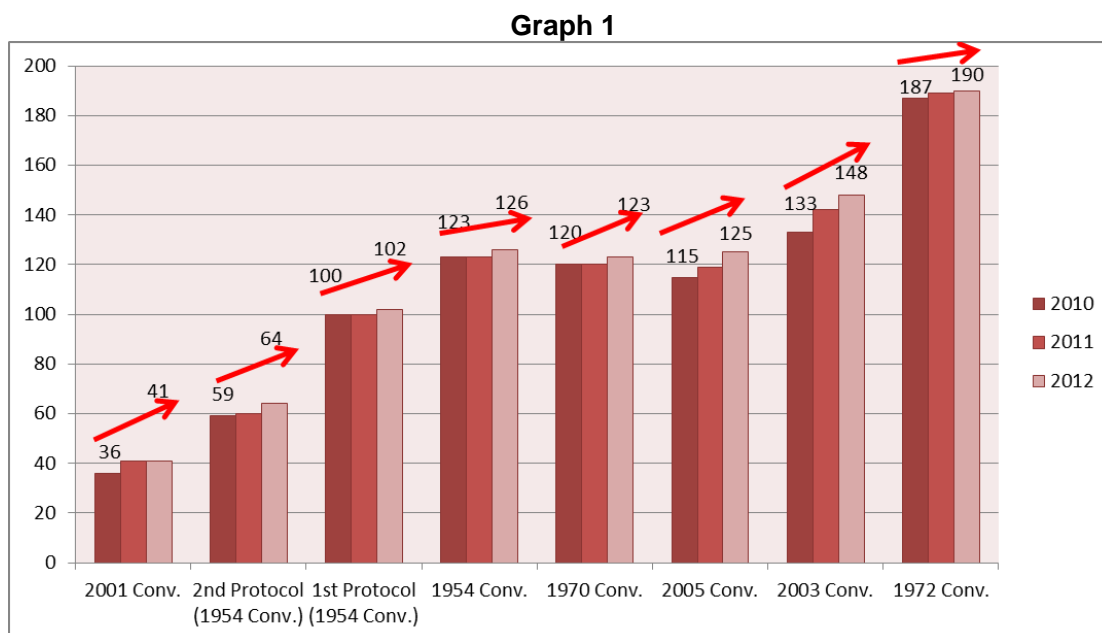
4. There are generally three funding modalities to support the activities under these conventions. 1) UNESCO Regular Programme support by way of activity funding and staff resources, 2) Dedicated funds for convention based on either assessed or voluntary contributions from the Member States, and 3) Other extra-budgetary funding. The total budgets for the biennium 2012-13, by convention are shown in the graph below.

Graph 2
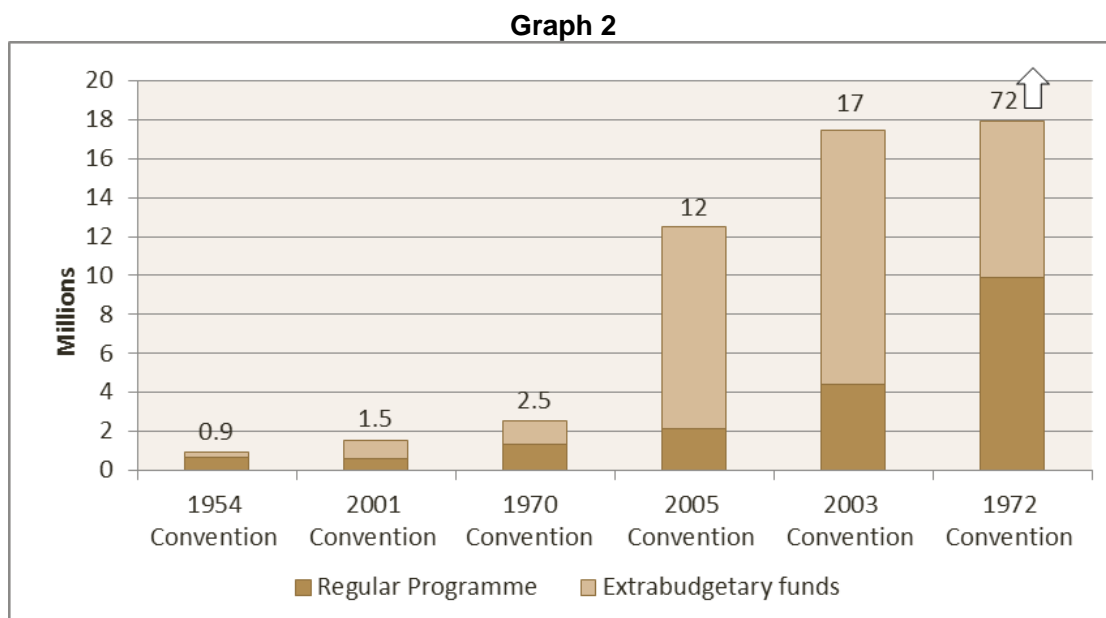
Source: FABS data July 2013. 33,9 Million USD is managed by the World Heritage Centre and 38.8 Million USD is delegated to UNESCO field offices.

5. Working methods of the governing bodies and broad functions of the secretariats are guided by the convention text as well as operational directives and rules of procedures adopted by the Governing Bodies of each convention.

6. Governance arrangements of these conventions are defined in the convention texts, and specific duties of each constituency are in the Operational Guidelines/Directives. The Conference/Assembly of State Parties is the highest decision making body and meets periodically, generally once in two years.

7. Four of the conventions are supported by intergovernmental committees, which meet annually or more frequently and are empowered to take decisions as per the convention texts and operational guidelines of the conventions. The sizes of these committees vary from 18 to 24 members, elected from the six UNESCO regional electoral groups for the election of Members of the Executive Board (except in case of the Second Protocol of the 1954 Convention). In addition, some conventions have subsidiary bodies/consultative bodies to support the work of the committee.

8. As mentioned in the texts of these conventions, UNESCO provides secretariats for the conventions. The roles of the secretariats, as defined in the convention text and in the operational directives are essentially twofold, i.e. a) to help organize the meetings of the Governing Bodies (i.e. Conference/Assembly of State Parties and Intergovernmental Committees) and b) to implement their decisions and recommendations as well as to perform any other function entrusted to them.

9. A Cultural Convention Liaison Group (CCLG) comprising of the heads of the convention secretariat has been established to increase coordination among conventions. The Group first met in January 2012.

Scope, objective and methodology

10. IOS conducted an audit of the working methods of the six conventions in the field of culture, in order to assess the adequacy and efficiency of the working methods of UNESCO's standard-setting work. The audit was performed in accordance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing*.

11. The scope of the review included working methods of the convention secretariats, the funding arrangements and the meetings of the governing bodies. For the purpose of this audit, all six active conventions were reviewed.

12. The methodology of the audit included data and information gathering through a review of convention texts, operational guidelines, rules of procedures as well as prior studies and reviews and interviews with the staff of the convention secretariats. In addition, the audit reviewed funding and governance structure in a number of similar UN conventions hosted outside UNESCO for benchmarking purposes.

Achievements:

- Member States assign high priorities to the convention related activities. During the prioritization exercise by the Executive Board (the 5th Special Session), the expected results relating to all six conventions received Medium- High (B-A) priority (meaning a budget priority between 40-100 per cent) with special mention for resource support to the 1970 Convention.

- In recent years, efforts have been made to increase coordination among various convention secretariats. A Cultural Convention Liaison Group (CCLG) comprising the heads of the convention secretariats has been established. This group has high

potential to foster coordination and efficiencies among the convention secretariats. To achieve this potential, the group would need clear roles and accountabilities.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Increasing workload with decreasing funding is unsustainable. Over the years, work of the convention secretariats has increased due to an increase in the number of: a) (State) Parties to the conventions; b) statutory meetings and their bodies; c) decisions and recommendations to be implemented by the secretariat; d) nominations to the conventions' mechanisms; e) international or any other category of assistance requests, f) design and implementation fundraising campaigns and communication strategies and g) processing and analysis of periodic reports. In addition, there are increasing demands from Parties for capacity building and technical assistance in the implementation of the Conventions at country level as well as for the production, management and distribution of knowledge in line with UNESCO's overall objectives to act as a clearing house and laboratory of ideas. These activities have been determined as priority by the governing bodies, in particular for the development of policies and action plans, gathering qualitative and quantitative evidence, content development distributed through knowledge sharing platforms, thematic debates on key articles of the Conventions. However, the total funding for the activities and staff resources are on decline. The decline is likely to be aggravated in the coming biennium due to overall budgetary cuts in UNESCO. There is a need to prioritise the activities of the convention secretariats and explore other funding models.

- Governing Bodies meetings should be more efficient and cost effective by reducing the frequency of meetings to align with the forthcoming quadrennial programming cycle of UNESCO, by limiting the meeting durations, by synchronizing the meetings of General Assemblies of the conventions, possibly just after the UNESCO General Conference meetings and by harmonising the translation and interpretation requirements across the convention meetings. The Executive Board in its 191st session recommended that the General Conference, at its 37th session, request the governing bodies of all intergovernmental and other bodies to address the efficiency and effectiveness of their meetings and formulate governance reform and cost-saving measures as appropriate.

- There is a need to review the cost structure of the advisory services (E.g. process requests for nomination and international assistance, impart trainings and undertake monitoring activities) provided by these statutory bodies to find more cost effective ways. Conventions follow different working methods for processing of nominations and International Assistance requests. Advisory services obtained from the three statutory bodies constitute a large part of the 1972 Convention budget.

- Support services such as IT and Web design & maintenance, communication and meeting logistics are fragmented across the convention secretariats and a common platform for such services would be more efficient.

- A coordinated fund raising strategy with common resource mobilization team would be more effective for raising extrabudgetary resources and will also provide an opportunity for common branding of UNESCO cultural conventions.

Table of recommendations

Recommendation 1: We recommend that the convention secretariats formulate proposals to the Governing Bodies of UNESCO and/or of the Convention(s) to:

a) Supplement the current funding structure with General Trust funds formed out of contributions from the Contracting (State) Parties on compulsory or voluntary basis to cover the ordinary expenditures of the secretariats, including staffing, administrative costs, preparation and translation of documents, b) prioritize the current work load of the convention secretariats to align it with available resources, c) reduce the frequency, when feasible, duration and agenda of the meetings of State Parties and that of the Intergovernmental Committees and synchronize the meetings of the State Parties to the conventions, when efficiencies can be achieved, d) harmonize the translation and interpretation requirements across the convention meetings and seek extrabudgetary funding for additional languages, and e) modify the financial rules and regulations if necessary to allow application of cost recovery policy.

Recommendation 2: We recommend that the convention secretariats, where applicable, explore more efficient ways of the obtaining advisory services and consider potential chargeback mechanisms to the nominating State Parties and/or earmarked fund and formulate proposals to the respective Governing Bodies for possible economies and financial sustainability in the advisory service fees.

Recommendation 3: We recommend that the CLT Sector should expand its common logistics unit to include additional services that add value and provide cost-effective solutions to support the work of all convention secretariats. The platform can function under the guidance of the Cultural Convention Liaison Group.

Recommendation 4: We recommend that the CLT Sector formulate, in consultation with BSP/CFS, a coordinated fund raising strategy for all conventions secretariats and form a common resource mobilization team.