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**CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE
WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE
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Information Document: Expert Meeting on the "Global Strategy" and Thematic Studies for a representative World Heritage List, UNESCO Headquarters, 20 - 22 June 1994

Expert Meeting on the "Global Strategy" and thematic studies for a representative World Heritage List
(UNESCO Headquarters, 20 - 22 June 1994)

I. Background and objectives

A document (WHC-93/CONF.002/8) on the current situation and the prospects of the "Global Study" and thematic studies was presented by the Secretariat to the Committee at its 17th Meeting in Cartagena (Colombia). After this document had been studied by the Committee, the Delegate of the United States of America urged ICOMOS and the Centre to continue this activity, taking into account the work that had already been carried out.

To this end, the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS organized a working group meeting at the UNESCO Headquarters on 20-22 June 1994 to concentrate on the representative nature of the World Heritage List and the methodology for its definition and implementation, to which experts from Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Niger, Sri Lanka, and Tunisia were invited (the list of participants is annexed to this report).

Many high-quality attempts had been made over the past decade to consider the best ways of ensuring the representative nature, and hence the credibility, of the World Heritage List in the future, but they had failed to achieve a consensus among the scientific community, despite the fact that all the component bodies and partners of the Convention were conscious of its weaknesses and imbalances. Since the adoption of the Convention by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1972, moreover, the concept of cultural heritage had also developed considerably in meaning, depth, and extent. The object of this meeting was therefore to carry out an examination in depth of all the studies made of this question over the last ten years and to arrive at concepts and a common methodological procedure as a result of a detailed analysis of the different approaches adopted.

All the earlier contributions to this debate, which had been brought together and analysed in the ICOMOS document *Framework for a Global Study*, were therefore studied in the initial phase of the meeting:

- 1984 Efforts by the Secretariat to put forward initial thoughts, which were both thematic and centred on architecture.

- 1987-1988 Expert groups convened by the Sri Lankan Ambassador to study the concept of a "Global Study" and its frame of reference, with several thematic studies

- 1991 Recommendation by the World Heritage Bureau that a combined temporal, cultural, and thematic approach should be adopted for the Global Study.

- 1992 ICOMOS proposal based on the idea of "cultural provinces" and proposal from the USA and Greece to expand the ICOMOS proposal by developing a three-dimensional "time-culture-human achievement" grid and implementing this by means of numerous thematic studies.

- 1992 Proposal by M. Léon Pressouyre, in his *publication La Convention du patrimoine mondial vingt ans après*, that there should be a thematic approach oriented towards categories of property that are little or not at all represented on the World Heritage List.

- 1993 ICOMOS expert meeting in Colombo (Sri Lanka) during which the approach involving the three-dimensional grid and "cultural provinces" was reaffirmed. The results of this meeting gave rise to many discussions in the expert community.

II. The content of the meeting

The three days of in-depth discussions by the experts led to unanimous agreement being reached on a number of observations.

It was apparent to all the participants that from its inception the World Heritage List had been based on an almost exclusively "monumental" concept of the cultural heritage, ignoring the fact that not only scientific knowledge but also intellectual attitudes towards the extent of the notion of cultural heritage, together with the perception and understanding of the history of human societies, had developed considerably in the past twenty years. Even the way in which different societies looked at themselves - their values, history, and the relations that they maintained or had maintained with other societies - had developed significantly. In 1972 the idea of cultural heritage had been to a very large extent embodied in and confined to architectural monuments. Since that time, however, the history of art and architecture, archaeology, anthropology, and ethnology no longer concentrated on single monuments in isolation but rather on considering cultural groupings that were complex and multidimensional, which demonstrated in spatial terms the social structures, ways of life, beliefs, systems of knowledge, and representations of different past and present cultures in the entire world. Each individual piece of evidence should therefore be considered not in isolation but within its whole context and with an understanding of the multiple reciprocal relationships that it had with its physical and non-physical environment.

Against this background, therefore, it was appropriate to set aside the idea of a rigid and restricted World Heritage List and instead to take into account all the possibilities for extending and enriching it by means of new types of property whose value might become apparent as knowledge and ideas developed. The List should be receptive to the many and varied cultural manifestations of outstanding universal value through which cultures expressed themselves.

This process of reflection should thus be continuous, pragmatic, and evolutionary in nature, based on systematic reference to the international scientific community; it should also be at all times prepared to identify the gaps in the List and to organize studies of those gaps.

A number of gaps and imbalances were already discernible on the World Heritage List:

- Europe was over-represented in relation to the rest of the world;

- historic towns and religious buildings were over-represented in relation to other types of property;

- Christianity was over-represented in relation to other religions and beliefs;

- historical periods were over-represented in relation to prehistory and the 20th century;

- "elitist" architecture was over-represented in relation to vernacular architecture;

- in more general terms, all living cultures - and especially the "traditional" ones -, with their depth, their wealth, their complexity, and their diverse relationships with their environment, figured very little on the List. Even traditional settlements were only included on the List in terms of their "architectural" value, taking no account of their many economic, social, symbolic, and philosophical dimensions or of their many continuing interactions with their natural environment in all its diversity. This impoverishment of the cultural expression of human societies was also due to an over-simplified division between cultural and natural properties which took no account of the fact that in most human societies the landscape, which was created or at all events inhabited by

human beings, was representative and an expression of the lives of the people who live in it and so was in this sense equally culturally meaningful.

In order to ensure for the future a World Heritage List that was at the same time representative, balanced, and credible, the expert group considered it to be necessary not only to increase the number of types, regions, and periods of cultural property that are under-represented in the coming years, but also to take into account the new concepts of the idea of cultural heritage that had been developed over the past twenty years. To achieve this it was advisable for there to be a process of continuous collaborative study of the development of knowledge, scientific thought, and views of relationships between world cultures. In addition, the expert group preferred the more dynamic, continuous, and evolutionary concept of a "Global Strategy" to the term "Global Study", which conjured up the idea of a study that was rigid, unique, and definitive.

This global strategy should take the form of an action programme covering several phases over at least five years. It should be based on a methodological technique designed to identify the major gaps relating to types of property, regions of the world, cultures, and periods in the List.

It would result in comparative studies that would call upon the skills and ideas of the international scientific community and in a strategy for encouraging nominations of types of property and from regions that were under-represented on the List and would, if necessary, make proposals for changes in the criteria for inscription and in the *Operational Guidelines*.

Two initiatives must therefore be undertaken concurrently: rectification of the imbalances on the List between regions of the world, types of monument, and periods, and at the same time a move away from a purely architectural view of the cultural heritage of humanity towards one which was much more anthropological, multi-functional. and universal.

For example, 20th century architecture should not be considered solely from the point of view of "great" architects and aesthetics, but rather as a striking transformation of multiple meanings in the use of materials, technology, work, organization of space, and, more generally, life in society. This new approach would naturally require something more than a "world prize" for architects in the development of a methodology that would make it possible to identify a battery of objective criteria and operational procedures that would reveal the significant characteristics of this category of cultural property so as to produce selections that were truly relevant.

Themes other than 20th century architecture were also identified by the group in moving from a "monumental" and static view to a more comprehensive and diversified perception of the wealth of human cultures. The world heritage should thus consider the products of culture by means of several new thematic approaches: modes of occupation of land and space, including nomadism and migration, industrial technology, subsistence strategies, water management, routes for people and goods, traditional settlements and their environments, etc.

Only by means of this thematic approach would it be possible to appreciate cultural properties in their full range of functions and meanings. The three-dimensional time-culture-human achievement grid might in this sense be considered as a stage in the process of reflection which had been of great value but which should give way to a process of reflection that was more anthropological and global.

In order to pursue this process of reflection on the new dimensions of the world heritage in greater depth and in this way to ensure that the representative nature and credibility of the List are maintained, it would be necessary to proceed not by sub- contracting the work exclusively to a single NGO, which could not guarantee the diversity of approaches and disciplines required, nor by means of large conferences, which would certainly be costly and largely unproductive, but rather through a small number of thematic studies, carefully targeted and forward-looking, and concentrating on new or little known aspects of the heritage, especially that of under-represented regions such as Africa or the Pacific (rather than categories of property that were already extensively covered in the scientific literature), and organized as regional or sub-regional meetings. These meetings should bring together regional experts, experts from the international scientific community in the relevant disciplines, and countries in the region which were States Parties to the Convention and those which had not yet joined. These meetings, each of which would be organized with reference to its specific objective, would be convened by the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS, the latter drawing upon its network of experts and preparing a document that explained the meaning and content of the Convention so as to assist those experts who had so far not been involved with it to work within the framework that it provided.

The expert group was convinced that these different approaches and initiatives were such as to make a major contribution to the balance, the representative nature, and therefore the credibility of the World Heritage List, which the World Heritage Committee in 1992 identified as lying at the heart of several of the major goals of its strategic guidelines for the future.

III Recommendations

State of the World Heritage List (cultural)

The group judged that the current state of the World Heritage List (for cultural and mixed sites) did not meeting the original concept of heritage as set forth in the World Heritage Convention (I, article 1). The List in its present form suffers from geographical, temporal, and spiritual imbalances. With its emphasis still on architectural monuments, the World Heritage List projects a narrow view of cultural heritage and fails to reflect living cultures, ethnographic and archaeological landscapes, and many of the broad areas of human activity which are of outstanding universal value.

This assessment of the state of the World Heritage List makes it imperative that steps be taken to achieve a representative, balanced, and credible List. The group therefore recommends for the consideration of the World Heritage Committee the following:

1. Building on previous discussions connected with the global study, the group proposes to pass from a typological approach to one that reflects the complex and dynamic nature of cultural expression. They therefore propose that the project should be renamed "Global Strategy for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention".

2. In order to redress the imbalances in the current List, some areas have been identified as having high potential to complete gaps in representation. Areas such as these should be considered in their broad anthropological context through time:

HUMAN COEXISTENCE WITH THE LAND

- Movement of peoples (nomadism, migration)
- Settlement

- Modes of subsistence
- Technological evolution

HUMAN BEINGS IN SOCIETY

- Human interaction
- Cultural coexistence
- Spirituality and creative expression.

3. In order to encourage nominations from under-represented regions, the group strongly preferred a series of regional meetings to the proposal for a large scientific conference. Regional meetings for States Parties and for regional experts should be organized, using as working documents the areas identified in recommendation 2 as well as analyses of properties already inscribed on the World Heritage List. In addition, in preparation for such regional meeting, States Parties are encouraged to develop tentative lists of properties for inscription as an additional working document.

4. In order to benefit from the wealth of scientific activity under way in all parts of the world, systematic approaches should be made to international scientific organizations to determine their interest in contributing to these reflections.

5. In an effort to achieve a representative List, the World Heritage Centre should actively encourage the participation of States Parties that have never nominated properties to the List, as well as countries that have not yet signed the Convention.

6. In the short term, after considering the list of proposed comparative studies needed to address current nominations to the List, the group noted that work is under way on industrial heritage, cultural landscapes, and 20th century architecture. In

its conviction that comparative studies should be targeted to gaps in the List, the group recommends support for studies on protohistoric sites (especially in sub-Saharan Africa) as well as properties in the Caucasian region. The group strongly suggested that comparative studies on areas already well covered in the international scientific literature, such as brick Gothic architecture and fortified towns, should only be undertaken with the participation of the States Parties involved in relevant nominations.

7. In order to encourage inscriptions of properties that would fill gaps in the List, the group recommends the modification of the cultural criteria (*Operational Guidelines*, paragraph 24) as follows:

Criterion (i) Remove "unique artistic achievement" from the English version so that it corresponds with the French;

Criterion (ii) Re-examine this criterion so as to reflect better the interaction of cultures, instead of the present formulation, which suggests that cultural influences occur in one direction only;

Criterion (iii) Removed "which has disappeared", since this excludes living cultures;

Criterion (v) Remove the phrase "especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change," since this favours cultures that have disappeared;

Criteria (vi) Encourage a less restrictive interpretation of this criterion.

ANNEX

LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS / LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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