

SIDE-EVENT

**“Properties of Religious Interest
Sharing best practices in World Heritage management”
2 July 2019, 1pm to 3pm
Baku Congress Centre, Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan**

The UNESCO Initiative on Heritage of Religious Interest, adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2011, responds to the identified need for a general guidance regarding the management of cultural and natural heritage of religious interest (Decision **35 COM 5A**, UNESCO, 2011). The Initiative is managed by a Steering Group composed of officially designated representatives from the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies.

Members of the Steering Group will present results of the ongoing work and share reflections on the elaboration of a thematic paper proposing to States Parties general guidance requested by the World Heritage Committee.

In preparation for a consultation with States Parties, an outline for draft recommendations on guidance for management of World Heritage properties of religious interest and a draft case-study questionnaire will be presented at the side-event, and shared with the States Parties for comments and suggestions. The Steering Group will consolidate feedback received to serve as a basis for preparation of the above-mentioned thematic paper.

Development of resource materials such as best practice case studies and capacity building tools are among the activities foreseen by the implementation strategy of the Initiative. Further to the Decision **42 COM 5A** and in line with the strategy, the Steering Group will present and launch an operational pilot-project approach, as well as further promote projects already published on the ‘Marketplace for World Heritage’.

As endorsed by the Committee at its 42nd session, States Parties will be invited to contribute by identifying case studies on governance, management and use of properties with associative sacred or spiritual values, including sites with living religious practice, which demonstrate new and creative ways in addressing the challenges that States Parties are facing. Sharing these practices helps other sites find solutions that work. This case studies approach, provides incentives for States Parties and site managers to reflect on their management practices and explore improvement possibilities.

The event will be an opportunity to enhance networks involving stakeholders, which should ensure that the general guidance takes into account all relevant studies, elements, common challenges, global trends and national specificities in the safeguarding of the Outstanding Universal Value of properties.

A possible round-table could be organized on 4 July 2019 at the Baku Congress Centre, for States Parties interested to discuss with the Steering Group members, the implementation of the Initiative as well as activities/case-studies/pilot-projects which could be launched by the States Parties in support of the elaboration of general guidance regarding the management of cultural and natural heritage of religious interest.