

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,  
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE  
WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Twenty-first session

Naples, Italy  
1-6 December 1997

**Item 7.1. of the Provisional Agenda: State of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List: Methodology and procedures for reporting on the state of conservation.**

**SUMMARY**

The 29th General Conference of UNESCO requested the World Heritage Committee to define the periodicity, form, nature and extent of the periodic reporting on the application of the World Heritage Convention and on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties and to examine and respond to these reports while respecting the principle of State sovereignty (see working document WHC-97/CONF.208/7).

**Decision required:** The Committee is requested to consider how to proceed with the implementation of the resolution of the 29th General Conference of UNESCO (paragraph 11).

## Background

1. The World Heritage Committee, at its twentieth session, requested "the Secretariat jointly with the Advisory Bodies to prepare, for consideration by the Committee at its twenty-first session in 1997, a draft format for reporting on the application of the Convention, taking into account the comments made by States Parties as well as the principles of monitoring and reporting reflected in the Committee's report and draft resolutions to the Eleventh General Assembly of States Parties and the 29th General Conference of UNESCO" (report of the twentieth session of the World Heritage Committee, paragraph VII.11).

2. The General Assembly of States Parties took place on 27 and 28 October 1997 and the decision-making of the General Conference of UNESCO was concluded on 12 November 1997. Some initial reflections on the manner in which to implement the resolution of the General Conference are presented in this working document. The Secretariat is seeking the guidance of the Committee for the development of a comprehensive proposal for examination of the Bureau and the Committee in 1998.

## Mandate of the World Heritage Committee

3. Following the suggestion of the Eleventh General Assembly to the General Conference of UNESCO to activate the procedures in Article 29 of the Convention and to refer to the World Heritage Committee the responsibility to respond to the reports, the General Conference adopted a resolution on monitoring and reporting. The full text of this resolution is included in working document WHC-97/CONF.208/6. Of particular importance are points 14, 15 and 16 of the resolution in which the General Conference:

*Invites the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention to submit in accordance with Article 29 of the Convention, through the World Heritage Committee, via its secretariat the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, reports on the legislative and administrative provisions and other actions which they have taken for the application of the Convention, including the state of conservation of the World Heritage properties located on its territories;*

and

*requests the World Heritage Committee to define the periodicity, form, nature and extent of the periodic reporting on the application of the World Heritage Convention and on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties and to examine and respond to these reports while respecting the principle of State sovereignty;*

and

*Requests the World Heritage Committee to include in its reports to the General Conference, presented in accordance with article 29.3 of the Convention, its findings as regard to the application of the Convention by the States Parties.*

## **The periodicity, form, nature and extent of the regular reporting**

### Periodicity of the regular reporting

4. Whereas the World Heritage Committee submits a report on its activities to each ordinary session of the General Conference (Article 29.3. of the Convention), i.e. every two years, States Parties could be requested to submit reports on the basis of a four or six-year cycle.

### Form, nature and extent of the regular reporting

5. The resolution adopted by the General Conference invites States Parties to submit through the World Heritage Committee, via its secretariat the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, reports on the legislative and administrative provisions and other actions which they have taken for the application of the Convention, including the state of conservation of the World Heritage properties located on its territories.

Subsequently, the reports by the States Parties could consist of two sections:

Section I: Application of the World Heritage Convention

Section II: State of Conservation of World Heritage Properties located on its territory.

6. In **Section I** the States Parties would report on the legislative and administrative provisions and other actions which they have taken for the application of the articles of the Convention.

7. **Section II** would refer more specifically to the state of conservation of World Heritage properties.

A format for a periodic World Heritage state of conservation report was examined by the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee at its nineteenth session and circulated to all States Parties in 1996. Substantive comments were made by several States Parties. It will be necessary, therefore, to re-consider this format. It is proposed that the Secretariat jointly with the Advisory Bodies prepare, for consideration by the twenty-second session of the Bureau in 1998, a draft format for this section of the periodic reports.

### Handling and examination of the periodic reports

8. If the periodicity of the reporting would be defined by a six-year cycle, the Committee would have to examine approximately fifty reports per biennium. The Secretariat will have to establish procedures and arrangements for the documentation, analysis and presentation of the periodic reports to the World Heritage Committee. This matter will have to be examined in the light of the recommendations of the External Auditor with regard to the Management Review of the World Heritage Centre, for example regarding the management of information.

### Reporting by the World Heritage Committee to the General Conference

9. The General Conference requested the World Heritage Committee to include in its reports to the General Conference, presented in accordance with Article 29.3 of the Convention, its findings regarding the application of the Convention by the States Parties. The Committee's report to the General Conference of UNESCO, therefore, will have to include in the future a section on the periodic reporting by the States Parties.

### Revision of the Operational Guidelines

10. The Operational Guidelines in its present form still reflect the decisions on 'systematic monitoring' that were taken by the Committee at its eighteenth session in Phuket.

Particularly Section II of the Operational Guidelines (Monitoring the State of Conservation of Properties inscribed on the World Heritage List) will have to be revised. It is suggested that, following the discussions at the twenty-second session of the Bureau on the format for periodic reporting, a draft revision be prepared by the Secretariat for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its twenty-second session.

In this context, it should be noted that the decision-making on periodic reporting does not affect the importance and continuing role of reactive monitoring that is foreseen in the procedures for the eventual deletion of properties from the World Heritage List, and in reference to properties inscribed, or to be inscribed, on the List of World Heritage in Danger (described in paragraph 75 of the Operational Guidelines). This was clearly stated in the report of the World Heritage Committee to the Eleventh General Conference.

11. **Decision required:** The Committee may wish to adopt the following:

"The Committee, having examined the resolution adopted by the 29th General Conference of UNESCO, as well as working document WHC-97/CONF.208/7:

1. requests the Secretariat jointly with the Advisory Bodies to prepare, for consideration by the twenty-second session of the Bureau in 1998, a draft format for the periodic reporting by the States Parties on the application of the World Heritage Convention and on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties;
2. requests the Secretariat to submit, for consideration by the twenty-second session of the Bureau in 1998, proposals for the handling and the examination and response by the Committee to the periodic reports;
3. requests the Secretariat to prepare, on the basis of the discussions at the twenty-second session of the Bureau, a draft revision of section II of the Operational Guidelines for consideration by the twenty-second session of the World Heritage Committee."