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**WHC-97/CONF.208/INF.4
Naples, 29 November 1997
Original: English only**

**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**

Speech of Mr A. Badran, Deputy Director-General of UNESCO

Speech of the Representative of the Director General, Mr. A. Badran, Deputy Director General of UNESCO, at the Opening of the Twenty First Ordinary Session of the World Heritage Committee, 1-6 December 1997, Naples, Italy

Mr President of the Committee

Mr Mayor of the City of Naples

Madame Under-Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs

Mr Vice-President of the Council of Ministers

Dear Colleagues

Let me begin by expressing my thanks and gratitude to Italy, for its continuing important contribution to UNESCO and the Italy for having organised this Committee session in such a rich cultural environment. I am pleased to have the opportunity to address all of you, on behalf of the Director General of UNESCO, at the inauguration of this twenty-first ordinary session of the World Heritage Committee.

Most of you may be aware of the fact that on 16 November 1997, the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage completed 25 years since its adoption by UNESCO (in 1972). This silver jubilee year has also witnessed the conduct of a Financial Audit of the World Heritage Fund and a Management Review of the World Heritage Convention, both carried out by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

The Director General and I have read with great interest the "Report of the External Auditor to the Director General of UNESCO on the Management Review of the World Heritage Convention", including the 35 recommendations made by the Reviewers. We are pleased to note that the Reviewers found that the "Centre has a motivated group of professional and support staff" who "perform a multiplicity of tasks and a broad range of activities that are largely output oriented", and that the "diversity and number of initiatives undertaken is impressive relative to the size of the staff and budget". However, there are some aspects of the Centre's work, for example, information management, where there could be improvements.

The Director General has commented on each one of the 35 recommendations contained in the Report, in the most constructive and positive manner as possible. However,

the Director General found most of the recommendations to be of a general nature and sometimes it will be difficult to apply them. The establishment of mechanisms for a closer and decentralised monitoring of the state of conservation of the World Heritage sites, has not received the attention he wishes to see. Nevertheless, the Director General has asked me to convey to you his commitment to apply those recommendations which you consider as priorities, and whose implementation is feasible. I hope that you will have time to study them carefully this week.

Earlier this year, in June 1997, the External Auditors gave their view on the management of the World Heritage Fund:

"in my opinion, the transactions of the [World Heritage] Fund that have come to my notice during my audit of the financial statements have, in all significant respects, been in accordance with the Fund's and UNESCO's Financial Regulations and legislative authorities"

As a follow up measure, the Director General has requested the Director of the Centre to take steps to implement all the recommendations made by the External Auditor for improving the presentation of information, to the Bureau and the Committee, on the management of the Fund, and appointed a professional Administrator to the Centre. The Director and the Administrator will ensure the implementation of all measures suggested by the Auditors for streamlining budgetary and contractual procedures critical for the efficient disbursement of the Fund's resources.

The Silver Jubilee of the World Heritage Convention in 1997 also coincided with anniversaries being celebrated by some individual World Heritage sites themselves; for example, the 125th year anniversary of Yellowstone National Park of the USA, the world's first national park established in 1872. Yellowstone of USA, together with 21 other World Heritage sites, such as Virunga National Park of the Democratic Republic of Congo and cultural heritage sites like Angkor in Cambodia and the Chan Chan Archaeological Zone in Peru, have been designated by the Committee as "World Heritage in Danger". Mitigation of threats to Yellowstone needed the intervention of the US President himself who offered a US\$ 65 million trade-of-land offer to withdraw mining rights in an area of about 22,000 acres immediately outside of Yellowstone's borders. As you will realise during your discussions on

the state of conservation of the other 21 World Heritage sites in Danger, conflicts between World Heritage conservation and economic development are intensifying; resolution of these conflicts more often than in the past demand interventions from the highest levels of the executive and legislative authorities in States Parties.

The Life Magazine, in an article celebrating Yellowstone's 125th year anniversary in its July, 1997, issue, noted that

"In 1,000 years national parks will be regarded as we now regard the Pyramids: as the most original and impressive works of those who made them"

This observation is testimony to UNESCO's foresight and vision in creating, 25 years before, a unique international Convention that simultaneously provided a legal framework for the preservation of both cultural as well as natural heritage of outstanding universal significance. However, as you enter the 26th year of the Convention, let me draw your attention to some questions frequently posed by those who genuinely care for the work of the Convention and wish to sustain its reputation as the most credible international legal instrument for the conservation of humankind's outstanding cultural and natural heritage:

- How can we improve the universality of the World Heritage List so that the List reflects a balanced representation of all regions and cultures in the world? As you know the List has been criticised within and outside of UNESCO for being heavily skewed in favour of the monumental heritage of European cultures and for not adequately reflecting the heritage of living cultures from other parts of the world. The Committee's introduction, in 1992, of the category of cultural landscape has begun to redress this imbalance to a certain extent but we need to allocate much more human and financial resources, for implementing the Global Strategy and enabling States Parties to identify and nominate new and innovative categories of cultural heritage sites to the World Heritage List;
- How can we improve the balance in the representation of sites included in the List, and at the same time prevent a rapid rise in the total number of sites inscribed on the World Heritage List? The credibility of the Listing process is in part linked to the fact that only the most outstanding of the nominated sites are inscribed on the List and that the rate of growth in the total number of Listed sites is kept at modest levels;
- How can we ensure that monitoring the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the

World Heritage List and reporting to the Committee by the States Parties, and mobilising financial and human resources for the long-term conservation of World Heritage sites become as important as identification, nomination and inscription of new sites in the World Heritage List; and

- How can we best meet the rapidly growing demand for information, public education, documentation, promotion and fund-raising and other services which must be met adequately if the States Parties and UNESCO are to be effective in presenting and popularising World Heritage among the present generation and ensure its safe transmission to future generations?

I am pleased to inform the Committee that the 29th Session of UNESCO's General Conference adopted, for the biennium 1998-99, a Programme of Action for the Cultural Sector Sub-Programme III.1.2, entitled "Promotion of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage", that has been designed to address the four concerns mentioned above; i.e. to improve the universality of the World Heritage List; to reinforce national capacities for the protection of sites; to monitor the state of conservation of World Heritage sites and to facilitate periodic reporting by the States Parties; and to inform and increase awareness of the work of the Convention among the public and specialised target groups such as youth. A special project on the "Participation of Youth in the preservation and the promotion of World Heritage" has also been approved and will be jointly executed by the Centre and the Education Sector.

Since I am aware of the complex, and often diplomatically sensitive nature of the work awaiting you for the next six days I do not intend to take any more of your valuable time. Before I conclude, let me reiterate the fact that the Director General sees the World Heritage Convention as UNESCO's premier international legal instrument to promote co-operation between its Member States and for pursuing an on-going, inter-cultural dialogue that encourages a climate of tolerance and lays the foundations for a culture of peace.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude by wishing you all the very best and a successful twenty-first session of the Committee.

Thank you.