

# The UNESCO World Heritage Centre's Natural Heritage Strategy



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



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This document is based on the World Heritage Committee document  
WHC-06/30.COM/INF.6A

Published in 2006 by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre  
with financial contribution from the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust at UNESCO

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(CLT.2006/ws/12)

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## Background

*The World Heritage Centre (WHC) was established in 1992 to serve as the Secretariat for the World Heritage Convention<sup>[1]</sup>. The creation of the WHC was timely, as the number of World Cultural and Natural Heritage properties continued to grow rapidly – there are currently 182 States Parties to the Convention and 830 World Heritage properties, and their numbers are expected to grow to over 1,000 by the end of this decade. The enthusiasm for the inscription of new sites is a positive indication of global political and public support for the World Heritage Convention.*

The concept of Natural Heritage is defined under Article 2 of the *Convention* and further elaborated in the World Heritage Operational Guidelines, which also contain the specific criteria and conditions of integrity for assessing Outstanding Universal Value(s) of prospective World Natural Heritage properties<sup>[2]</sup>. The WHC works closely with the technical advisory body, IUCN – the World Conservation Union to ensure the long term protection and conservation of inscribed natural heritage sites and their World Heritage values. This includes undertaking monitoring missions in cooperation with site management agencies to evaluate the state of conservation of World Heritage sites, providing technical assistance, and building capacity in the States Parties. In pursuance of these and other crucial tasks the Centre has increasingly attempted to mobilise international support from public and private sectors.

Over the past several years the WHC has been able to broaden its range of partnerships and intervention strategies and raise substantial extrabudgetary resources. The United Nations Foundation (UNF) has played a key role in this effort, and the major international conservation non-governmental organisations like Conservation International (CI), Fauna and Flora International (FFI), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) have figured prominently in the expanding range of activities carried out by the WHC. UNF support for biodiversity conservation has been and for the foreseeable future will continue to be a very important driver of the Centre’s work on natural heritage. The WHC will continue to maintain a strong working relationship with its advisory body on natural heritage (IUCN) and all the partners who are involved in project implementation, and further diversify the nature of the collaboration.



*Ichkeul National Park, Tunisia*

<sup>[1]</sup> Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)

<sup>[2]</sup> Please visit the World Heritage Website at: <http://whc.unesco.org/> for more details on the *World Heritage Convention* and its implementation.

## Recent Endeavours and Achievements

*While maintaining its core responsibilities in serving the World Heritage Convention secretariat needs, the WHC's natural heritage team has undertaken a variety of activities emanating from UNF supported and other extra-budgetary projects and from its growing relationships with conservation NGOs. Many of them have highlighted non-traditional ways in which the World Heritage Convention can be leveraged by both UNESCO and other conservation stakeholders to promote conservation of World Heritage sites and integrate them with the larger development context. Some items of note include:*

- a) Project coordination:  
A portfolio of 24 projects with a value of nearly US\$ 40M targeting 48 sites in 26 countries (in large part financed by UNF and involving close work with CI, FFI, TNC, WCS, IUCN and WWF, amongst others).
- b) Diversification of financing:  
Gradual diversification of extra-budgetary financing with recent support obtained from the French – Global Environmental Facility (FFEM), MacArthur Foundation, Grand Circle Foundation and the Belgian, Italian and United Kingdom Governments.
- c) Innovating conservation finance mechanisms:  
Establishment, with FFI, of a Rapid Response Facility (RRF) to channel emergency funds for World Heritage biodiversity sites; participation in the technical advisory committee for the United Nations Development Programme – Global Environmental Facility (UNDP-GEF) - Financial Sustainability for National Systems of Protected Areas project.
- d) Neutral “deal maker”:  
Brokering agreements for World Heritage sites as “no-go” areas for prospecting and extracting with the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) and with Shell International; helping negotiations between UN peacekeeping forces and rebel armies in regards to World Heritage site concerns; intermediary between World Heritage site management agencies and Shell International in identifying and carrying out business planning skills sharing project.
- e) Power of Assembly:  
Convening a joint international donors meeting, scientific conference and museum exhibit in

support of the conservation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's five World Heritage sites; convening of an international meeting of forest (2005) and marine (2002) conservation stakeholders to develop World Heritage forest and marine conservation strategies with the participation of IUCN, CI, FFI, WCS and WWF; coordinating multi-NGO participation landscape level projects (FFEM Bushmeat); engaging local communities and sustainable development stakeholders and civil society in becoming promoters of World Heritage site conservation.

- f) Achieving heightened international recognition:  
The *World Heritage Convention* was identified as a cross cutting theme at the fifth World Parks Congress in Durban (2003), indicating an increased recognition of the *Convention* as an action oriented tool to be considered by conservation stakeholders world wide. Participation in the “Biodiversity Convention Liaison Group” (BLG) led by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and signatory to the statement on Biodiversity and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for the Heads of State Summit in September 2005. Obtaining standing in the deliberations and meetings of intergovernmental agencies whose decisions may directly affect World Heritage properties (e.g. The International Maritime Organization, United Nations Forum on Forests, Development Banks, etc).
- g) Promotion and dissemination of information:  
In order to fulfil the Centre's clearinghouse mandate, a sizeable investment is being made in designing an information management system that would increase the Centre's capacity to handle new information about World Heritage sites. An entire new section for special projects was built into the information management system so as to be able to flag World Heritage conservation needs and encourage support that contributes towards such activities.

The vision and strategy for natural heritage work at the WHC, which is elaborated in the next section has been developed in the context of the above-mentioned background and achievements.

# The Strategy

## A. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

*The following main principles guide the Centre's work on natural heritage:*

### 1. Guidance given by the World Heritage Committee

Apart from the guidance given by the *Operational Guidelines* for implementing the *World Heritage Convention*, the core policy documents of the Committee are the "Global Strategy" and the "Strategic Objectives". These seminal policy orientations are fundamental to the development of the strategy for the WHC's work on natural heritage.

- a) In 1994, the World Heritage Committee launched the Global Strategy for a Balanced, Representative and Credible World Heritage List which was initially for cultural heritage, but extended to cover natural heritage in 1996. Crucial to the Global Strategy are efforts to encourage countries to become States Parties to the *Convention*, to prepare Tentative Lists and to prepare nominations of properties from categories and regions currently not well-represented on the World Heritage List.
- b) At its 26th session in 2002, the World Heritage Committee adopted the "Budapest Declaration on World Heritage", inviting all partners to support World Heritage Conservation through 4 strategic objectives: Strengthening the Credibility of the World Heritage List; Ensuring the effective Conservation of World Heritage properties; Promoting the development of effective Capacity building in States Parties; Increasing public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through Communication.

### 2. The Global Development Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

In September 2000, the General Assembly of the United Nations endorsed the Millennium Declaration, identifying the central challenges the world community is facing in the 21st century. The declaration inter alia recognized the need to address the loss of biodiversity and to conserve and use, in a sustainable manner, the World's forest resources.

- a) The 8 MDGs provide a roadmap to address the challenges put forward in the Millennium Declaration and demonstrate the commitment of the global community to achieve progress on these challenges by 2015. For the work on World Natural Heritage, "Goal 7 - Ensuring Environmental Sustainability" is particularly relevant, as reversing the loss of environmental resources is one of the key targets. The *World Heritage Convention* is an important instrument for achieving this target, as it is protecting some of the most important ecosystems and areas of high biodiversity and providing ecosystem goods and services to local communities and national economies. They can also, thus, be motors for economic development, helping to "Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger" and contribute to achieving Goal 1.

### 3. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

The Convention on Biological Diversity sets the global agenda for the conservation and wise use of biodiversity. It provides the policy framework for biodiversity conservation activities and, through the mechanism of the "Biodiversity Liaison Group", promotes synergistic activities and increased coordination with the other four major international biodiversity related agreements (The *World Heritage Convention*, The Wetlands 'Ramsar' Convention, Convention on Migratory Species and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). The work of the WHC on natural heritage relates directly to the following main orientations of the CBD:

- a) **2010 Biodiversity Target:** The CBD’s 6th Conference of the Parties (CoP) 2002, set as a strategic target for the Convention to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss at the global, regional and national level as a contribution to poverty alleviation and to the benefit of all life on earth. The *World Heritage Convention* through its programme of conserving natural sites representing outstanding ecosystems and sites of outstanding universal value for biodiversity is an important instrument to achieve this target.
- b) **Ecosystem approach:** The ecosystem approach was endorsed by the CBD’s 5th CoP at Nairobi in 2000. World Heritage sites form part of broader ecosystems that include a range of social and economic activities. As such, actions outside site boundaries often have significant effects on site integrity and conversely, some conservation actions can also adversely impact on local communities. The World Heritage programme seeks not only to alleviate site threats, but also works with key stakeholders to promote sustainable livelihoods within the extended landscapes of the sites.
- c) **Programme of Work on Protected Areas:** As protected areas remain one of the most important instruments to conserve in situ biodiversity, the 7th CoP to the CBD adopted a Programme of Work on Protected Areas (PoWPA) which sets out clear goals and targets for countries to meet in the coming years. World Heritage sites have an important role to play in meeting these targets as they, being flagships of the protected area world, can become models demonstrating best practices in various aspects of planning and management. While the *World Heritage Convention’s* comparative advantage in regards to the CBD lies most clearly and directly within the scope of the PoWPA, activities are also coordinated with the Expanded Programme of Work on Forest Biological Diversity and the Programme of Work on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity.

## B. MISSION STATEMENT

*“To promote the fullest and broadest application of the World Heritage Convention by all relevant stakeholders, from site level individuals to global organizations, in the pursuit of long-term conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development.”*



Marovo Lagoon, Solomon Islands



Namibi Desert, Namibia

## C. STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS

*This strategy for natural heritage work at the WHC takes into consideration the comparative advantage offered by the World Heritage Convention and the WHC's resources, and focuses primarily on initiatives that would put them to the most effective use. A particular emphasis is placed on ensuring that other actors are made fully aware of the conservation leveraging potential of the World Heritage Convention, with the intention of mainstreaming this simple tool in a wider array of actions involving conservation and sustainable development in and around World Heritage sites. The strategic orientations are described below, followed by a sample of indicative activities to illustrate the types that would best contribute to the achievement of these orientations. These activities will all be implemented in collaboration with IUCN and other relevant partners, as described in the section on Working Methods.*

### 1. Continually improve World Heritage site management capacities

The WHC will target its efforts at ensuring that management standards and capacities at World Heritage sites are improved in a way that indicators are developed for World Heritage values and site integrity, threats are identified and management interventions implemented in response to them, and that they are monitored for management effectiveness. A secondary, but no less important objective is to develop World Heritage sites into exemplary models demonstrating best practice that would positively influence the development of other protected areas and contribute to the overall biodiversity conservation effort.

*Indicative activities:*

- a) Promote the IUCN-WCPA management effectiveness framework among World Heritage sites and engage partners in helping overcome locally identified management challenges.

- b) Assist site managers in setting up monitoring systems that can track World Heritage values and site integrity.
- c) Support World Heritage site management stakeholders in developing sustainable financing strategies for management activities and engaging in business planning.
- d) Encourage the adoption of mechanisms that would help World Heritage site management stakeholders integrate their work with broader landscape/seascape management and sustainable development priorities.
- e) Provide complementary planning and management tools to improve World Heritage management status by making full use of the experience gained under the World Heritage Forest, Marine and Tourism Thematic Programmes.
- f) Help States Parties in dealing with new and emerging management challenges at World Heritage sites, such as those resulting from the impacts of climate change, by mobilising technical and financial resource for developing and implementing adaptation measures.
- g) Make use of regional and global networks of World Heritage sites and managers to develop and share lessons and best practices, including through the use of web-based knowledge management tools.

### 2. Counter threats to World Heritage in Danger sites

The *World Heritage Convention* includes a process whereby sites with particularly acute threats to their outstanding universal values or integrity can be placed on the "List of World Heritage in Danger", as a means to mobilize increased national and international support for dealing with these threats. The WHC will give priority to setting up conservation programmes that address the imminent threats to these sites and mitigate their impacts, in view of preventing the loss of their World Heritage values, leading to the site's removal from the list of World Heritage in Danger.

*Indicative activities:*

- a) Support the development of emergency action plans to address threats acting on the sites in danger and extend international assistance under the World Heritage Fund.
- b) Mobilize international support through targeted conservation diplomacy, raising funds and extending technical assistance.
- c) Set up mechanisms to monitor progress of threat mitigation, including through the development of indicators and establishment of benchmarks and time-frames to track removal of sites from the danger list.
- d) Support NGOs and other organisations in their efforts to attract donor interest to World Heritage sites in danger, to meet threat alleviation and management needs.

### **3. Complete the World Heritage List**

Recent studies by IUCN point to the following biomes as gaps in the current World Heritage list: tropical/ temperate grasslands, savannas, lake systems, tundra and polar systems, and cold winter deserts. IUCN has also recommended several marine systems as worthy of consideration for inclusion on the List. Work in this area will primarily be guided by the continuing global strategy and gap analysis work of the IUCN and in partnership with them.

*Indicative activities:*

- a) Work with the States Parties, IUCN and other partners to identify specific protected sites within the priority biomes and encourage the submission of nominations to complete the list.
- b) Provide sustained technical advice and support for the preparation of tentative lists and nominations.
- c) Help States Parties obtain financing to carry out preparatory field and institutional level activities in support of nominations.
- d) Encourage civil society and private sector participation in the development of new World Heritage site nominations as a means of securing broader and longer-term support.

- e) Actively promote use of serial and trans-boundary approaches for new site nominations and where appropriate, extensions to existing sites.

### **4. Apply the Ecosystem Approach**

The WHC recognizes that World Heritage sites are part of a larger and complex mosaic of multiple ecosystems with multiple uses. It also understands that, just as World Heritage sites are subject to events taking place outside their boundaries, so can areas outside World Heritage site boundaries benefit from the ecosystem goods and services provided by the site. Under these circumstances, the WHC promotes the tighter integration of World Heritage site management agencies into the decision-making processes affecting landscape/ seascape level actions.

*Indicative activities:*

- a) Promote integration of the ecosystem approach principles into all stages of planning and management of World Heritage sites.
- b) Prioritise actions in and around World Heritage sites that integrate an ecosystem approach to sustainable development and conservation, including actions contributing to the sustainable livelihoods of local communities, which directly or indirectly assist site conservation.
- c) Consider landscape/seascape level issues when monitoring the state of conservation of World Heritage sites.
- d) Play a facilitating role in creating landscape/ seascape management stakeholder relationships.
- e) Provide technical advice to the UNDP's Community Management of Protected Areas for Conservation (COMPACT) and Small Grants Programme (SGP) initiatives on sustainable livelihoods in and around World Heritage sites.
- f) Promote and demonstrate the value of the ecosystem approach through the planning and management strategies of serial and transboundary World Heritage sites.



## 5. Link up with the international biodiversity conservation agenda

Although the *World Heritage Convention* is recognized as one of the five biodiversity related conventions, its potential in achieving the 2010 biodiversity target has not yet been sufficiently harnessed. The Centre intends to actively promote the role of the *Convention* as a tool for in situ biodiversity conservation by establishing strong links with the international biodiversity agenda, and in particular the CBD.

*Indicative activities:*

- a) Develop and implement a joint plan of activities with the CBD Secretariat, international NGOs and other partners to implement key priorities of the CBD's Programme of Work on Protected Areas using the iconic World Heritage sites to demonstrate standards and best practices to larger protected area systems.
- b) Develop and implement joint plan of activities with the CBD Programme of Work on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity, as components of a global system of effectively managed marine and coastal protected areas.
- c) Promote serial and transboundary approaches and implement projects that directly support the 2012 biodiversity target on establishment of networks of marine and coastal protected areas (existing World Heritage projects include Eastern Tropical Pacific Seascape and Central Pacific Project).



*Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania*

## 6. Mainstream the *Convention* and convey the World Heritage message

The *World Heritage Convention* continues to be poorly understood in terms of its biodiversity conservation potential. It is generally perceived as a simple listing mechanism whereas its full potential as a robust tool to galvanize national and international attention remains under-utilised by key conservation and sustainable development stakeholders. Incorporating the *Convention* into the standard conservation toolbox of these stakeholders is a priority objective of the WHC, as is the forging of private and public sector partnerships. The nature team of the Centre will work closely with the Communications and Partnerships unit of the Centre and others in advancing these objectives.

*Indicative activities:*

- a) Develop a standard communications package focusing on the practical applications of the *World Heritage Convention* from the perspectives of conservation and sustainable development stakeholders.
- b) Make use of various international fora to communicate to broad audiences on how the *World Heritage Convention* can be leveraged to achieve conservation and sustainable development objectives.
- c) Bring to the attention of non-traditional international organizations and fora the intergovernmental obligations of signatory countries in regards to World Heritage site conservation (e.g. International Maritime Organization, International Council on Metals and Mining, International Tropical Timber Organisation, Associations of Tour Operators and the hospitality industry).
- d) Actively develop key private and public sector partnerships to aid the financing of conservation initiatives.
- e) Use World Heritage sites and the World Heritage label as a local and regional economic development tool.

## D. WORKING METHODS

### 1. Using World Heritage Convention Mechanisms

The tools most readily available to the WHC are those provided by the *Convention*. They involve maintaining close working relationships with States Parties during the: i) tentative listing and nomination, ii) state of conservation monitoring and reporting, and iii) danger listing / delisting processes. The intention behind these three is to leverage maximum national government and public support for biodiversity conservation. Major achievements for conservation have been realised by applying these tools and they will continue to be the basic foundation of the Centre's work.

### 2. Maximizing United Nations Value Added

A key report of the UNF on the value of UN participation in biodiversity conservation cites that “*the power, influence, stature and prestige confer respect, legitimacy and strength to NGO work at different levels*”. At the Centre it is recognized that association with a UN agency can overcome communications barriers with governmental authorities, and establish a neutral forum for the convergence of disparate interests around the World Heritage idea. The UNESCO World Heritage sites represent an easy rallying point around which conservation stakeholders can attract support and plan joint work. The WHC will seek to maximize this comparative advantage in carrying out its work, particularly by seeking the engagement of government authorities, as well as by leveraging its convening power.

### 3. Developing Results Based Partnerships

The natural heritage team within the Centre represents a diversity of expertise and experience and although it comprises specialists working within different regional sections, the scope of their activities is thematic and often global. However,

given that over 160 natural heritage sites are currently inscribed on the World Heritage list, and that many more are likely to be inscribed in the years ahead, the Centre alone does not have the resources and capacities necessary to achieve the ambitious programme of strategic initiatives outlined in this document. Therefore, the Centre will seek to identify new, and strengthen existing, relationships with various allies in its efforts to mainstream the *World Heritage Convention* and realise its full potential. The subsections below list some of the groups with whom the Centre already works or seeks to develop a relationship, and describe the ways in which these relationships could be enhanced or established:

#### *IUCN - The World Conservation Union*

As the Advisory Body to the *World Heritage Convention* on natural heritage matters the main role of IUCN is to evaluate natural properties nominated for inscription, monitor the state of conservation of World Heritage sites, review requests for international assistance and provide input and support for capacity building activities. IUCN also advises the World Heritage Committee on the Global Strategy and identifies gaps in the World Heritage List. To provide these services IUCN depends heavily on its members and the experts of its World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) network. The Centre will continue to work with the IUCN secretariat on exploring ways to create a more integrated and dynamic relationship. Possible elements are:

- a) Exploring opportunities to work on joint programs and projects that can develop, pilot and disseminate best practice protected area management methodologies, both to the natural World Heritage network and protected areas in general. This would ideally be coupled with joint fund-raising to implement such initiatives.
- b) Using other thematic and policy capacities available at IUCN for the further development of the thematic programmes of natural World Heritage (marine, tourism, forests).
- c) Building a network of World Heritage sites and managers to complement the Protected Areas Learning Network (PALNet) initiative, as a means of knowledge management and capacity development.

- d) Strengthening information gathering for the state of conservation reporting through closer involvement of IUCN regional offices, conservation NGO members and the WCPA.
- e) Using the IUCN channels to promote the *Convention* as a tool for biodiversity conservation in international fora such as CBD.

### ***International Conservation NGOs***

UNESCO and the WHC have a long tradition of cooperation with international conservation NGOs, having helped establish the Charles Darwin Foundation in the 1950s. Currently, the Centre is working on a project-by-project basis with the WCS, WWF and FFI, while with Conservation International (CI) a 3-way agreement was brokered with UNF, committing US\$ 15 Million for World Heritage conservation activities. TNC has signed an agreement with the WHC to develop closer cooperation for the nomination and management of World Heritage sites, especially in the areas of conservation finance, marine conservation and ecotourism. It is clear that there is a lot of scope to develop these fledging relationships and the conservation NGOs have signalled a clear interest in doing so. Possible avenues for increased cooperation are:

- a) Involve the conservation NGOs more directly in the work of the *Convention*, in particular in the monitoring of sites inscribed on the World Heritage List.
- b) Collaborate more closely to strengthen conservation of World Heritage sites where the NGOs are already implementing conservation programmes and use the *Convention* to secure support for their work.
- c) Involve the NGOs more closely in some of the programmatic work done in the Centre, such as on the marine, tourism and forestry programmes.
- d) Use the excellent communication channels and lobbying campaigns of the NGOs to raise awareness on the role of the *Convention* as a tool for standard setting in biodiversity conservation.
- e) Develop closer cooperation, on the basis of each other's comparative strengths, to further the achievement of key goals and targets of the

PoWPA, including through joint project development, fundraising and implementation.

- f) Develop new cooperation building on each other's added value to strengthen conservation of World Heritage sites (such as the Rapid Response Facility and Climate Change initiatives).

### ***United Nations Foundation***

In 1999, with its decision to focus on World Heritage sites as the mechanism of choice to carry out the biodiversity conservation mandate, the UNF laid the foundations for remarkable changes that were to take place within the WHC over the subsequent six years. In the most immediate terms, UNF's support led to the strengthening and consolidation of the natural heritage team within the World Heritage Centre. This team was able to engage not only their professional networks, but also a new group of World Heritage allies in carrying out its work in an increasing variety of ways. Given this history of innovation and collaboration, the WHC envisages its relationship with the UNF to evolve along the following lines:

- a) Completing existing and on-going project commitments, while exploring strategic programmatic areas for potential collaboration.
- b) Developing key private sector partnerships to aid the financing of conservation initiatives.
- c) Identifying and facilitating new partnerships with non-governmental organizations that would contribute to site conservation by improving management and the issues of the broader ecosystem approach.
- d) Working to establish practical mechanisms for fund raising and personnel exchange to strengthen the World Heritage Nature Team.
- e) Establishing a "Friends of World Heritage" fundraising campaign to support the ongoing work of natural heritage conservation.
- f) Supporting a natural heritage communication package telling the success stories of, the UNF-World Heritage projects, the value added of the UNF- World Heritage -NGO partnership dynamic for conservation, and the utility of the *World Heritage Convention* as an in-situ biodiversity conservation tool.

### ***UNESCO – In House Sectors and Bodies***

Within UNESCO, several sectors and departments have contributed significantly to WHC activities in the past. The UNESCO Natural Sciences Sector and in particular its Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB) under the Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences (EES) and International Oceanographic Commission (IOC) are natural WHC partners. The recent creation of an in-house biodiversity liaison group, which assembles representatives of all parts of UNESCO with an interest and a mandate to conserve biodiversity, has set the foundation for more systematic cooperation between UNESCO entities. In fact, currently 74 Biosphere Reserves overlap with World Heritage sites and share similar challenges. Fortunately they can also share solutions towards better management of sites, promoting sustainable livelihoods and linking science to management. Areas of collaboration would *inter alia* include:

- a) Using the science, technology and sustainable development models developed by EES to further integrate World Heritage sites in their surrounding land/ seascapes.
- b) Disseminating lessons learnt from working for more than 30 years in protected areas that are also World Heritage and MAB sites, within the framework of the CBD PoWPA.
- c) Using World Heritage and MAB sites to generate information and data to document experience and best practices on sustainable development during the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (UNDES), which was launched in 2005 under the leadership of UNESCO. This would also foster cooperation between WHC and the Education Sector of UNESCO.
- d) IOC and the World Heritage Marine Programme have already developed an initial work-plan for joint activities that would: i) Promote the enhancement and integrated management of coastal and marine areas through international and regional conventions and programmes; ii) Conduct a study on exemplary cases to assess the ecological and socioeconomic benefits generated by the protection of coastal and marine sites ensured through international and regional conventions (WHC, Ramsar, Regional Seas protocols) and programs (MAB) with comparable objectives; and iii) Organise meetings or side events at

relevant international events to advance common objectives.

- e) The Centre will continue its close collaboration with EES to test the use of remote sensing techniques for the nomination and monitoring of World Heritage sites.
- f) The WHC and EES will also cooperate on climate change and its impacts on World Heritage sites, and explore opportunities of raising conservation finance through the mechanism of the emerging market in emissions trading.

### ***UNDP-GEF/SGP COMPACT***

In 1999, the UNDP-GEF's Small Grants Programme (SGP) joined efforts with the UNF to launch a partnership initiative entitled 'Community Management of Protected Areas for Conservation' (COMPACT). The main objective of COMPACT has been to demonstrate how community-based initiatives working with local and indigenous groups can significantly increase the effectiveness of biodiversity conservation in natural World Heritage Sites. The project has demonstrated that clusters of livelihood projects with multiple linkages can be a cost-effective strategy to better address critical threats and pressures to natural World Heritage sites in the framework of a landscape approach, while also ensuring that World Heritage sites are contributing to local development.

In February 2004, an official Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the World Heritage Centre, and the SGP of UNDP-GEF at the seventh Conference of the Parties of the CBD. In the framework of this memorandum, annual work plans will focus:

- a) Improving cooperation around sites that already benefit from conservation support through the Centre or UNDP/SGP.
- b) Dissemination of key lessons learned from the COMPACT experience as best practice throughout the World Heritage network.
- c) Expanding the current programme to additional COMPACT sites and mainstreaming its experience within the SGP, to increase its impact throughout the protected areas network.

- d) Ensuring that World Heritage site management agencies become increasingly involved in COMPACT and SGP initiatives, and in the process, establish formal mechanisms that will guarantee on-going exchanges between these agencies and the sustainable development stakeholders within the landscape in which the World Heritage site is located.

### ***Development Agencies and Conservation Financing Organizations***

Many multi-lateral and bi-lateral development and aid agencies and private foundations have mandates that contain significant overlap with that of the *World Heritage Convention*, i.e. biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, sustainable livelihoods. The credibility of the WHC has improved in the eyes of such organizations over the past few years, especially as a result of UNF participation and the resulting heightened activity in project implementation and coordination. The strengthening of relationship with these organisations will help the WHC support its partners in their search for financing, as the value of its contribution in project design and endorsement of proposals rises. Possible future directions include:

- a) Providing advisory function to the development banks vis-à-vis those initiatives or proposals that may impact heritage conservation, for example, the impacts of tourism or infrastructure development.
- b) Orientating development assistance on activities that contribute to the achievement of the MDGs (Goals 1 and 7), while simultaneously consolidating conservation of World Heritage sites, particularly in light of the ecosystem approach.
- c) Submitting and/ or endorsing project proposals which would support the WHC activities under its strategic orientations.

### ***Private sector***

The WHC has had a very positive experience in developing partnerships with the private sector over the past few years. This sector may on the one hand derive direct benefits from World Heritage sites (e.g. tourism) and thus have a vested interest in site conservation, or the sector may recognize the global value of World Heritage sites as part of their

overall corporate social responsibility policy (ICMM/Shell International no-go policy). The WHC is currently exploring approaches to engaging national and international businesses to support site management and community based products and services. To strengthen site management capacity, a partnership has been formed and activities are being carried out under agreements with Shell International. Tour companies are also providing training in skills related to visitor management and/or are financing the development of local enterprises or providing in-kind services. Future actions would recognize the resource industries operating within the larger ecosystems in which World Heritage sites are located, as sustainable engines generating support for local goods and services, e.g. fishing, forestry and agriculture. Priorities in the future will include:

- a) Strategic targeting of enterprises and their associations to identify mutual areas of cooperation.
- b) Assisting World Heritage site managers engage the landscape/ seascape level resource industries in sustainable development dialogues.
- c) Seeking active involvement to aid site management, capacity building and site financing and supporting sustainable livelihoods.
- d) Linking thematic programmes (tourism, marine, forestry) to key industry associations.
- e) Engaging groups or associations representing those industries impacting World Heritage sites in a constructive dialogue that achieves appropriate solutions.
- f) Expanding the “no-go” corporate policies to more industries, e.g. the hydrocarbons industry.



*Everglades National Park, USA*

## World Heritage Programmes & Initiatives on Natural Heritage

### World Heritage Marine Programme



*Brazilian Atlantic Islands: Fernando de Noronha and Atol das Rocas Reserves, Brazil*

The World Heritage Marine Programme's mission is to safeguard the world's marine cultural and natural heritage. This is achieved by assisting States Parties with the nomination of marine properties, including promotion of serial and transboundary nominations; through development of strategic partnerships, through networking between the sites; and by supporting effective management of marine sites.

The marine environment is under increasing threat from a variety of sources including over-fishing, inappropriate fishing practices, coastal development and pollution. The *World Heritage Convention* is uniquely positioned to make an important contribution for the protection of marine protected areas. Its international profile, legal status, site-based orientation and its comprehensive natural heritage criteria provide a practical approach to strategically enhance marine conservation worldwide.

Out of total of over 800 sites there are currently about 34 World Heritage sites which include marine areas. In addition, there are 30 sites that limit to coastline.

The Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Programme works closely with the World Heritage Marine and the Sustainable Tourism Programmes and the Working Group of the Science Sector of UNESCO. It coordinates and develops World Heritage-related activities, natural and cultural, on islands in the Caribbean, the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans.

### Forests Programme



*Shirakami-Sanchi, Japan*

With the inscription of the Sichuan Giant Panda Sanctuaries during the 30<sup>th</sup> World Heritage Committee meeting in July 2006, the number of World Heritage Forest sites increased to 92. Ranging in size from 18 hectares (Vallée de Mai, Seychelles), to 8.8 million hectares (Lake Baikal, Russia), World Heritage forest sites now have a total surface area of over 73 million hectares (1.5 times the surface area of France) and represent over 13% of all IUCN category I-IV protected forests worldwide.

Conversely, every year, over 12 million hectares of tropical and subtropical forest cover alone are lost to agriculture, forestry and other human activities. Ironically, this ever diminishing forest base is also expected to meet an ever increasing demand for forest products. It is clear that serious tensions exist between the global community's demand for forest products on one hand, and its efforts to conserve forest biodiversity on the other.

The *World Heritage Convention* is uniquely positioned amongst international conventions, programmes and agencies to play a leading role for in-situ conservation of forest biodiversity. In recognition of this solemn responsibility, the World Heritage Committee in its 25<sup>th</sup> session (2001), agreed that forests warranted a particular focus, and approved the creation of the World Heritage Forest Programme. Its mission is to promote the fullest and broadest application of the *World Heritage Convention* by all relevant stakeholders, from site level individuals to global organizations, in the pursuit of long term conservation of World Heritage forests and sustainable development.

## Tourism Programme



*Rwenzori Mountains National Park, Uganda*

The mission of the Tourism Programme is to aid the World Heritage Committee and site management using tourism as a positive force to retain WH site values and to help mitigate site threats. The Programme's four areas of activity are:

- Aiding the work of the WH Committee and field offices;
- Increasing WH site capacity to plan and manage tourism;
- Promoting alternative livelihoods for local communities;
- Engaging the tourism industry to affect increased conservation benefits.

In general, the Tourism Programme facilitates linkages between the key actors in the sustainable tourism and conservation chain and develops tools and methods for practical tourism applications. Management policies and processes for broad tourism applications for World Heritage sites are being developed, including processes for determining visitor limits, World Heritage visitor interpretation, facilitating the involvement of the private sector, developing tourism related activities in communities, and exploring methods to aid sites with their operational costs. The Programme encourages the development of planning methodologies so that tourism development remains within the limits of acceptable change to those values upon which the sites were listed as World Heritage.

The Tourism Programme is now cooperating with IUCN, WCPA Tourism Task Force, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, the National Geographic Society, Earthwatch and Ecotourism Australia.

## Rapid Response Facility



*Royal Chitwan National Park, Nepal*

When emergency situations such as forest fires, oil spills and illegal infrastructure works occur in protected areas, critical time is often lost organizing a response, and in particular, finding funds to pay for the response. Under these circumstances, by the time a response can be mounted, managers are faced with a fait accompli, with severe and perhaps irreversible damage to the site already having occurred.

Recognizing the challenge in trying to provide rapid access to funds, and to providing transparency and accountability of how the funds are used, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre (WHC), in cooperation with Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and the United Nations Foundation have established the Rapid Response Facility (RRF).

The RRF provides timely and flexible resources to address threats and emergencies affecting Natural World Heritage Sites and surrounding areas of influence. In particular, it aims to:

- mobilize funds quickly to respond to emergency situations in natural World Heritage sites;
- provide bridging funds in places where longer-term funding is being sought, and;
- catalyse innovative financing mechanisms as part of long-term support programmes.

The RRF is being developed and tested in an initial Pilot Phase (2006-07), during which it will only award small grants of US\$5000 to US\$30,000. Approximately five or six of these will be available each year. If the Pilot Phase is successful, further grants will be offered.

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