

World Heritage is a building block for peace and sustainable development. It is a source of identity and dignity for local communities, a wellspring of knowledge and strength to be shared. In 2012, as we celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, this message is more relevant than ever.

Irina Bokova,
Director-General of UNESCO

Join us
for the 40th Anniversary
of the World Heritage Convention as
we celebrate **World Heritage and
Sustainable Development:**
the Role of Local
Communities.

40 years of the World Heritage
Convention



The World Heritage Convention: KEY DATES

- 1972** Adoption of the [Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage](#). This unique international treaty links for the first time the concepts of nature conservation and preservation of cultural properties, recognizing the way people interact with nature, and the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two.
- 1978** The World Heritage Committee develops selection criteria for inscribing properties on the World Heritage List, and draws up [Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention](#), setting out among other principles those of monitoring and reporting for properties on the List. Ecuador's Galápagos Islands becomes the first of twelve sites to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.
- 1994** The Committee adopts the [Global Strategy](#) for a Balanced, Representative and Credible World Heritage List, aimed at addressing the imbalances on the List between regions of the world, and the types of monuments and periods represented. The Strategy marks the progression from a monumental vision of heritage to a much more people-oriented, multifunctional and global vision of World Heritage. The [Nara Document on Authenticity](#) is adopted, recognizing the specific nature of heritage values within each cultural context.
- 2007** The World Heritage Committee adds a fifth 'C' - [Community](#) - to its Strategic Objectives, highlighting the important role of local communities in preserving World Heritage.
- 1975** The World Heritage Convention formally takes effect upon ratification by the first 20 States Parties. The [List of World Heritage in Danger](#) is created to draw attention to properties needing special international consideration and priority assistance. The [World Heritage Fund](#) is established to assist States Parties identify, preserve and promote World Heritage sites through both compulsory and voluntary contributions.
- 1992** With 377 sites inscribed in the first twenty years of the Convention, the [World Heritage Centre](#) is established to oversee the day-to-day management of the Convention. A new category of sites is added, making the Convention the first legal instrument to recognize and protect [cultural landscapes](#).
- 2002** On the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Convention, the Committee adopts the Budapest Declaration on World Heritage, inviting all stakeholders to support World Heritage conservation through four key Strategic Objectives (the '4 Cs'): [Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-building and Communication](#). The World Heritage Partners Initiative, known today as PACT, is launched to encourage public-private partnerships and set in place a framework through which a wide range of institutions as well as individuals can contribute to the conservation of World Heritage sites around the world.
- 2012** 40 years and 936 World Heritage sites. A year of activities, including events, conferences, workshops, exhibits and a targeted communication campaign, celebrates the 40th Anniversary of the adoption of the World Heritage Convention, with a focus on [World Heritage and Sustainable Development: the Role of Local Communities](#).

Get involved

Visit responsibly

Volunteer

Join the celebration!

World Heritage is our shared heritage.
Help preserve World Heritage sites now!

To make a donation: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/donation/>

To learn more about the World Heritage Convention and find out about the 40th Anniversary events throughout the world and in your region, visit our website at <http://whc.unesco.org> or contact:

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WORLD HERITAGE

and Sustainable Development

The Role of Local Communities



Since the adoption, 40 years ago, of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 936 properties have been inscribed on the World Heritage List. So far, 188 States Parties have ratified the Convention, making it the most widely recognized international treaty for heritage protection.

In our ever more globalized world, communities – both local groups and more ‘virtual’ social networks – are playing an increasingly important role within society, by setting the development agenda and leading on numerous grassroots initiatives. As the Convention celebrates its 40th anniversary, the debate on the place of communities in heritage conservation has taken centre stage.

How can we ensure that World Heritage is given ‘a function in the life of the community’ (*Article 5 of the Convention*) and what does this mean in practice, in the light of the rapidly changing social, economic and environmental context ?

A tour guide.

A schoolteacher and her class.

Women selling their handiwork to

World Heritage site visitors or fishermen

selling their catches to restaurants and hotels in the surrounding areas. Local authorities working to enforce legislation and regulations.

You. Me. Individuals and groups, informal collectives and institutions alike, WE are the real custodians of World Heritage.



Facing challenges together

Along with the many benefits deriving from inscription on the World Heritage List, there are special challenges for those living near, working at, or visiting World Heritage sites. Increased visitation to a site, one of the desired benefits of World Heritage status, can also call for involvement at all levels to have this growth carefully managed. Stakeholders have both benefits and responsibilities and their voice is crucial. The 40th Anniversary focuses on World Heritage and Sustainable Development to illustrate how the participation of local communities can – and should – be a ‘win-win scenario’ for everyone who is committed to protecting the world’s heritage.

2012 – A worldwide celebration

A year of exciting events throughout the five regions of the world has been launched to celebrate the World Heritage Convention’s 40th Anniversary. The celebration is the perfect occasion to reflect on the future of the Convention and explore how its mechanisms can continue to adapt and stay in tune with a changing world. As this remarkable visionary instrument enters its fifth decade, a new Vision Statement and Strategic Plan will come into force, drawing attention to the important links between sustainable development and World Heritage conservation. Innovative approaches to nominations to the List, to monitoring the sites’ state of conservation, and to streamlining the working methods of the Convention’s governing bodies will also be introduced.

The planned events, including workshops, conferences, expert meetings and youth forums, serve as a reminder of how far the Convention has come in helping us to recognize and protect natural and cultural heritage sites of outstanding universal value and offer people around the world the chance to participate directly. Regional thematic meetings will cover subjects such as ensuring the compatibility of heritage and sustainable development; how World Heritage preservation may best benefit from the support and skills of private sector partners; and how to integrate sustainable local community projects into World Heritage planning. **Here is your chance to be involved!**

Throughout 2012, young people a key role in the Anniversary celebrations, day-to-day life of heritage sites, continue to network and attend international World Heritage youth forums, and become involved, through their schools, in UNESCO’s Young People’s World Heritage Education Programme. The future of the Convention rests with them.

in all regions of the world will play as they learn how to participate in the

A final three-day celebration hosted by the Government of Japan in November 2012 will showcase to the world the year’s activities and the conclusions drawn from the regional and thematic events. It will shed fresh light on the past, present and future of the Convention, while publicly recognizing a set of heritage management best practices for the first time.

The Convention in 6 stories

Cambodia Angkor



One of the most important archaeological sites in South-East Asia, Angkor Archaeological Park in Cambodia contains the magnificent remains of the various capitals of the Khmer Empire. Over the years, political and military upheavals, illicit excavation, pillaging of archaeological sites and landmines were destroying the site. Although many monuments are still in need of attention and pressure from tourism is growing, more than fifteen major conservation and restoration projects have been undertaken. In 2004, given that Angkor was being properly managed and that the numerous conservation and restoration activities were successful, the site was removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger.

New Zealand Tongariro National Park



New Zealand’s Tongariro National Park, whose mountains have cultural and religious significance for the Maori people and symbolize their spiritual links with the environment, was designated as the first cultural landscape on the World Heritage List in 1993. The recognition of cultural landscapes as World Heritage sites in 1992 was an important step in underlining the intimate spiritual relationship between peoples and their natural environment.

Mozambique Island of Mozambique



Decades of wars and economic stagnation allowed the former historic capital, on the Island of Mozambique, to lapse into decay. Under a truly multi-donor rehabilitation project – with financing from Japan, Portugal, the Flemish Government of Belgium, the Netherlands and the Union of Luso-Afro-American-Asian Capital Cities – more than 100 local and Mozambican professionals and students were trained in traditional building techniques, using local building materials and decorative principles to restore the fortress and install a new public water cistern.

Ecuador Sangay National Park



In 2005, Sangay National Park, Ecuador, was removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger as significant measures had been taken to address threats. Heavy poaching of wildlife, illegal livestock grazing, encroachment along the park’s perimeter and unplanned road construction were threatening to cause irreversible damage to the natural environment. Today, activities such as hunting, mountain climbing or illegal grazing can only be found in a minimal section of the park, and road construction has been modified to satisfy rigorous international environmental standards.

Yemen Shibam



The 16th-century Old Walled City of Shibam, Yemen, nicknamed ‘the Manhattan of the desert’, has been under threat of destruction because of the abandonment of the old agricultural flood management system in the wadi surrounding the city and the overloading of the traditional sanitary systems. Extensive conservation works implemented by partner organizations have resulted in the restoration of 65 per cent of the buildings, and large-scale flood control measures have been taken in the wadi.

Greenland, Denmark Ilulissat Icefjord



Over the years, the town of Ilulissat experienced a rise in the number of cruise tourists. Without proper management, the growing number of visitors led to difficulties such as attrition, crowding and problems of waste disposal. A management plan (2009–2014) was formulated with initiatives encompassing commercial hunting, motorized vehicles, navigation, recreational activities, research and information. When the plan was presented at a public meeting, many citizens joined the discussion about the management of the World Heritage site.