

The Kyoto Vision



November 8, 2012

Preamble

We, the participants gathered in Kyoto, on the occasion of the Closing Event of the Celebrations of the 40th Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, wish to acknowledge the generous hospitality and intellectual leadership of the Japanese authorities in providing a forum to reflect on the achievements, present issues and future evolution of this unique international conservation treaty.

We reaffirm the centrality of the theme adopted by the General Assembly of the States Parties to the Convention and by the World Heritage Committee for this Fortieth Anniversary, namely "World Heritage and Sustainable Development: the Role of Local Communities". The relationship between World Heritage and local communities is indeed at the heart of the Convention and is fundamental to address the challenges currently facing all regions of the world, through increasing demographic and development pressures, global financial crises and climate change.

We recall, in this context, the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development "The Future We Want" (Rio de Janeiro, June 2012) and the "Vision and Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention 2012-2022" adopted by the 18th General Assembly of States Parties (UNESCO, 2011); as well as the in-depth reflections and results from several expert and consultative meetings organized in all regions of the world under the framework of the 40th anniversary of the Convention.

Achievements of 40 years of the World Heritage Convention

We recognize that the World Heritage Convention, with its 190 States Parties, is one of the most powerful tools for heritage conservation, with a shared vision combining the protection of cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value in one single instrument. We acknowledge the significant contribution of the Convention to social cohesion, dialogue, tolerance, cultural diversity and peace, through its emphasis on the common and shared importance of World Heritage for all of humankind and the promotion of international cooperation for its safeguarding.

We also acknowledge some contributions made over time in strengthening the policies and practices of the Convention as a standard-setter in heritage preservation globally; the importance of youth and future generations, especially related to the Convention's role in intergenerational equity; and all partners and stakeholders in heritage conservation at local, national and regional levels, including local communities and indigenous peoples, whom we acknowledge with respect and pay tribute to on this occasion.

We are concerned, however, about the serious challenges confronting World Heritage properties, associated with development pressures, conflicts, man-made and natural disasters, as well as the gaps in the representativity of the World Heritage List. We also note with concern the crucial lack of technical capacity and financial resources to implement the Convention, particularly in the least developed and developing countries.

A Sustainable Earth and the Role of World Heritage

We are conscious of the enormous challenges our planet is facing to in order to ensure its sustainability and of the need for a transformative change to be reflected in the post-2015 development agenda, which would take into consideration the broader picture of human progress beyond GDP.

We are convinced that a people-centred conservation of the world's cultural and natural heritage is an opportunity to provide critical learning models for the pursuit of sustainable development and for ensuring a harmonious relationship between communities and their environment. The concept of heritage is fundamental to the logic of sustainable development as heritage results from the dynamic and continuous interaction between communities and their environment. Heritage

sustains and improves the quality of life of people, as reinforced in the relevant internationally recognized policies such as the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the achievement of which is beneficial to both cultural and natural heritage.

The acknowledgment and conservation of the diversity of the world's cultural and natural heritage, and the equitable sharing of the benefits deriving from its use, enhance a feeling of place and belonging, mutual respect for others and a sense of collective purpose, which contribute to the social cohesion of a community.

The Importance of the Role of Community

We reiterate the important role of communities, including local communities and indigenous peoples, in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, in accordance with one of its five strategic objectives, the fifth "C" adopted in 2007, and the Strategic Action Plan 2012-2022.

The Convention, in its Article 4, places the responsibility for ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage with the States Parties. At the same time, if one of the aims of the Convention is to "give heritage a role in the life of the community" (Article. 5), then the concerns and aspirations of communities must be centrally involved in conservation and management efforts.

Only through strengthened relationships between people and heritage, based on respect for cultural and biological diversity as a whole, integrating both tangible and intangible aspects and geared toward sustainable development, will the "future we want" become attainable.

Such strengthened relationships should be grounded in a multi-disciplinary and participatory approach to heritage conservation, which would integrate the consideration of social, economic and environmental dimensions, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups respecting all relevant international standards and obligations. Unless such a sustainable development perspective is integrated in the management of a World Heritage property, it will be difficult in the long run to ensure the conservation of its Outstanding Universal Value.

Thus, benefits derived from well-protected cultural and natural heritage properties should be equitably distributed to communities to foster their sustainable development and there should be close cooperation with management bodies and experts. At the same time, attention should be paid to the evolving character of cultural and social contexts relevant to World Heritage, which will inevitably lead to the emergence of new groups of interest and concerns.

This new approach and these considerations will require the building of capacities and education of relevant actors, from institutions and policy makers to heritage practitioners and communities and networks. Communities, in particular, should be empowered to harness the benefits of heritage to society through specific awareness-raising initiatives, skills-development programmes and the establishment of networks. They should be fully involved in management and conservation activities, including in reducing risks from disasters and climate change.

Attention should also be given to the development of sustainable tourism as one of the sources of economic benefits and empowerment for local communities, and the appreciation of cultural diversities by visitors.

A Call for Action

For forty years, the World Heritage Convention has embodied the global ideals and ethics of conservation. While continuing to emphasize the importance of protecting a selection of outstanding sites important for all of humankind, a holistic approach is necessary to include wider dimensions arising from new emerging challenges that threaten the foundation of our societies. The question is not only to save exceptional sites from destruction or neglect, but to demonstrate, through appropriate conservation and management, strategies and a development model based on the values of continuity.

To realize this Vision, the participants wish to launch an appeal to the international community with a view to:

- mobilizing substantial financial resources for heritage conservation globally in the spirit of solidarity and cooperation;

- developing innovative responses to share experience, good practice and knowledge related to communities in support of World Heritage and sustainable development, including capacity building at all levels;
 - sharing responsibility for effectively addressing threats to the world's cultural and natural heritage, and contributing to its sustainable development and collective benefits;
 - taking into account World Heritage in the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda by engaging the international community - within all relevant regional and global forums - for an inclusive approach, considering environmental, cultural and socio-economic needs;
 - enhancing cooperation and coordination among all stakeholders and ensuring effective involvement of local communities, indigenous peoples, experts and youth in conservation from the preparatory phase of the World Heritage nomination process, so that heritage conservation contributes to the sustainable development of the whole society;
 - ensuring the sustainability of local communities through other domains such as intangible cultural heritage and cultural and creative industries, which play a crucial role and;
 - Implementing, as a priority, the Strategic Action Plan 2012-2022 adopted by the General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention.
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