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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD
CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Thirtieth Session

Vilnius, Lithuania

8-16 July 2006

Item 11.1 of the Provisional Agenda: Periodic Reports

11C.1. Progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Periodic Report for the Arab States

SUMMARY

This document contains information on the follow-up actions to the Periodic Report in the Arab States, including the progress made towards the implementation of the Regional Programme adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 27th session (UNESCO, 2003) and notably the Regional Consultation Meeting of December 2005.

Draft Decision: 30 COM 11C.1, Item IV.

I. Background

1. The Arab Region was the first to undertake the Periodic Reporting Exercise, in 2000, approved by the World Heritage Committee during its 24th session (Cairns, 2000). The analysis of the Periodic Reports and other information gathered directly by the Secretariat during its daily activities contributed towards the elaboration of a Regional Programme, framed in the context of the recent Strategic Orientations adopted by the Committee, as well as of the Global Training Strategy, provides a response to the issues raised by the Periodic Reporting exercise for the Arab States and constitutes an attempt to respond to the need for streamlining and pro-activeness identified by the Committee.
2. The World Heritage Committee approved, at its 27th session (UNESCO, 2003), the "Regional Programme for the Arab States", submitted by the World Heritage Centre (document *WHC-03/27.COM/INF.20B*) and published in 2004, in the *World Heritage Paper Series* n°11, thanks to a financial contribution from the Dutch Government.

II. Progress made in the implementation of the Regional Programme

A. REGIONAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING

3. The timetable for the implementation of the Regional Programme (2004-2009) foresees that a consultative meeting, between the Arab States Parties and the World Heritage Centre, be held in 2005, in order to have its content presented and discussed in view of its application. The Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority (United Arab Emirates) generously accepted to collaborate with the World Heritage Centre for the organization of this activity, notably by hosting it and ensuring its local coordination.
4. The main objectives of the meeting were to identify the actions to be undertaken within the framework of the Regional Programme, to assess the application of the latter to date, to present and review assistance modules elaborated by ICOMOS and IUCN and to facilitate the dialogue between States Parties, experts, technical partners and donors. Furthermore, a certain number of priorities, such as the increasing of the number of natural sites nominated to the World Heritage List (many potential marine sites), the reinforcement of the capacities in information management or the development of networks for exchange of experiences and competences between the Arab World Heritage Sites managers, were also to be discussed. Finally, guidelines aiming at helping each of the Arab States Parties for the elaboration of national work plans, and possibly regional ones, were to be defined.
5. The World Heritage Centre wanted to bring together all directors (or his/her representative) of the national institutions in charge of the protection and conservation of the cultural and natural heritage, of each Arab State Party to the *World Heritage Convention*, as well as representatives of the Advisory bodies to the World Heritage Committee, representatives of the main national,

regional and international partners, already collaborating with the World Heritage Centre for the conservation of the cultural and natural heritage in the Arab Region, as well as other potential partners likely to be interested to contribute to the implementation of the Regional Programme in the future.

6. The meeting, entitled “Follow-up to Periodic Reporting and Information Management”, took place in Abu Dhabi from 4 to 8 December 2005 and included representatives from Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen as well as international and regional professional institutions.
7. A certain number of priorities were discussed, such as increasing the number of natural sites nominated to the World Heritage List, the reinforcement of capacities in information management and the development of networks for the exchange of experiences and competencies among the Arab World Heritage sites managers.
8. The meeting reviewed the proposed *Assistance Modules* (see below, paragraph 29) and requested that the World Heritage Centre establish a clear strategy for the training and preparation of national staff responsible for antiquities in the Arab States, with priority to countries which do not have any sites inscribed on the World Heritage List. The *Modules* should also be reviewed by the responsible authorities for approval before being translated into Arabic and posted on the World Heritage Centre Website.
9. Participants requested that Arab States Parties, which do not have laws aimed at protecting their cultural and natural heritage, work on the adoption of these laws as soon as possible. They also suggested that the World Heritage Centre prepare a list of Arab experts in the field of cultural and natural heritage protection in order that the States Parties may benefit from this expertise. They called for the full participation of local communities in the conservation and management of sites. An important request was that the World Heritage Centre and ALECSO study the feasibility of establishing a Fund for Arab World Heritage, similar to the one being initiated in Africa.
10. The draft decisions and recommendations elaborated during the working sessions were further discussed and approved at the final session. Participants adopted the ‘Regional Action Plan Concerning the Cultural World Heritage in the Arab Region,’ as well as the ‘Regional Action Plan Concerning the Natural World Heritage in the Arab Region’ and decided that these plans were to be used as a basis for the preparation of ‘National Action Plans’ for both cultural and natural heritage.
11. The outcome of the meeting shows great progress in the understanding of the Regional programme by the States Parties and on the means to achieve its expected results. A clear commitment has been taken for the implementation of the programme, for the drafting of national action plans by mid-2006, for the establishment of national World Heritage committees/Focal points and for envisaging the creation of a specific Fund. The need to prepare for the next Periodic Reporting exercise was also highlighted and activities to this end

should start as soon as possible in order for the States Parties to be ready for the exercise.

III. Activities undertaken in pursuit of the 4Cs

12. Since the 7th extraordinary session of the Committee (UNESCO, 2004), the following activities were carried out to follow-up on Periodic Reporting in the Arab States, taking into account the comments and recommendations of the States Parties.

A. ACTIVITIES TO MAKE THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST MORE REPRESENTATIVE, BALANCED AND CREDIBLE:

13. Within the framework of the project for the safeguarding and the conservation of the Iraqi cultural heritage, initiated in September 2004 by the World Heritage Centre in collaboration with the UNESCO Amman Office for Iraq and with the generous financial support of the Nordic World Heritage Foundation (NWHF), two workshops were organized by the World Heritage Centre to provide assistance to four Iraqi experts of the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage for the elaboration of the Nomination File of "*Samarra Archaeological City*". The first workshop was held in Amman in June 2005 and the second one held in Paris in September 2005, with the participation of a consultant of the NWHF and representatives of the World Heritage Centre. The final Nomination File was submitted to the World Heritage Centre on 1 February 2006, for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 31st session in 2007.
14. An International Assistance Request for the preparation of the Nomination File of the site of the "Island of Meroe" (Sudan), in view of its proposal for inscription on the World Heritage List, allowed the World Heritage Centre to launch the activity through a mission to Sudan organized in April 2006 in collaboration with the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM). After a complete visit of the three sites composing the proposed property (Naqa, Musawwarat and Meroe), two international experts are currently assisting the NCAM in the constitution of the Nomination File, with a focus on the component dealing with management issues. The finalized dossier should be submitted to the World Heritage by the end of December 2006.
15. In the framework of the Natural Heritage Action Plan for the Arab region developed as follow-up to Periodic Reporting, the World Heritage Centre participated in a workshop entitled "Partnership for Sustainable Development in the Red Sea Coast of Sudan", held in Port Sudan (Sudan) in March 2006, organized by the Regional Organization for the Conservation of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden Environment (PERSGA). As the Red Sea and Sudan marine and coastal areas contain some of the most pristine and biologically diverse ecosystems in the world that are of Outstanding Universal Value, the most important outcome of the above-mentioned workshop is the decision to include a serial site composed of Sanganeb Atoll and Dungenab Bay in the Tentative List of Sudan in view of its nomination as the first Sudanese Natural World Heritage Site.

16. The UNESCO office in Doha (Qatar) is assisting the Qatari cultural and environmental authorities with a 'Study towards a Tentative List of potential World Heritage sites in the State of Qatar'. It also assisted the Qatari Supreme Council for the Environment and Natural Reserves with a survey of existing data, a field survey (marine biology, terrestrial ecology and geology, and ecotourism), and the compilation of a draft nomination file for a potential World Heritage site, 'Khor al Udayd'.
17. Since September 2005, the Arab Region has been the focus of the "Retrospective Inventory", which has been examining the nominations of all sites in the Arab Region inscribed between 1978 and 2004. It should allow for a more complete understanding of the boundaries and other baseline data that will contribute significantly to the second cycle of the Periodic Reporting.

B. ACTIVITIES AND MEETINGS TO ENSURE THE EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION OF WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTIES:

18. A Round Table, co-organized by the World Heritage Centre and the site authorities, on the management of the Banc d'Arguin National Park (Mauritania), took place at UNESCO Headquarters (29-30 November 2004).
19. A stakeholders' meeting, organized from 14 to 16 December 2004 in Zabid, Yemen, by GOPHCY, the organization responsible for the preservation of historic cities of Yemen, aimed at bringing together decision makers, representatives of civil society, and international experts to generate a number of activities towards the rehabilitation and economic revitalization of the city inscribed on the World Heritage List in Danger.
20. A meeting of the International Committee of Experts for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of the Old City of Jerusalem, was convened by the Director-General of UNESCO on 26-27 January 2005 (reported in Document *WHC-05/29.COM/7A*), followed by four technical missions to Jerusalem (reported in document *WHC-06/30.COM/7A*).
21. A Round Table and exhibition on the project "Safeguarding and Development of World Heritage Towns in Mauritania" organized within the framework of the Tripartite Convention "UNESCO – Government of Islamic Republic of Mauritania – World Bank" were held at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France (11-15 April 2005).
22. The World Heritage Centre carried out a mission to Bahrain, in January 2006, responding to a request of the Directorate of Culture and National Heritage regarding the management and protection of the World Heritage Archaeological Site of Qal'at al-Bahrain, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2005. The mission was the opportunity to be informed, on the spot, about the current planning processes of development projects which are threatening the Outstanding Universal Value of the Archaeological Site of Qal'at al-Bahrain, and to meet the responsible authorities and stakeholders dealing with the implementation of these projects, as well as the decision makers at the highest level of the concerned ministries (Document *WHC-06/30.COM/7B*).

23. In the framework of the International Assistance, the World Heritage Centre and the NCAM organized a mission to Sudan in April 2006, in view of the elaboration of the management plan of the World Heritage Site “Jebel Barkal and the sites of the Napatan region”. An international expert visited Khartoum and the five sites of the World Heritage property and held several working roundtables with the different experts of NCAM. A document containing the management plan will be prepared and submitted to the responsible authorities by the end of November 2006 for endorsement.
24. A study on the interdependence between the cultural and biological diversity of the Qadisha Valley (Lebanon) was prepared in 2005 with the assistance of the UNESCO Beirut office, as well as a study for the elaboration of the management plan of the Valley.
25. Special activities aiming at the protection and preservation of the Palestinian natural and cultural heritage, initiated by the decisions of the World Heritage Committee in 2002, implemented mostly by the UNESCO Office in Ramallah, are continuing and are reported in document *WHC-06/30.COM/11C.2*.

C. ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTIVE CAPACITY BUILDING MEASURES INCLUDED THE ORGANIZATION OF OR PARTICIPATION IN:

26. One of the results of the Periodic Reporting in the Arab States demonstrated the difficulties that the State Parties were facing in implementing the *World Heritage Convention* and managing World Heritage Sites. Taking these observations into account, a project financed by the Flemish authority (Kingdom of Belgium) and entitled “*Development of a World Heritage information management capacity in the Arab States*” was elaborated, in order to respond to a concrete need of capacity building in the field of information management, and aimed also at disseminating information on the *World Heritage Convention*. Four components were identified in order to achieve these objectives: two training workshops implemented in two hosting Arab countries (Tunisia and Egypt), Web pages in Arabic dealing with the *World Heritage Convention* and its implementation in the Arab Region, a regional seminar to present the results of the projects to representatives of the Arab States Parties and a human and scientific network aiming at ensuring a follow-up to the main outcomes of the project. The main finding of the project is that the Regional Programme for the Arab States, discussed with the States Parties in the Abu Dhabi meeting (December 2005), integrates information management as a key component for the improvement of the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention* in the region, and the conservation and management of the Arab World Heritage Sites.
27. Within the framework of the ICCROM “*Athar*” Programme, a training workshop entitled “Applied Course on Heritage Site Management”, was organized by ICCROM, in collaboration with the UNESCO Office in Beirut, the World Heritage Centre and the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, Ministry of Culture, Syria, (25 January to 3 February 2005), aiming at raising the issues related to the management of the historic and archaeological sites in the Arab Region. This programme further included a

core regional course on “Conservation of Archaeological Sites”, which was held within a period of 8 weeks at the end of 2005-beginning of 2006. The course included the following topics: documentation; deterioration processes; condition assessment; conservation theory; material conservation and enhancement of sites.

28. A training workshop on the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention* was jointly organized by the World Heritage Centre and the UNESCO Office Doha, in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, (26 February to 2 March 2005) hosted by the Sharjah Directorate of Culture.
29. Within the framework of the Regional Programme, a series of “assistance kits”, ready for use and conceived as modules that can be reproduced, were prepared by ICCROM and IUCN. These kits, 18 in total (10 dealing with cultural heritage and 8 with natural heritage), are referred to as “International Assistance Modules”. They were elaborated in order to respond to each of the needs identified in the first Periodic Reporting Exercise in the Arab Region. These modules, presented to the States Parties at the occasion of the Regional Meeting held in Abu Dhabi in December 2005, are to be envisaged in the framework of the International Assistance, in a pro-active manner, in a “menu” form. The States Parties will naturally still be able to request International Assistance to the World Heritage Fund for specific activities which are not available as modules in the framework of the Regional Programme, and additional modules could also be elaborated to respond to the needs.
30. Within the framework of the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) and the World Monuments Fund (WMF), Iraq Culture Heritage Conservation Initiative, in cooperation with the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) of Iraq, the World Heritage Centre contributed to the content of a training course entitled “Rapid Site Assessment and Iraq Cultural Heritage Sites Database Compilation”, developed and implemented in Amman, Jordan, from 25 August to 25 September 2005. The main interest of the participation of the World Heritage Centre was to experience the integration of the *World Heritage Convention* as tool for conservation and management of cultural heritage sites.

D. COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICATIONS

31. Within the framework of the *World Heritage Convention*, the precision and clarity of the information provided to the States Parties are essential in view of an appropriate implementation of the principles developed in the *Operational Guidelines*. The experience showed that, in the Arab Region the use of the Arabic reinforces the understanding of these principles. Therefore, considering the usefulness of making available the official texts of the *Convention* available in Arabic for the States Parties and the general public, notably on the web site of the World Heritage Centre, all the basic texts relating to the *Convention* were translated into Arabic, thanks to the generous contribution of the Sultanate of Oman. Therefore, a document in Arabic entitled “Basic texts relating to the *World Heritage Convention* (1972)” was published by the World Heritage Centre in March 2006.

32. A Programme for Earthen Architecture was approved by the World Heritage Committee in 2002, with particular reference to Asia and the Arab region. The aim was to develop activities under this programme in view of the improvement of the conservation and management of earthen sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, by developing policies and best practices for users and site managers. In this framework, the World Heritage Centre launched the elaboration of a handbook entitled “Conservation Manual for Earth Architecture Heritage in the pre-Saharan valleys of Morocco”, prepared by CRATerre (France) with the collaboration of the CERKAS (Centre pour l’Etude et la Recherche sur les Kasbahs du Sud - Morocco). The UNESCO Rabat Office ensured the publication of the handbook in November 2005, in Arabic, French and English, to the financing of which the Spanish Funds-in-trust for UNESCO contributed generously.

IV. Draft Decision

Draft decision: 30 COM 11C.1

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-06/30.COM/11C.1,*
2. *Recalling Decision 7 **EXT.COM 5B** adopted at its 7th extraordinary session (UNESCO, 2004),*
3. *Takes note of the information provided by the World Heritage Centre on the progress made in the implementation of the Regional Programme for the Arab States and in responding to the priority needs identified in the Periodic Reporting submitted by the Arab States in 2000;*
4. *Thanks the Flemish Authority (Kingdom of Belgium) for the project entitled “Development of a World Heritage information management capacity in the Arab States”, and the Nordic World Heritage Foundation for its assistance to the State Board of Antiquities of Iraq;*
5. *Expresses its gratitude to the United Arab Emirates, and especially the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority, for hosting the Regional Meeting on the Follow-up to Periodic Reporting in the Arab States, held in Abu Dhabi in December 2005;*
6. *Requests the States Parties, in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, to continue implementing the Regional Programme, and notably the Action Plans adopted in Abu Dhabi, to be developed into operational national work plans, and to establish a fund raising strategy to provide the necessary financial and human resources required to this end;*

7. *Requests the Director of the World Heritage Centre to report at its 32nd session (2008) on the implementation of the Regional Programme.*