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SEVENTEENTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Paris, UNESCO Headquarters
23 – 28 October 2009

Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda: Future of the *World Heritage Convention*

SUMMARY

This document on the Future of the *World Heritage Convention* contains:

- I. Background on the Reflection on the Future of the *Convention*
- II. Working methods of the World Heritage Committee and of the General Assembly of States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention*;
- III. Progress report on the implementation of the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List
- IV. Draft Resolution

Draft Resolution: 17 GA 9, see Point IV.

PART I

Background on the reflection on the Future of the *Convention*

1. At the 32nd session (Quebec City, 2008), the World Heritage Committee decided, in view of the approaching 40th anniversary of the *World Heritage Convention* in 2012 and of the potential inscription of the 1000th property to the World Heritage List, to convene a workshop to reflect on the future of the *Convention*. With a view to assisting in the establishment of the agenda and preparation of materials for the workshop, World Heritage Committee members, States Parties and Advisory Bodies were invited to submit written communications. These papers, along with background material, were available online prior to the Workshop.
2. The Workshop to reflect on the Future of the *World Heritage Convention*, which took place from 25 to 27 February 2009 at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, was attended by 129 experts from 72 States Parties (including 35 from developing countries), as well as by 10 representatives from IUCN, ICOMOS, and ICCROM, 29 representatives from non-governmental organizations and 18 representatives from UNESCO.
3. The meeting provided a venue for rich debate, strengthened by the reflection of 44 written submissions from States Parties, Advisory Bodies, UNESCO and non-governmental and international organizations. On the basis of these written submissions, the agenda for the Workshop addressed three key themes:
 - a) Values, messages and image of the *Convention*
 - b) Conservation and sustainable development
 - c) The World Heritage system
4. Keynote addresses were presented by a variety of experts, and the workshop utilized a combination of plenary and small working group formats. All the relevant documents relating to this process are available online at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/futureoftheconvention/>, together with Document *WHC-09/33.COM/14A*, which is the summary of the Workshop by the Chairperson of the 33rd session.
5. At its 33rd session, the World Heritage Committee welcomed the Chairperson's summary and established a Consultative Body under Rule 20 of the Rules of Procedure of the World Heritage Committee to meet for the duration of its 33rd session, with a specific mandate to:
 - a) review the outcome of the above-mentioned workshop;
 - b) formulate its recommendations thereon; and
 - c) report back on this issue to the Committee at its plenary session.
6. The *Consultative Body* worked for five days and presented its report to the plenary. The Decision (Decision **33 COM 14A.2, see Annex**) adopted by the Committee on this subject highlighted the need to develop an overall strategic plan to guide the implementation of the *Convention* over the next decade and identified some high priority short to medium term activities on which action needs to be taken immediately. These include:
 - (i) to develop an inclusive plan of action to increase community awareness and engagement;
 - (ii) to explore creative approaches, including through the tentative list process, which might reduce the number of properties that experience significant problems;
 - (iii) to develop recommendations to assist States Parties in responding effectively to the range of problems that emerge for inscribed properties.

PART II

Working methods of the World Heritage Committee and of the General Assembly of States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention*

A. Background on the working methods of the World Heritage Committee

1. The issue of the working methods of the World Heritage Committee has been dealt with several times in different contexts and settings.
2. At its 23rd session (Marrakech, 1999), the World Heritage Committee established a Task Force on the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention*, chaired by Canada, which reported to the Committee at its 24th session (Cairns, 2000). This Task Force identified several proposals for improving the working methods of the Committee. The report of this Task Force can be consulted at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2000/whc-00-conf204-inf7e.pdf>.
3. At its 7th extraordinary session (UNESCO, 2004), the World Heritage Committee, by its Decision **7 EXT.COM 4B.3**, established an ad hoc working group to examine its working methods. The Committee decided that this working group should complete its mandate for the 29th session (Durban, 2005). On the basis of this report, the Committee adopted at its 29th session (Durban, 2005), Decision **29 COM 18 C** by which it decided “*to explore at its 30th session ways and means of optimizing the time-management of its sessions, including the need and convenience of increasing on a permanent basis the periodicity of its ordinary sessions, taking particularly into account*
 - i) *the importance of ensuring a manageable agenda; and*
 - ii) *the need to have enough time to examine the state of conservation of sites on the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger, as well as the nominations to the World Heritage List.*”
4. In December 2005 and during the first trimester of 2006, a number of States Parties (including several European countries as well as Australia and Canada) expressed, by letter addressed to the Director-General, their concerns about the working methods of the World Heritage Committee. Upon request by a number of European States Parties, the Director-General received the representatives of Austria (in the capacity of Chair of the European Union Presidency), the United Kingdom and Finland on 19 May 2006. Following this meeting, proposals were drawn up to improve the working methods of the World Heritage Committee and were submitted to the Committee for its consideration and possible adoption.
5. At its 30th session (Vilnius, 2006), the World Heritage Committee debated the proposals presented in Document *WHC-06/30.COM/13* and requested the World Heritage Centre by its Decision **30 COM 13** to develop, without prejudice to the *World Heritage Convention* and the *Operational Guidelines*, a document to be discussed at the 31st session of the Committee in 2007 on the division of responsibilities between the World Heritage Committee and the General Assembly of State Parties, based on the following principles;
 - a) *Strategic policy issues should be discussed and adopted by the General Assembly;*

- b) *Decisions by the General Assembly should direct and guide the work of the World Heritage Committee in its implementation of the World Heritage Convention;*
- c) *The World Heritage Committee should concentrate its agenda around the State of Conservation of listed properties, Periodic Reporting, and nominations to the World Heritage List.*

Concerning the working methods, the Committee also recommended that the World Heritage Committee hold one session per year. Extra-ordinary sessions of the Committee should only take place when very exceptional circumstances make it necessary and the Committee reaffirmed that, to ensure an efficient meeting, the following principles should be followed:

- a) *To have a manageable agenda in relation to the number of days set for the meeting;*
- b) *To start all proceedings on time;*
- c) *To apply Rule 22.2 of the Rules of Procedure and to set a strict limit to the time allowed for each speaker;*
- d) *To allow one additional full meeting day every two years, devoted to issues to be presented to the General Assembly the same year, starting with the 31st session in 2007.*

It further recommended that working documents for decision by the Committee be as short as possible and normally not exceed 5 pages, contain all the elements necessary for a well-founded decision, and be written in plain (non-technical) language as far as possible. It requested the World Heritage Centre to carry out a cost-benefit analysis of the current summary record and an audio recording and to report back to its 31st session in 2007.

B. Background on the working methods of the General Assembly

At its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007), the Committee, after having examined the document, invited the General Assembly to take into account the debate on the division of responsibilities between the General Assembly and the World Heritage Committee held at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007) in examining the possibility that strategic policy issues become permanent agenda items for the Assembly, including:

- a) Strategic Objectives for the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention*;
- b) Strategic policy issues such as the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List;
- c) Orientations in relation to World Heritage Programmes and the World Heritage Fund;
- d) Reflection on major themes of cultural and natural heritage;
- e) Implementation of previous General Assembly resolutions;
- f) The State of Conservation of World Heritage.

The General Assembly of States Parties at its 16th session decided to put Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List on the Agenda of its 16th session and to keep it on for the 17th session.

Even if the General Assembly is not a position to decide on the Committee's working methods, it can debate at this present session its own working methods in light of the above-mentioned background documents.

PART III

Progress report on the implementation of the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List

I. Background

The Global Strategy for a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List, adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 18th session (1994) (<http://whc.unesco.org/archive/global94.htm>), provides a broad framework for an analysis and action programme designed to identify and fill the major gaps in the World Heritage List. The Global Strategy relies on regional and thematic reviews and analyses of categories of heritage of Outstanding Universal Value, encourages more countries to become States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* and to develop good Tentative Lists and suitable nominations of properties for inscription on the List.

It is important to recall that the Global Strategy first focused on cultural heritage in 1994 and was then enlarged in 1996 to encompass natural heritage with the Expert Meeting on Evaluation of general principles and Criteria for Nominations of Natural World Heritage sites (Parc de la Vanoise, France, 22-24 March 1996; WHC.96/CONF.201/INF.08, <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/vanoise.htm>). This meeting was "understood to be a first step in the process of developing an overall Global Strategy". The origins of the Global Strategy and an overview of Global Strategy activities conducted between 1994 and 1998 can be found in Document *WHC-98/CONF.203/12.3*.

As the main goal of the 1994 Global Strategy has been to ensure a more representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List, this document will focus only on those aspects of the Global Strategy directly relevant to improving those three characteristics attributed to the List. As such, it is important to recall that:

Representativity refers to: *ensuring representation on the World Heritage List of properties of Outstanding Universal Value from all regions* (2000 Working Group on the Representativity of the World Heritage List);

Balance refers to: *ensuring that key bio-geographical regions or events in the history of life are reflected in the World Heritage List* (Expert Meeting, Parc de La Vanoise, 1996; WHC.96/CONF.201/INF.08);

Credibility refers to: *ensuring a rigorous application of the criteria established by the Committee for both inscription and management, and ensuring representativity and balance of sites, in order that the World Heritage List as a whole is not undermined* (Expert Meeting Parc de La Vanoise, 1996; WHC.96/CONF.201/INF.08; and as reviewed during the development of the 1992 ICOMOS Global Study).

II. Analysis of the implementation of the Global Strategy over the period 2003-2009

In order to better ascertain the results of the Global Strategy it is necessary to set aside the first nine years of implementation, as these might be considered mostly as a capacity building period whose outcomes would only be appreciated later. This is the reason why this analysis focuses only on the period 2003 to 2009.

It is also essential to consider the results of the Global Training Strategy adopted by the World Heritage Committee, and that led to the creation of Regional Programmes whose objectives are to build the capacities of countries to improve their representativity on the World Heritage List on the long term.

The results of any analysis of the Global Strategy for a Balanced, Representative and Credible World Heritage List should be read alongside the notion of Outstanding Universal Value. According to this notion, to ensure the **credibility** of the World Heritage List, it must be acknowledged that the List cannot ever be wholly representative of the earth's entire cultural and natural heritage.

Taking into account this consideration, in terms of **representativity**, the outcomes of the implementation of the Global Strategy are encouraging. While in 2002, the List counted already **126 (72%)** States Parties with inscribed properties out of 175 States Parties to the *Convention*, today **148 (79%)** out of 186 States Parties have inscribed properties on the List. This means that during the period 2003-2009, **22** States Parties had inscribed a property on the World Heritage List for the first time.

Furthermore, during this same period, another positive trend could be noted related to the increase in inscriptions on the World Heritage List of under-represented regions (in line with Main Line of Action 1 of the Culture Programme in the 34 C/ 5 approved the under-represented regions are Africa, Caribbean and Pacific regions). Today, **116 (13%)** properties out of the 890 forming the World Heritage List are in under-represented regions. Indeed, **31 (19%)** inscriptions out of a total of 162 new additions to the List were from under-represented regions during the period 2003-2009. While these regions continue to be under-represented, this data clearly shows the important progress made in terms of improving geographical balance through the implementation of the Global Strategy.

In terms of **balance** and categories of properties, it is less easy to discern the impact of the implementation of the Global Strategy. However, some general trends can be noticed from an analysis of the relevant data of the period 2003-2009, bearing in mind that, concerning cultural properties, the Global Strategy proposed specifically to “move away from a purely architectural view of the cultural heritage of humanity towards one which was much more anthropological, multi-functional and universal”.

Regarding cultural landscapes, out of the 66 inscribed on the List to date, **36 (54%)** were inscribed in the period 2003-2009 representing **22%** of the total inscriptions over the same years. Interestingly, about one third of the 36 cultural landscapes inscribed come from the less represented regions. It can also be noted that, although the four most represented categories of cultural properties (according to ICOMOS gaps analysis: The World Heritage List: Filling the gaps – an action plan for the future, An analysis by ICOMOS, 2004) account for almost a half, **79 (48%)** of the 162, properties inscribed in the period 2003-2009 (archaeological properties, or historic towns/urban settlements, or architectural monuments or religious properties), whereas **18** properties of modern heritage were also inscribed between 2003 and 2009.

For natural heritage, the scale of inscriptions occurring during the period 2003-2009 does not allow for significant conclusions to be drawn; out of a total of 162 inscriptions, **34 (20%)** were natural properties, a result that confirms the overall proportion of the List (see Table 1). It could be noted that **41%** of natural heritage inscribed in the period 2003-2009 were geological sites and **20%** were marine sites. However, it can be noted that following the publication of the IUCN paper on “Future priorities for a credible and complete list of natural and mixed sites” (2004), a few inscriptions filled some of the gaps identified in that analysis.

After having considered the impacts of the Global Strategy over the period 2003-2009 of inscriptions, the following section presents some statistics concerning the Tentative Lists and the World Heritage List during the broader period between 1994 and 2009.

III. Statistical analysis of the current Tentative Lists and the World Heritage List over the period 1994-2009

A. Some statistical analyses

There are **890** properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and **1,458** properties currently included on Tentative Lists. Table 1 presents the numbers and percentages of properties by region and by category:

Table 1: The current situation on the World Heritage List and on Tentative Lists.

Geographical Regions (number of States Parties)	Cultural properties				Natural properties				Mixed properties			
	W.H.List 2009		Tentative Lists 2009		W.H.List 2009		Tentative Lists 2009		W.H.List 2009		Tentative Lists 2009	
Africa (44)	42	4.72%	124	8.50%	33	3.70%	63	4.32%	3	0.33%	39	2.67%
Arab States (18)	60	6.74%	101	6.92%	4	0.45%	23	1.57%	1	0.11%	11	0.75%
Asia and the Pacific (41)	129	14.94%	273	18.72%	48	5.39%	87	5.96%	9	1.01%	45	3.08%
Europe and North America (51)	375	42.13%	352	24.14%	56	6.29%	93	6.37%	9	1.01%	66	4.52%
Latin America and the Caribbean (32)	83	9.32%	103	7.06%	35	3.93%	41	2.81%	3	0.33%	37	2.53%
Total	689	77.41%	953	65.36%	176	19.77%	307	21.05%	25	2.80%	198	13.58%

If the numbers of properties on the current World Heritage list are compared (by region and category) with those on Tentative Lists (see table below), it can be observed that the Global Strategy may have had an impact on the latter.

Table 2: The comparison between the situation of the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and properties included on the Tentative Lists in 2009.

Geographical Regions	Cultural properties	Natural properties	Mixed properties
Africa	+ 3.78%	+ 0.61%	+ 2.34%
Arab States	+ 0.18%	+ 1.12%	+ 0.64%
Asia and the Pacific	+ 3.78%	+0.57%	+ 2.07%
Europe and North America	- 17.99%	+ 0.08%	+ 3.51%
Latin America and the Caribbean	- 2.26%	- 1.12%	+ 2.2%
Total	- 12.05%	+ 1.28%	+ 10.78%

This table which compares the present situation (properties on the World Heritage List) with the potential future situation (with properties from the Tentative Lists) could give an indication of potential trends that could characterise submission of nominations in future years. The most significant potential trends that result from this comparison are the following:

- A comparatively sharp decrease of cultural properties along with an increase of natural and especially of mixed properties;
- A considerable decrease in cultural properties from Europe and North America;
- A relative increase of cultural and mixed properties in Africa, which for years has been the only region with more natural than cultural properties.

However, it should be noted that trends in nominations and in the composition of Tentative Lists over the last few years, appear to have been significantly influenced by the limits imposed by the Cairns-Suzhou decision. These limits strongly encouraged States Parties looking for alternative solutions.

The distribution of natural, cultural and mixed properties in the five, broad geographical regions recognized by UNESCO, in 1994 and 2009, is as follows:

Table 3: The situation of the World Heritage List in 1994 and in 2009.

Geographical Regions	Cultural properties		Natural properties		Mixed properties							
	1994	2009	1994	2009	1994	2009						
Africa	14	3.41%	42	4.72%	18	4.39%	33	3.70%	1	0.24%	3	0.33%
Arab States	42	10.24%	60	6.74%	2	0.48%	4	0.45%	1	0.24%	1	0.11%
Asia and the Pacific	49	11.95%	129	14.94%	24	5.85%	48	5.39%	7	1.70%	9	1.01%
Europe and North America	160	39.02%	375	42.13%	31	7.56%	56	6.29%	5	1.21%	9	1.01%
Latin America and the Caribbean	40	9.75%	83	9.32%	13	3.17%	35	3.93%	3	0.73%	3	0.33%
Total	305	74.40%	689	77.41%	88	21.45%	176	19.77%	17	4.15%	25	2.80%

Number of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1994: **410**

Number of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2009: **890**

The table below shows the changes in percentage within each region and category of property between 1994 and 2009.

Table 4: The comparison of the World Heritage List in 1994 and in 2009.

Geographical Regions	Cultural properties	Natural properties	Mixed properties
	1994 → 2009	1994 → 2009	1994 → 2009
Africa	+ 1.31%	- 0.69%	+ 0.09%
Arab States	- 3.5%	- 0.13%	- 0.13%
Asia and the Pacific	+ 2.99%	- 0.03%	- 0.69%
Europe and North America	+ 3.11%	- 1.27%	- 0.2%
Latin America and the Caribbean	- 0.43%	+ 0.76%	- 0.4%
Total	+ 3.01%	- 1.68%	- 1.35%

The following trends can be deduced from these figures:

- a) Since 1994, the significant overall growth in the number of cultural properties inscribed made the gap between the number of natural and mixed properties even bigger. The Cairns-Suzhou decision (imposing the nomination of a natural property on those States Parties that wanted to submit 2 nominations for the same cycle) had an immediate and positive effect¹ in terms of growth of nominations of natural properties. However, the amendment made to that decision at the 31st session of the Committee in Christchurch (which allows States Parties to submit two nominations of cultural properties for the same cycle) is widening again the difference between cultural properties and natural properties;
- b) The period between 1994 and 2009, registered again an increase in the number of cultural properties inscribed in Europe and North America and in Asia and the Pacific. In the same period, a considerable drop in the number of cultural properties in the Arab States was also noted.

Some other important trends, also in relation to the number of States Parties that ratified the *World Heritage Convention*, have to be taken into consideration:

- a) The percentage of States Parties **not** having any World Heritage properties **decreased significantly** from **30.9%** in 1994 (36 out of 139 States Parties) to **20.4%** in 2009 (38 out of 186 States Parties);
- b) The percentage of States Parties having submitted Tentative Lists **rose considerably** from **53%** in 1994 (74 out of 139 States Parties) to **89%** in 2009 (166 out of 186 States Parties);
- c) In 1994, 56 (40.2%) of States Parties had 1-3 properties, 30 (21.5%) had 4-10 properties and 7 (5%) had 11 properties or more; the corresponding figures for 2009 are: 76 (39.8%), 52 (27.9%) and 20 (10.75%), respectively;

¹ See document "Global Strategy: Evaluation of the Cairns-Suzhou Decision", WHC-07/31.COM/10

- d) In 2009, the 20 States Parties with 11 or more properties account for 459 properties, equivalent to 51.5% of the total number of inscribed properties.

IV. Draft Resolution

The General Assembly,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-09/17.GA/9,*
2. *Notes the progress report on the implementation of the Global Strategy for a credible, representative and balanced World Heritage List from 1994 to 2009 presented in this document;*
3. *Calls upon the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and other partners to increase significantly their support to States Parties, particularly in less developed countries, in the identification of cultural, natural and mixed properties for Tentative Lists as well as in the harmonization of their Tentative List taking into account existing relevant studies;*
4. *Requests the World Heritage Centre to compile all reports from sub-regional meetings and thematic studies and to make them available on a specific web page of the World Heritage Centre's website;*
5. *Invites States Parties to share with other States Parties their national exercises for preparation of Tentative Lists, in particular to support the harmonization of Tentative Lists;*
6. *Requests the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre to develop additional technical and policy guidance for serial, transboundary and transnational nominations and in particular for their identification and management;*
7. *Requests the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to provide for the next session of the General Assembly in 2011 an evaluation of the Global Strategy from its inception in 1994 to 2011.*