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

Paris, UNESCO Headquarters

18-20 November 2015

**Item 14 of the Provisional Agenda: Reflection on the Periodic Reporting
exercise (2015-2017)**

INF.14: General reflection on Periodic Reporting

SUMMARY

This document contains the general reflection on Periodic Reporting that has been presented to the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session (Part II of document WHC-15/39.COM/10B).

This document is to be read in conjunction with WHC-15/20.GA/14.

GENERAL REFLECTION ON PERIODIC REPORTING (EXTRACT FROM WORKING DOCUMENT WHC-15/39.COM/10B)

I. BACKGROUND

1. Periodic Reporting (PR) is a statutory process based on Article 29 of the *World Heritage Convention* and is further regulated by the *Operational Guidelines* in Chapter V: Periodic Reporting on the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. According to Paragraph 199 of the *Operational Guidelines*, “States Parties are requested to submit reports to the UNESCO General Conference through the World Heritage Committee on the legislative and administrative provisions they have adopted and other actions which they have taken for the application of the *Convention*, including the state of conservation of the World Heritage properties located on their territories.”
2. The main purposes of the Periodic Reporting exercise are defined by Paragraph 201 of the *Operational Guidelines*, namely:
 - a) to provide an assessment of the application of the *World Heritage Convention* by the State Party;
 - b) to provide an assessment as to whether the Outstanding Universal Value of the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List is being maintained over time;
 - c) to provide updated information about the World Heritage properties to record the changing circumstances and state of conservation of the properties;
 - d) to provide a mechanism for regional co-operation and exchange of information and experiences between States Parties concerning the implementation of the *Convention* and World Heritage conservation.
3. The first decision on the process and format of the Periodic Reporting exercise (Decision **22 COM VI.7**) was taken by the Committee at its 22nd session (Kyoto, 1998). The first cycle of Periodic reporting took place, on a regional basis, between 2000 and 2006. The reports and respective Regional Action Plans were examined and adopted by the World Heritage Committee, at its 24th (Cairns, 2000), 25th (Helsinki, 2001), 27th (UNESCO, 2003), 28th (Suzhou, 2004) and 30th (Vilnius, 2006) sessions respectively.
4. The completion of the first cycle of Periodic Reporting generated important information regarding the state of implementation of the World Heritage Convention, as well as about the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. Some general conclusions were drawn from the completion of this cycle and issues that need to be addressed in the future were identified. At the same time, the first cycle also exposed some flaws in the process and the need to revise the questionnaire in order to collect the type of information that could realistically be expected from States Parties.
5. In line with the Committee’s Decision **7 EXT.COM 5**, in view of the need “to study and reflect on the first cycle of Periodic Reporting, develop strategic direction on the forms and the format of the Periodic Reports, training priorities and international cooperation priorities and to streamline the Committee’s consideration of matters raised through Periodic Reporting relating to inscribed properties”, the launch of the second cycle was suspended by one year. Two preparatory meetings to pave the way for the Periodic Reporting Reflection Year 2007 were organized by the World Heritage Centre.
6. At its 30th session (Vilnius, 2006), the Committee examined the outcomes of the preparation for the Periodic Reporting Reflection Year 2007 and adopted the Terms of Reference for the Reflection Year, as well as the timeline for the second Periodic Reporting cycle. By its Decision **30 COM 11G**, it decided to entrust to a small Working Group composed of the UNESCO Institute of Statistics / international experts /

Committee Members/Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre with the simplification of the Periodic Reporting questionnaire including the elaboration of indicators.

7. The results of the work of the Working Group were examined by the Committee at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007) and 32nd session (Quebec, 2008) and the respective decisions **30 COM 11D.1** and **32 COM 11E** were adopted. By its Decision **32 COM 11E**, the Committee approved the new format of the Periodic Reporting questionnaire and launched the second cycle of Periodic Reporting. The Decision also welcomed the web-based tool to be used by all regions for the second cycle. In addition, it acknowledged that it had not been possible, within the available timeframe (between 31st and 32nd sessions) and financial resources, to develop comprehensive indicators for World Heritage properties, and invited this matter to be addressed through an expert meeting, subject to extra-budgetary funding.

I. SECOND CYCLE OF PERIODIC REPORTING

8. The Committee launched the second cycle of Periodic Reporting at its 32nd session (Quebec, 2008). The exercise concerned 18 States Parties from the Arab region, 15 of which had properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and covered some 64 properties, for which 59 reports were received. The second cycle of the Periodic Reporting exercise in the Africa region was launched in 2009 and involved 44 States Parties to the Convention, 78 properties in 30 States Parties were reported on. In the Asia Pacific Region, all States Parties that ratified the Convention before the launch in 2010 joined the Periodic Reporting exercise, which involved 41 States Parties and 198 properties. In the Latin America and the Caribbean region, 29 out of the 32 States Parties of the region took part in the second cycle, covering 122 out of the 128 properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. The second cycle of the Periodic Reporting exercise in the Europe and North America region was launched in 2012, and 50 out of 51 States Parties in the Europe and North America region took part in the two-year exercise, covering some 443 World Heritage properties.
9. All regions used the web-based Periodic Reporting format of the questionnaire (Section I and Section II), updated as a result of the Periodic Reporting Reflection Year 2007. It should be noted that the Africa region reportedly experienced challenges with this system due to the lack of reliable internet service.
10. The respective Periodic Reports for the regions were adopted by the Committee at its 34th session (Brasilia, 2009) for the Arab region; 35th session (UNESCO, 2011) for Africa; 36th session (St Petersburg, 2012) for the Asia and the Pacific region; 37th session (Phnom Penh, 2013) for Latin America and the Caribbean and 38th session (Doha, 2014) for North America. The Periodic Report for the Europe region was examined by the Committee at its 39th session (Bonn, 2015) (See Document WHC-15/39.COM/10A).
11. In comparison with the first cycle, which applied to the World Heritage properties inscribed on the World Heritage List up to 1998, the second cycle applied to all World Heritage properties inscribed on the List at the time when the exercise was launched for each respective region. Therefore, the number of properties which were included in the second cycle comprised practically the entirety of World Heritage properties on the List (some 930 properties), thus allowing to establish a more complete picture of the implementation of the Convention in all States Parties, as well as a more precise worldwide snapshot of the maintenance of the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties over time and their state of conservation, including trends and tendencies, both global and regions-specific.

12. The second cycle of Periodic Reporting generated a wealth of information and thus, fully complied with the main purposes of the Periodic Reporting exercise defined by Paragraph 201 of the *Operational Guidelines*.
13. The second cycle brought to light that important efforts are being made to improve site management and made it clear that while issues from within the properties were coming under better control, the external pressures on sites with regard to integrating site management with the larger development planning issues is emerging as a leading challenge for World Heritage sites in many regions. As a result, the World Heritage Committee's recommendations focus more and more on these large development and planning issues. A small but telling example is the emphasis that the Committee and the heritage community now place on Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs).
14. For some of the regions, the Periodic Reporting exercise has helped to focus World Heritage International Assistance and cooperation on the key and most critical of safeguarding matters in response to the evolution of the most pressing internal and external issues identified through the Periodic Reporting exercise.
15. At the same time, during the second cycle a number of issues were identified regarding the process and format by different World Heritage stakeholders, which the Committee may wish to address during a Reflection period, in view of further improving the modalities of this exercise and updating it with the evolving factors, trends and requirements.

A. INVOLVEMENT AND WORKLOAD OF STAKEHOLDERS CONCERNED DURING THE SECOND CYCLE

16. The second cycle involved a very significant workload for all stakeholders concerned and required substantial human and financial resources to address all relevant elements, including the Periodic Reporting questionnaires, the retrospective Statements of Outstanding Universal Value and the Retrospective Inventory. The overview presented below addresses only the workload related directly to the Periodic Reporting exercise and submission of questionnaires, excluding the workload of the various World Heritage stakeholders related to the Retrospective Inventory and the process of elaboration, processing and adoption of retrospective Statements for Outstanding Universal Value.

World Heritage Centre

17. To support the smooth running of the Second Periodic Reporting exercise, the World Heritage Centre, with the involvement of Advisory Bodies, where appropriate:
 - a) Manually pre-filled the Section I questionnaires for all States Parties of the Convention at the time of launch for each respective region as well as Section II questionnaires for all World Heritage properties with the available statutory information, prior to releasing those questionnaires to the Focal Points and Site Managers for validation and/or update;
 - b) Prepared training materials before and during the second cycle of Periodic Reporting: for some regions, special video tutorials were edited (Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and North America); a Handbook for Site Managers (Europe) was prepared and translated into a number of languages; Guidelines as well as a Frequently Asked Questions document were also made available;
 - c) Provided Desk Support for all Focal Points and Site Managers for most regions throughout the exercise, providing advice and support on all technical issues and questions of content;
 - d) Co-organised with host countries during the preparation and the process itself more than 30 workshops dedicated to Periodic Reporting and organised numerous side-

events during statutory meetings. In most cases, these meetings were organized as capacity-building events as they were also an opportunity to address World Heritage matters beyond the strict scope of the Periodic Reporting exercise;

- e) In a number of regions, involved World Heritage experts in the capacity of mentors/advisors in the exercise, to provide support and advise to the stakeholders of the exercise in the region (Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Arab States);
 - f) Shared National Data Sets with States Parties as soon as feasible after the end of the exercise to enable the respective World Heritage stakeholders of States Parties to make the best use of the available data for adjusting and improving respective policies and management practices (Europe);
 - g) Posted the short Periodic Reporting reports, with the responses to both Section I and II, on the web page, subject to agreement by States Parties (Europe);
 - h) Analysed 182 Section I questionnaires and 927 Section II questionnaires, hiring external help where necessary, and produced the Periodic Reports for the five regions which were consulted with the States Parties of the regions and endorsed by the Committee.
 - i) On the basis of the Periodic Reports, organized the publication of the outcomes of the second cycle for each of the regions, including main conclusions, trends, lessons learnt, in view of sharing the results of the exercise with a larger number of stakeholders in a more accessible and illustrative manner than the standard format of a working Committee document; thanks to extra-budgetary funding, the abovementioned outcome publication for the Asia Pacific region included an interactive DVD, which provides full information on factors affecting the properties in Asia and the Pacific, providing the users, in particular site managers, with a tool to search properties that are affected by the same factors. This tool further allows the users to search properties by subject (chrono-regional, thematic, biophysical landscape/seascape, and the types of material used), and find information on properties and site managers;
 - j) Initiated and organized with the Focal Points of the States Parties in each respective region, a discussion of outcomes of the exercise, needs and priorities and elaborated the Action Plans, further to the discussion. In some cases, the Action plans were elaborated in a fully participative manner by the Focal Points (Helsinki Action Plan);
 - k) Launched, for some regions, the so-called 'post-filling', a largely manual process, which includes processing of all responses and comments and the enormous amount of statutory information which should be updated as a follow-up to the second cycle of Periodic Reporting through the related statutory procedures;
 - l) Resolved technical difficulties encountered during the exercise, including temporary unavailability of the questionnaires, saving issues, indications of completeness of the questionnaire and correct displays of responses. Thanks to the extensive and useful feedback collected from the Focal Points, the web-based questionnaire was improved from an IT perspective. An estimated two to four months of IT support per region (including pre-filling, improvement of questionnaire and data export function, Periodic Reporting Platform) was put into the second cycle.
18. Overall, the lessons learnt from the second cycle, with regard to the involvement and workload of the World Heritage Centre, show that:
- a) The workload associated with Periodic Reporting and following up on the implementation of the regional Action Plans at the World Heritage Centre is considerable and, in the current financial and human resources, not sustainable. Depending on the size of the region and number of World Heritage properties, a member of the Unit has always been tasked, full- or part-time, with the follow-up of

the Periodic Reporting exercise, and required the assistance of other staff in the Units, part-time consultants and other temporary staff;

- b) In addition, while essential to the preparation and follow-up of Periodic Reporting, Periodic Reporting capacity-building has also represented a substantial strain on human and financial resources at the World Heritage Centre;
- c) Unless additional or extra-budgetary funding is provided specifically for the purposes of Periodic Reporting, the World Heritage Centre will not be able to organize the exercise in the same manner during next cycles and provide the same level of service and assistance to the States Parties.

States Parties

19. Each State Party organized the Periodic Reporting exercise in its own way. Based on the feedback received it has involved the following:

- a) Designation of Focal Point and Site Manager responsible for filling in the questionnaire;
- b) Organization of national workshops, teleconferences or meetings to train the site managers on the Periodic Reporting questionnaire;
- c) Filling in the questionnaires (ranging from 1 to 50 questionnaires depending on the State Party);
- d) Ensuring technical assistance by Focal Points on an ongoing basis and replying to questions raised by Site Managers directly or liaising with the World Heritage Centre;
- e) Translated, in many cases, the questionnaire in the national language in view of ensuring that the questionnaire is being fully understood by all Site Managers responsible for filling in the English / French version of the online questionnaire;
- f) Liaising with the World Heritage Centre on the content and technical aspects of the questionnaire and providing feedback;
- g) Organising, in a number of States Parties, follow-up on a national basis, according to their own vision and priorities.

20. Overall, the Periodic Reporting exercise can be summarized as resource- and time-consuming for the States Parties, Focal Points and Site Managers and therefore adequate resourcing, planned well in advance of the exercise, is important. It is worth noting however that many States Parties do not have clear objectives and views as to the use of Periodic Reporting data and outcomes at the national level. This is an important element on which reflection and exchange of good practices in the future will be beneficial.

B. FEEDBACK ON THE SECOND CYCLE OF PERIODIC REPORTING

21. Throughout the second cycle, valuable feedback was received both in terms of replies to the Evaluation chapter of the questionnaire, and through direct comments and reactions from different World Heritage stakeholders in all regions including Focal Points, Site Managers, Advisory Bodies, Periodic Reporting experts and advisors. Questions were raised and proposals were made with regard to the improvement of the exercise for the next cycles, both content- and process-wise. These matters have been addressed more specifically towards the end of the second cycle. For example, Europe region, further to the expectations and comments of the Focal Points in the region, included a special item on the agenda of its final Periodic Reporting meeting that took place in Helsinki in December 2014 (See Document 10 of the Helsinki meeting

(<http://whc.unesco.org/document/134467>) as well as the Meeting Report (<http://whc.unesco.org/document/134614>).

Summary of feedback further to the Evaluation chapter of the questionnaire (Questions 6.4-6.9)

22. The figures indicated below are an average of the statistics between the regions:

- 85% of the Site Managers indicated that the information needed to complete the questionnaire was easily accessible to them.
- 77.5% of the Site Managers indicated that the questionnaire helped them better understand the importance of managing the property to maintain the Outstanding Universal Value.
- 80% of the Site Managers indicated that it helped them better understand the importance of monitoring and reporting.
- 72.5% of the Site Managers indicated that the questionnaire improved their understanding of management effectiveness.

Summary of feedback from States Parties (Focal Points and Site Managers) outside of the Periodic Reporting questionnaire

23. The Periodic Reporting meetings and workshops organized in all the regions throughout the process allowed the Centre to collect valuable feedback from the Focal Points and/or Site Managers, Periodic Reporting experts, mentors and advisors on the pertinence and usefulness of the Periodic Reporting exercise, in addition to its main purposes defined by the *Operational Guidelines*. The areas indicated below provide a succinct summary of various feedbacks received, according to which the Periodic Reporting Exercise encouraged:

- States Parties to update their baseline data about the World Heritage properties;
- Site Managers to think about their World Heritage property in new ways;
- States Parties to consider World Heritage in a broader (inter)national context;
- National and (sub)-regional Site Managers networks to be established or reinforced;
- Better (sub)-regional cooperation on site management level and exchange of good practices and lessons learnt;
- Strengthening communication between national and site management level.

24. The general considerations presented below, as well as the questionnaire-specific considerations, represent a non-exhaustive summary of the feedback received from different stakeholders in all regions regarding issues which they consider important to be addressed. The feedback has been collected and structured by the World Heritage Centre, and completed on the basis of statutory needs and requirements, as well as the Centre's own experience and reflections.

C. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Periodicity and Nature of the Questionnaire

- Need to explore whether the periodicity of the Periodic Reporting exercise is still appropriate;
- Need to include new indicators and benchmarks and thus take on board Recommendation 1 made in the Evaluation of UNESCO's Standard-Setting Work of the

Culture Sector, 1972 Convention (Decision **38 COM 5F.2**), namely “Strengthen the existing results reporting framework, which includes the Periodic Reports, through the development of indicators and benchmarks to improve follow up on progress made by State Parties with the implementation of both the 1972 Convention and the 1972 Recommendation.” In the framework of the follow-up to the Evaluation, the World Heritage Committee noted that the current Periodic Reporting mechanism already includes a number of indicators and considered that Recommendation 1 should be addressed in the framework of the reflection period after the end of the second cycle of the Periodic Reporting;

- Explore the possibility to streamline the reporting exercises for the different Culture Conventions of UNESCO, in particular with regard to Section I. More specifically, explore streamlining possibilities with the 1954 Hague Convention and its Second Protocol (1999);
- Review whether the focus on state of conservation of World Heritage properties is sufficient (Section II) and explore options to make Section I less generic;
- Explore the need to re-focus questions and ensure their relevance;
- While streamlining the process and questionnaire, need to ensure that the Periodic Reporting exercise continues to be an all-encompassing tool to confirm or to update statutory information through follow-up of statutory processes and that this aspect is not discarded for the upcoming cycles without appropriate mechanisms to replace it;
- Explore the possibility to make the Periodic Reporting questionnaire available to States Parties who request it as a monitoring tool to be used independently on a national level between the Periodic Reporting Cycles;
- Explore how to ensure efficient statutory follow-up processes without overloading States Parties, the World Heritage Centre or Advisory Bodies.

Reliability and Comparability of the Data

- The questionnaire being a self-assessment tool, there is a need to improve it, namely with regard to the validity and comparability of data, and to ensure the reliability and consistency of the answers provided. While the Periodic Reporting questionnaire includes inevitably a certain level of subjective appreciation, it must be ensured that the information and data obtained could be usable in a way that is both credible and result-oriented.
- Need to reduce the amount of ambiguity and interpretation of questions and to ensure that the questions are formulated so as to collect the right and relevant data;
- Explore how to maintain the comparability of the questionnaire across the cycles, in order to establish trends over time.

Analysis & Use of the Data

- Need to ensure that a follow-up of the respective cycle of Periodic Reporting is carried out in the best possible way, at regional, national and site-level, as it has been difficult to properly monitor the follow-up of the first cycle of Periodic Reporting. No specific question is currently included in the Questionnaire.
- Explore ways to encourage the appropriation of the results of the Periodic Reporting cycle by Focal Points, Site Managers, and other relevant stakeholders.
- Data and analyses from Periodic Reporting cycles must be made easily usable at sub-regional, national and/or regional level.

- Determine whether the analyses of the data and the future questionnaires should focus on the differences between properties and States Parties rather than similarities.
- Need to ensure cross-reference data across platforms on World Heritage (notably with the World Heritage Centre State of Conservation database).
- Explore how the questionnaire could be used as an opportunity for Focal Points and Site Managers to share their World Heritage management experiences.
- Explore how the outputs of the Periodic Reporting exercise could be improved – Short Summary Reports, Export function of the Periodic Reporting questionnaires, Regional Reports.
- Explore the possibility of ensuring that there is a follow-up in terms of use of data and analysis through building constantly on previous efforts – the information collected during each cycle being stored in a usable format to be of use at a later stage. Thus a system of reporting could be established that feeds into a framework which can continue to be used by World Heritage stakeholders, including site managers and Focal Points during subsequent cycles. This system could be a basis for assessing progress in responding to the outcome of previous reporting exercise and adding on new information for the next reporting process. It could also be linked to the State of Conservation database. Thus, the framework could be used for comparison and differentiation between sites across regions, which could automatically allow for global trends to be assessed through the available reporting information at the World Heritage Centre.

Coordination and Funding of the Third Cycle

- How should the coordination of the third cycle of Periodic Reporting be organised?
- How can Periodic Reporting become a more States Parties-led process?
- How to ensure funding of the third cycle, bearing in mind the financial situation of the World Heritage Fund and the various requirements of a Periodic Reporting cycle?

D. SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING SECTION I AND SECTION II OF THE CURRENT PERIODIC REPORTING QUESTIONNAIRE

25. Various specific considerations were also made with regard to Section I and Section II of the current questionnaire. Without entering into technical details, which is not the purpose of the present working document, it is worth noting that a number of meaningful issues were raised and comments and proposals made. The succinct summary below provides a couple of examples of pertinent issues raised.
26. With regard to Section I, some feedback addressed the appropriateness of the Periodic Reporting tool to collect information on details for national World Heritage contacts (TL, the Government institution responsible, site managers etc.). Other questions addressed the appropriateness of deriving the national legal framework (question 5.1 in the questionnaire for the second cycle) from the Database of National Cultural Heritage Laws, which lists the national laws currently in force related to the protection of cultural heritage in general. Another issue concerned research which is considered important for all World Heritage properties, but to what extent should and can it be measured and assessed as part of the questionnaire? Can (potential) areas of international cooperation be better identified within the questionnaire, along with the modalities of their implementation?
27. With regard to Section II, should the third cycle of Periodic reporting offer an opportunity to review the Protection and Management Requirements section of existing Statements of Outstanding Universal Value? In this context, it is to be noted that further to feedback from States Parties, the proposed revised *Operational Guidelines* submitted for

examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session (Bonn, 2015) includes a revision of the relevant provision of the *Operational Guidelines* (Paragraph 155) to include a mechanism for the review and update of the Protection and Management Requirements of the Statements of Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties (See document WHC-15/39.COM/11). Further, it is considered that the current list of primary and secondary factors could be reviewed in terms of comprehensiveness and ease of comprehension. It is also indicated that there is a need to also focus on success stories and report in more detail on positive factors/impact in addition to negative ones. It was also requested that the management responses to the identified current negative factors be better shown within the questionnaire / captured in the analysis reports. Another matter raised is the need to improve the questionnaire with regard to the specific issues of trans-boundary and serial transnational properties.

II. REFLECTION PERIOD

28. The feedback received throughout the second cycle undoubtedly confirms the pertinence and usefulness of the Periodic Reporting exercise, for all World Heritage stakeholders alike and at the same time it clearly illustrates the need for further improvement and change of the process itself, of the main tool used for submission of data, of the use and analysis of data, of the distribution of roles and responsibilities, and of the funding and coordination, taking into account the current financial constraints. Possibilities of streamlining of the Periodic Reporting exercise with the reporting of other culture conventions of UNESCO should also be explored. Clearly, the format of the Periodic Reporting questionnaire also needs to be reviewed, streamlined and adjusted to the new realities.
29. The Committee may therefore wish to consider suspending the launch of the third cycle of Periodic Reporting and launching a two-year reflection period (June 2015-June 2017) with a view of streamlining and refining the Periodic Reporting exercise, in terms of content, process and in technical terms. The aim of this reflection should be to improve the forthcoming cycles, while building on existing mechanisms, avoiding overlap of reporting mechanisms, working towards a result-based reporting and ensuring greater efficiency.
30. In this regard, the Committee may wish to request the World Heritage Centre to launch a questionnaire to the attention of the States Parties, in view of receiving coordinated and structured feedback on the improvement of the process, format, coordination and efficiency of the Periodic Reporting Exercise. States Parties could be invited to host at least two Periodic Reporting reflection meetings, with the participation of selected representatives of States Parties from all regions, Advisory Bodies, the World Heritage Centre, UNESCO field offices, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, category 2 centres and experts that have been involved in the second cycle of Periodic Reporting. The updating of format and process could be entrusted to a small expert Working Group and coordinated by the World Heritage Centre. The Terms of Reference of the Working Group could be presented for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 40th session, within the progress report concerning the implementation of the related decision. In this regard, a financial provision in the form of seed money should be made in the draft Budget for 2016-2017.
31. The Committee may also wish to note that the proposed current revision of the *Operational Guidelines* does not include a proposal for a revised version of Chapter V of the *Operational Guidelines* (Periodic Reporting on the Implementation of the *World Heritage Convention*) and Annex 7 (Format for the Periodic Reporting of the application of the *World Heritage Convention*). These will need to be duly updated once the Reflection Period is completed.

32. Finally, it is also suggested that, following Decision **39 COM 10B.5**, this information document would be presented to the General Assembly at its 20th session in 2015.

DECISION 39 COM 10B.5 ADOPTED BY THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE AT ITS 39TH SESSION

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined document WHC-15/39.COM 10B,*
2. *Recalling Decisions **34 COM 10A**, **35 COM 10A**, **36 COM 10A**, **37 COM 10A** and **38 COM 5F** adopted respectively at its 34th (Brasilia, 2010), 35th (UNESCO, 2011), 36th (Saint Petersburg, 2012), 37th (Phnom Penh, 2013) and 38th (Doha, 2014) sessions,*
3. *Congratulates the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention for having actively participated and completed the Second Cycle of the Periodic Reporting Exercise and takes note of their efforts to ensure relevant follow-up at the regional, national and site levels;*
4. *Notes with appreciation that the outcomes of the Second Cycle relate fully to the main purposes of the Periodic Reporting exercise as defined by Paragraph 201 of the Operational Guidelines;*
5. *Also notes that valuable feedback has been received from States Parties and other World Heritage stakeholders with regard to the process, format, relevance, use and analysis of data derived from the Periodic Reporting;*
6. *Further notes that the existing results reporting framework, which includes the Periodic Reports, should be strengthened through the development of comprehensive indicators and benchmarks to improve follow-up on progress made by State Parties with the implementation of both the 1972 Convention and the 1972 Recommendation concerning the Protection, at National Level, of the Cultural and Natural Heritage, further to Recommendation 1 of the Evaluation of UNESCO's Standard-Setting Work of the Culture Sector, 1972 Convention, acknowledged by Decision **38 COM 5F.2** of the Committee, according to which the matter will be addressed during the Reflection Period on Periodic Reporting;*
7. *Decides to suspend the third cycle of Periodic Reporting and launch a two-year Periodic Reporting Reflection Period from 2015-2017;*
8. *Requests the World Heritage Centre to bring this matter to the attention of the General Assembly of the States Parties to the Convention, at its 20th session (Paris, 2015), in an information document and also requests that the comments of the States Parties be sought on the matters of reviewing the process, format, relevance, use and analysis of data and efficiency of the Periodic Reporting exercise as well as synergies with other UNESCO culture conventions, preferably by means of a questionnaire;*
9. *Calls upon States Parties and other World Heritage stakeholders to provide extra-budgetary resources to ensure a proper reflection, including through hosting at least two Periodic Reporting reflection meetings with the participation of selected representatives of States Parties from all regions, Advisory Bodies, the World Heritage*

Centre, UNESCO Field offices, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, category 2 centres as well as experts that have been involved in the second cycle of Periodic Reporting;

10. Further decides that a small expert working group will be entrusted with drafting an updated format of the questionnaire and proposals for improving the process, relevance, analysis and use of data, further to feedback of States Parties and outcomes of Reflection meetings, in accordance with Terms of Reference which will be included in the progress report to be presented to the World Heritage Committee at the 40th session in 2016;
11. Requests furthermore the World Heritage Centre to present for examination by the World Heritage Committee an updated format of the questionnaire and proposals for improving the process, relevance, analysis and use of data, as well as a proposal of a revised version of Chapter V of the Operational Guidelines (Periodic Reporting on the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention) and Annex 7 (Format for the Periodic Reporting of the application of the World Heritage Convention), at its 41st session in 2017.