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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Fortieth session

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Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda: Reports of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies

5D: Report on the World Heritage Thematic Programmes

SUMMARY

This document presents an updated report on the activities of the following World Heritage Thematic Programmes and Initiatives:

- World Heritage Cities Programme (2001);
- World Heritage Forests Programme (2001);
- World Heritage Earthen Architecture Programme (2001);
- World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Programme (2012);
- Small Island Developing States Programme (2005);
- World Heritage Marine Programme (2005);
- World Heritage Thematic Programme on Prehistory (2009) and re-named as Human Evolution: Adaptations, Dispersals and Social Developments (HEADS);
- Astronomy and World Heritage Initiative (2005); and
- Initiative on Heritage of Religious Interest (2011).

Draft Decision: 40 COM 5D, see Point II.

I. BACKGROUND

1. This report provides information on the implementation of the Thematic Programmes and Initiatives according to a harmonized standard reporting format, including "mission", "major activities" and "way forward".
2. The Thematic Programmes and Initiatives are being implemented by the World Heritage Centre in close collaboration with the Advisory Bodies, in view of identifying, conserving and managing under-represented types of properties as well as in view of addressing issues related to the efficient implementation of the World Heritage Convention.
3. Over the years since their respective launch, the Thematic Programmes and Initiatives have produced substantial positive results. They have contributed significantly to the enhanced implementation of the World Heritage Convention and have provided the States Parties and other World Heritage stakeholders with focused guidance, tools and technical assistance.
4. Many of the Thematic Programmes and Initiatives have received extra-budgetary support while others have been implemented with little or no financial support, by the World Heritage Centre with the support of the Advisory Bodies.
5. In view of the current financial constraints of the Organisation, the reduced staff of the World Heritage Centre and the critical situation of the World Heritage Fund budget which can no longer provide any funding for the Thematic Programmes, the implementation and further development of the Programmes which do not benefit from extra-budgetary funding has become practically impossible to sustain.
6. Moreover, with one exception (the Earthen Architecture Programme), the Thematic Programmes and Initiatives do not have a sunset clause.
7. It is therefore proposed to the Committee to examine the results and achievements of the Programmes and Initiatives and to take a decision as to whether these are to be carried forward, entrusted for operational implementation to other World Heritage partner organizations, suspended or phased out.
8. Furthermore, given the fact that status and information on these programmes and initiatives that will be continued are foreseen every 2 years in the form of a report, it is proposed to include it, on the Committee's future sessions' Agenda, under Item 5A (*Report of the World Heritage Centre on its activities and the implementation of the World Heritage Committee's Decisions*). This will also contribute to the efforts by Secretariat in reducing the number of items on the Agenda of the sessions of the Committee, in line with the recommendations of recent Evaluations and Audits.

A. World Heritage Cities Programme (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/cities>)

Mission

9. The Programme was adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 25th session (Helsinki, 2001) to develop a theoretical framework for urban heritage conservation and provide technical assistance to States Parties for the implementation of new approaches and methodologies to that end.
10. With more than 1631 human settlements worldwide concerned by World Heritage, a significant number of local governments are directly involved in managing World Heritage Sites. Urban heritage is the most represented type of heritage on the World Heritage List, representing more than 53% of the cultural sites inscribed with 428 properties. Among these, 241 are listed as historic cities, while the other 187 are properties in an urban context. From the conservation point of view, threats to urban heritage or to properties in an urban context are predominant in State of Conservation (SOC) reports.

11. The World Heritage Cities Programme substantially contributed to the elaboration of the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape adopted by UNESCO's General Conference in November 2011. The Recommendation finds its most important use as a tool to strengthen UNESCO's action in the field of urban heritage conservation, beyond the World Heritage context. It has become the standard framework for the implementation of the World Heritage Cities Programme.

Major activities (July 2014 - today)

12. In the framework of the World Heritage Cities Programme, the World Heritage Centre organized technical meetings, training workshops and pilot projects in cities on the topic of urban conservation based on the Historic Urban Landscape approach.
13. The World Heritage Centre also provided backstopping to Field Offices as well as guidance and information to State Parties on urban conservation. In Africa, for instance, UNESCO co-organized an international conference on heritage and development in French-speaking countries in July 2014. A workshop on historic urban landscapes was held from 15 to 17 April 2015 in Cidade Velha, Cabo Verde. In the Arab States, an international conference on the Recommendation's role in the conservation of modern urban heritage took place in Kuwait in December 2015. Advisory missions on the historic urban landscape approach were sent to Morocco and Algeria in May and June 2015 respectively. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Regional Programme Plan incorporated the Historic Urban Landscape approach into its activities implementation. As a direct follow-up, a regional meeting on this topic was held in Quito (Ecuador) from 9 to 11 September 2015. In the Asia and Pacific region, the category-2-centre "World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region" (WHITRAP), has been operational since 2011. Most of its activities are related to the implementation of the Recommendation, like in Fiji (the harbour town of Levuka). In Europe and North America, experts discussed the role of the academic world both in the implementation of the Recommendation, and in the definition of urban development policies. The World Heritage Centre contributed to discussions led by a network of European universities located in World Heritage cities (Unitown). The discussions explored the role that universities could play in the conservation of these urban areas. A seminar on the Historic Urban Landscape approach was organized in Mostar (Bosnia Herzegovina) on 3 July 2014 by the UNESCO Office in Venice. In line with Decision **39 COM 11**, an Urban Study was conducted from October 2015 to January 2016. The data and material provided by the study aims to enrich and improve the existing online tools and develop new material and online resources. For instance, it should allow to further detail threats in the State of Conservation database, and further define terminology pertaining to urban conservation. The study might be used as a basis for a new volume of the World Heritage Paper Series.
14. The World Heritage Cities Programme has been actively participating in the elaboration of UNESCO's contribution to the definition of a "New Urban Agenda" to be discussed and adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), to be held in Quito (Ecuador) from 17 to 20 October 2016. UNESCO's contribution will be a report on the role of culture in sustainable urban development worldwide.
15. UNESCO hosted the Urban Thinkers Campus - Smart Planning and Sustainable Cities, at UNESCO Headquarters from 20 until 21 January 2016. This activity was organized by the French Federation of Town Planning Agencies (FNAU), the Regional Town Planning Institute of Ile de France (IAU-IDF) and the French Partnership for Cities and Territories (PFVT).
16. A consolidated report on the implementation of the Recommendation was examined by the UNESCO General Conference at its 38th session in November 2015. The Member States acknowledged the importance of the Recommendation in supporting UNESCO's mission for the conservation of urban heritage in a perspective of sustainable development (the report is available in Document 38 C/71 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002352/235234e.pdf>).

Way forward

17. The Thematic Programme coordinates the activities related to the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape. The Recommendation has become the key normative instrument of UNESCO to address the protection and conservation of urban heritage, both tangible and intangible, as well as for the promotion of cultural diversity and support to cultural industries.
18. The Thematic Programme contributes substantially to the implementation of Goal 11 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, namely to “make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. Eleven targets have been developed for Goal 11, including target to strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage. Therefore, the efficient implementation of the Thematic Programme requires additional human and financial resources in order for the Secretariat to meet the increasing expectations of Member States.

B. World Heritage Forests Programme (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/forests/>)

Mission

19. The World Heritage Forest Programme (WHFP) was adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 25th session (Helsinki, 2001) with the purpose of identification and conservation of the world’s most outstanding forests (Decision **25 COM XVII.10**).

Major activities (July 2014 - today)

20. The World Heritage Centre prepared an exhaustive progress report on the activities and achievements of the Forest Programme since its inception and presented it to the 38th session of the Committee (WHC-14/38.COM/5E).
21. As of 2015, 110 World Heritage sites across all biogeographic realms are recognized as World Heritage forest sites, 25 of which have been inscribed on the World Heritage List since the adoption of the Programme. By strengthening the leading role of the Convention in the conservation of forest biodiversity through the identification and conservation of the world’s most outstanding forests, the Programme has made a significant contribution to the implementation of the Global Strategy and to forest conservation at a global level.
22. The Programme has also made a significant contribution towards attaining the three WHFP objectives, namely: a) assembling and dissemination of information and knowledge related to World Heritage Forests and the role of the Convention in their conservation; b) support for the integration of World Heritage properties into the broader landscape with which they are ecologically connected; c) exploring opportunities to channel technical and financial support to World Heritage Forests in an effort to enhance management capabilities and to implement priority management actions (see WHC-14/38.COM/5E for further details).
23. In its Decision **38 COM 5E**, the World Heritage Committee acknowledged the results attained by the Forest Programme, expressed its regrets that no extrabudgetary funding could be secured and asked the World Heritage Centre to explore alternative options before phasing out the Programme. Since then, no extra-budgetary resources have been provided for the Programme as such.

Way forward

24. Given the substantial results achieved and the limited available staff and financial resources, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies recommend to phase out this Thematic Programme.
25. It is however important to note that the World Heritage Convention continues to be an important instrument in identifying, conserving and managing forests of Outstanding Universal Value. Significant efforts in forest conservation continue to be made through extra-budgetary projects, such as the Central Africa World Heritage Forest Initiative (CAWHFI) (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/cawhfi/>) funded by the European Commission with a view to reinforce the management of forest sites in the Congo Basin’s Forests, as well as to improve the representation of natural World Heritage sites in the region.

C. **World Heritage Earthen Architecture Programme** (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/earthen-architecture/>)

Mission

26. The World Heritage Programme on Earthen Architecture (WHEAP) aims to enhance the state of conservation and management of earthen architecture sites worldwide. Over 10% of the World Heritage properties incorporate earthen structures that are increasingly threatened by natural and human impacts and thus need special attention in terms of conservation and maintenance.
27. The Programme was approved by the World Heritage Committee at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007) for a ten-year period (2007-2017) (Decision **31 COM 21C**). Donors and States Parties were invited to provide financial support for the implementation of the activities which were structured in four phases. Accordingly, the preparatory phase concluded in 2008, and was followed by three phases, each focusing on two regions or sub regions: Phase 2 (2009-2011) focused on Africa and the Arab States, Phase 3 (2012-2014) on Latin-America and Central Asia, and Phase 4 (2015-2017) on Europe and Asia.
28. The principal partner of this Thematic Programme is the International Centre for Earthen Architecture (CRATerre).

Major activities (July 2014 - today)

29. One of the recent conservation achievements of the World Heritage Earthen Architecture Programme (WHEAP 2007-2017) is the successful rehabilitation of Timbuktu as part of UNESCO's Action Plan for the safeguarding of Mali's cultural heritage adopted in February 2013. This Action Plan foresees activities for the rehabilitation of cultural heritage intentionally damaged during the conflict with the active involvement of local communities, measures for sustainable conservation of manuscripts as well as capacity-building activities with the view to re-establish appropriate conditions for the conservation, maintenance, management and safeguarding of cultural heritage and manuscripts.
30. The international congress "Terra 2016" (the twelfth in a series of international events organised since 1972) is being organised under the aegis of the International Scientific Committee on Earthen Architectural Heritage (ISCEAH) Committee of ICOMOS international, in the framework of WHEAP. It will bring together over 800 participants from the fields of heritage conservation, archaeology, architecture and urban planning, engineering, social sciences, as well as fields related to local sustainable development and crisis intervention. The 2016 edition will mainly focus on issues dealing with sustainable development, particularly in urban areas.

Way forward

31. In light of the current financial constraints, the World Heritage Centre is no longer in a position to ensure the implementation of this Programme.
32. In order to ensure its continuity, it is proposed that the regular coordination of WHEAP be entrusted to the CRATerre, with institutional supervision and guidance by the World Heritage Centre. The Programme should continue to focus on the identification of best practices and set examples for the development and dissemination of appropriate methods and techniques in conservation, management, and capacity-building.
33. It is important that the Programme continues to benefit from the technical support of the international conservation institutions which have collaborated with WHEAP, as ICCROM, ICOMOS, and the earth conservation institute CRATerre-ENSAG as well as of the regional institutions School of African Heritage (EPA, Benin), Centre for Heritage development in Africa (CHDA, Kenya), Centre for Conservation and Restoration of Atlas and Subatlas Architectural Heritage (CERKAS, Morocco), and Udine University (Italy).

D. World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Programme (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/tourism/>)

Mission

34. Adopted in 2012 at its 36th session in St Petersburg (**36 COM 5E**), the World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism (WH+ST) Programme has created an international framework for the planning and sustainable management of tourism at World Heritage properties in order to protect the Outstanding Universal Value and achieve sustainable economic development. The WH+ST Programme is being implemented according to an Action Plan identifying activities that support the overall objectives of the Programme. The priority has been the development of tools and strategies for capacity development, stakeholder engagement, and destination management. Policy advocacy and stakeholder awareness are also strategic priorities, as well as the development and promotion of quality tourism products and services that encourage responsible behavior and foster an understanding and appreciation of the heritage values of the properties. Support for the Programme is provided by extra-budgetary funds and significant time has been devoted to securing resources for the long term sustainability of the Programme. To date over US\$3 million has been raised for the Programme from the private sector, bilateral donors and the European Commission.

Major project activities (July 2014 - today)

35. Capacity development and training in four natural properties in Africa: Significant progress has been made with regard to capacity development for World Heritage site managers and other tourism stakeholders in three natural World Heritage sites in Africa: Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls (Zambia and Zimbabwe), Maloti-Drakensberg Park (South Africa and Lesotho) and Lake Malawi National Park (Malawi). Based on a toolkit specifically designed to develop sustainable tourism strategies at the World Heritage sites, a series of training workshops were organized in three sites. The project resulted in the development of sustainable tourism strategies and action plans for the three sites. A tourism assessment is being conducted in Ngorongoro Conservation Area (United Republic of Tanzania) as part of the project. Project implementation support was provided by the African World Heritage Fund and the UNESCO Harare Office. The project is funded by the Government of Flanders (Belgium).
36. Capacity Development and training in three sites in South-East Asia: The WH+ST Programme has been providing technical support to a capacity-building project in South-East Asia, funded under the Malaysian Funds-in-Trust and implemented by UNESCO Jakarta Office. The project focuses on three sites in the region: Melaka and George Town, Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca (Malaysia), Cultural Landscape of Bali Province: The Subak System as a Manifestation of the Tri Hita Karana Philosophy (Indonesia) and the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras (Philippines). Using the UNESCO toolkit, participants developed sustainable tourism strategies for the three sites. The outcomes of the project will be used as case studies and good practice models for other sites in South-East Asian region upon successful implementation of the project.
37. Training tourist guides in China and Central Asia: In partnership with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations, a training course "Enhancing Silk Road Interpretation and Quality Guides Training" was organized in Khiva, Republic of Uzbekistan (August 2015). A handbook was developed for the training which can be adapted for other sites and regions. The training certified 26 tourist guides from China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to become heritage guide trainers. Project implementation was assisted by the UNESCO Tashkent Office and funding made available by the Netherlands Fund-in-Trust.

Way forward

38. European Heritage Routes for sustainable tourism development: Through a 1.5M EUR project funded by the European Commission, implementation of a first phase of a 18-month has begun to create networks of key stakeholders to coordinate destination management and marketing associated with thematic heritage routes to promote and coordinate high-

quality, unique visitor experiences based on UNESCO recognized heritage across Europe. The goal is to create a digital platform and communication and marketing tools to promote sustainable economic development based on heritage values and create added social and economic benefits for the sites.

39. Standards to measure social-economic benefits from tourism: With the support of the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust, the WH+ST Programme is helping coordinate a project initiated by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation and the University of Würzburg in Germany which aims to harmonize and standardize methodologies for the evaluation of visitation to natural World Heritage sites (including visitors spending and regional economic effects). The goal is to create a global standard for evaluation and monitoring of visitation in protected areas.
40. Baseline assessment tool development: Based on the analysis produced by the Nordic World Heritage Foundation in the framework of the project “Towards a Nordic-Baltic pilot region for World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism (2012-2014)”, the WH+ST Programme is finalizing an online World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Baseline Self-Assessment Tool. This tool will enable stakeholders responsible for managing World Heritage properties to rapidly and efficiently assess to which degree tourism is managed according to a set of sustainability indicators within the context of the overall management plan. The project is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment.
41. Capacity development in Chinese World Heritage properties: The sustainable tourism toolkit has been translated into Chinese and will be used as the basis for a capacity-building project focussed on Chinese World Heritage site managers. The project will be implemented with the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITRAP) and in collaboration with the UNESCO Beijing Office and ICCROM. The first training workshop will be held in July 2016.

E. Small Island Developing States Programme (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/sids/>)

Mission

42. The World Heritage Programme for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 29th session (Durban, 2005).
43. The Programme coordinates and develops World Heritage related activities on the islands of the Caribbean, Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans. The Programme provides support to assist in the submission of new nominations in SIDS as part of the implementation of the 1994 Global Strategy for a representative, credible and balanced World Heritage List, to support a process of sustainable development as well as post-inscription processes such as conservation, management and presentation of heritage assets.

Major activities (July 2014-today)

44. 2014 was proclaimed to the United Nations’ International Year of SIDS, and the 3rd international Conference on SIDS was held in September 2014 in Apia, Samoa. The World Heritage Programme for SIDS has contributed to the SIDS International Year Exhibit at the conference by displaying the World Heritage panels on SIDS and publication of the World Heritage Papers no. 38 “Safeguarding Precious Resources for Island Communities” (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/series/38/>), published in August 2014. The publication offers various thematic papers which address concerns and challenges related to SIDS such as climate change, risks’ anticipation, marine, sustainable tourism, land management and community involvement.
45. One new SIDS State Party, the Bahamas, joined the World Heritage Convention in 2014. In 2015, two capacity-building workshops were organized for non-State Parties to the World Heritage Convention. These workshops have been held in Nauru (January 2015) and in Tuvalu (March 2015) through the Japanese Funds-in-Trust project on “Capacity-Building to Support the Conservation of World Heritage Sites and Enhance Sustainable Development of Local Communities in Small Island Developing States (SIDS)”.

46. Three SIDS State Parties (Barbados, the Bahamas and Dominica) have updated and/or submitted their Tentative Lists in 2014 and 2015. Two properties were inscribed to the World Heritage List (Blue and John Crow Mountains in Jamaica and Singapore Botanical Gardens in Singapore) in 2015. Support was provided to prepare the first nomination file from Tonga, under the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust, and a workshop was held in Tonga in October 2014.
47. For the conservation and management: "Planning for the Conservation and Development of Historic Towns and Urban Areas in Fiji" a training workshop was held in Suva, Fiji (July-August 2015) to train professionals and administrators, not only in Levuka (Pacific colonial port town which was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2013) but also other cities and towns in Fiji, for the protection and preservation of buildings and structures and their setting.
48. A stakeholders meeting on "East Rennell, Solomon Islands" took place in Sanya, China (February 2016) with the objective to remove the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger. The participants received technical support to define key parameters such as forest cover and land use in areas outside of the World Heritage property. The meeting was organized by the International Centre on Space Technology for Natural and Cultural Heritage (HIST), a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO.
49. Two regional World Heritage Action Plans were developed: One for the Caribbean 2015-2019 at the regional meeting in Havana, Cuba (November 2014) and one for the Pacific 2016-2020 at the regional meeting in Suva, Fiji (December 2015). These Action Plans will serve as a roadmap for activities in the coming years.

Way forward

50. The World Heritage SIDS Programme provides support to the conservation and management of the SIDS properties which are already inscribed on the World Heritage List, but also by building-capacity and raising awareness of stakeholders and civil society who are involved in heritage.
51. UNESCO has developed a SIDS Action Plan as a direct follow-up to the 2014 SIDS Conference and the "SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, which was adopted at the 199th session of Executive Board in 2016 (199 EXB/5.INF). The Action Plan addresses the unique vulnerabilities and challenges faced by SIDS, including climate change, while taking into account the UNFCCC COP21 outcomes, as well as the goals and their specific targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
52. The regional World Heritage Action Plans as well as UNESCO's SIDS Action Plan will serve as an important reference documents for the World Heritage SIDS Programme which aim to increase sustainable development in SIDS through a wise use of cultural and natural resources.
53. The Programme and the follow-up on the Action Plans will be managed in the framework of extra-budgetary projects. The extra-budgetary funding for 2016 is provided mostly from the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust.

F. World Heritage Marine Programme (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/marine-programme>)

Mission

54. The Programme was adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 29th session (Durban, 2005) with the mission to establish effective conservation of existing World Heritage marine sites and marine areas with potential Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

Major activities (July 2014-today)

55. Ten new marine properties were inscribed on the World Heritage List since the adoption of this Programme in 2005. The marine area covered by the Convention has since doubled. The activities contribute to the implementation of the 2006 World Heritage Centre's Natural Heritage Strategy calling for an ecosystem approach, the 2011 Global Strategy Audit

conclusions, the 2013 IUCN marine Thematic Study and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 11 and 14 in particular).

56. The World Heritage Centre provided assistance to the project "identifying potential natural marine sites in the Arctic region". The work is led by IUCN in partnership with the non-governmental organisation "Natural Resources Defence Council". The World Heritage Marine Programme assisted the partners in obtaining the funding for the project and facilitated the expert meeting on 25-26 February 2016 in UNESCO. Furthermore, a joint WHC-IUCN project on the possible application of OUV to marine areas beyond national jurisdiction took place in October 2015.
57. Through the Programme, input was provided to 11 state of conservation reports, including for the Great Barrier Reef, and development of two desired state of conservation for the removal of a property (DSOCRs). The contribution of the Programme was instrumental for the development of the 3-year DSOCR for the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System adopted by the World Heritage Committee (**39 COM 7A.18**). The World Heritage Centre provided advice and technical support for the full ban on offshore oil exploration in the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System World Heritage property and the adoption of the coastal zone management plan. Technical support was also provided for the development of a DSOCR for East Rennell (**39 COM 7A.16**). The Programme facilitated mobilised resources to fight illegal fishing in Cocos Island National Park. Additionally, coordination as well as technical and financial support was provided towards a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) status under International Maritime Organization regulation for Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park, Philippines (**33 COM 7B.18**) and Banc d'Arguin National Park, Mauritania (**38 COM 7B.62**). Official application dossiers have been submitted by the governments of Mauritania and Philippines in 2015 and 2016.
58. The World Heritage marine community network encompasses 47 properties in 36 countries. The Programme coordinates and facilitates the exchange of best practices and management solutions among the site managers and their teams. The network is maintained through an e-newsletters, a web-based platform, and the organization of regional workshops. Results include an improved visibility of the conservation of marine properties, improved access to marine expertise, technical support for the development of management plans, exchange of staff, improved exchange on management solutions and the development of a Marine World Heritage best practice guide.
59. The Programme communicates on the activities developed for marine World Heritage. The results achieved were included in a short film narrated by Gisele Bündchen, Goodwill Ambassador to the United Nations Environment Programme, for the occasion of Earth Day, as well as smartphone applications and an annual newsletter.
60. With support from the Programme, Banc d'Arguin National Park in Mauritania scaled up its educational activities for students who live in the park.
61. A partnership has been developed with the Polynesian Voyaging Society to strengthen visibility of marine World Heritage sites among local communities who live and work in marine properties. The agreement concerns an inter-sectoral cooperation between the Natural Sciences and the Culture Sectors of UNESCO.
62. The Programme and staff are fully financed through extra-budgetary funding raised by the World Heritage Centre. The Programme attracted a total of USD 1,310,000 from 10 partners between July 2014 and April 2016. Among others, this funding result is a direct outcome of the Programme's outreach activities and its strong relations with managers in the field.

Way forward

63. In collaboration with the Government of Ecuador, the third Global Managers Meeting from 27 to 31 August 2016 is being organized in the Galapagos Islands.
64. A publication to highlight the 10th Anniversary of the Programme and reveal the core challenges for the future will be launched at the IUCN World Conservation Congress (Hawaii, 2016).

65. The major focus for the coming years will be addressing the challenge of unsustainable fisheries, still impacting more than 30% of World Heritage marine sites.
66. Notwithstanding the above, the Programme may face some challenges in the future with the likely departure of key partners in 2017.

G. Human Evolution: Adaptations, Dispersals and Social Developments (HEADS)
[\(http://whc.unesco.org/en/heads/\)](http://whc.unesco.org/en/heads/)

Mission

67. As a follow-up to the thematic study on prehistoric sites (Decision **32 COM 10A**), the World Heritage Thematic Programme on Prehistory was adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 33rd session (Sevilla, 2009) by Decision **33 COM 5A**. At its 34th session, the World Heritage Committee (Brasilia, 2010) decided to change the title of the Programme to “Human Evolution: adaptations, dispersals and social developments (HEADS)” (Decision **34 COM 5F.1**).
68. Human Evolution-related properties represent a process of evolutionary accretion that took place over a vast period of time, offering vital insight to scientific, cultural, ethological and historical dimensions of human development, and the earliest evidence of human ritual, expression and practice. HEADS aims at defining and establishing a scientific cooperation to ensure the recognition, conservation and study of these prehistoric World Heritage sites that are still underrepresented on the World Heritage List. Since the adoption of the programme in 2009, 10 prehistoric sites have been inscribed on the World Heritage List.
69. As per Decision **38 COM 16**, the follow-up of the HEADS Programme has been ensured through extra-budgetary projects, including through extra-budgetary funding secured by the UNESCO Mexico Office.

Major activities (July 2014-today)

70. From 18 to 22 August 2014, an International Expert Meeting for the Nomination of Tehuacan-Cuicatlán was organized in Puebla, Mexico. 39 experts discussed the Outstanding Universal Value of Tehuacán-Cuicatlan and undertook a comparative analysis of the origin of food production in all continents. The meeting focused on the understanding of the transition from hunter-gatherer societies to sedentary societies and highlighted the importance of the preservation of related archaeological sites.
71. From 11 to 13 November 2014, an international meeting on the “Settlement Dynamics in Human Evolution: human history from dispersals and migrations to adaptations to sedentary societies, implications for the World Heritage Convention” took place in Ankara, Turkey. The meeting contributed to the scientific discussion in which sites related to the transition from hunter-gatherers to food production are conceptualized by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and represented on the UNESCO World Heritage List.
72. From 5 to 6 June 2015, the UNESCO Office in Mexico organized a meeting on “Interdisciplinary Preservation Practices for Rock Art” in Mexico City. 12 international and national experts in rock art preservation discussed the main challenges facing the research and preservation of rock art in Mexico, as well as how these could be overcome and how to design and implement a standardized protocol for the preservation of rock art.
73. The International Meeting “Exploring Frameworks for Tropical Forest Conservation: managing production and consumption for sustainability” was held in Veracruz, Mexico, from 6 to 8 December 2015. 40 experts in archaeology, biology, botany, historical ecology, forest management, as well as traditional and local producers discussed the theme “Interpreting the Past to Inform the Present and Implication for the Future: lessons from archaeology and historical ecology” which highlighted the very potent impact early human populations played in the formation of tropical forest environments, especially in South and Southeast Asia and South America.

74. Four new prehistoric sites have been inscribed on the World Heritage List: “Decorated Cave of Pont d’Arc”, known as Grotte Chauvet-Pont d’Arc, Ardèche (France), “Monumental Earthworks of Poverty Point” (United States of America) and “Precolumbian Chiefdom Settlements with Stone Spheres of the Diquís” (Costa Rica) were inscribed in 2014 and the “Rock Art in the Hail Region of Saudi Arabia” (Saudi Arabia) in 2015.
75. In addition, the following prehistoric sites nominations are proposed for inscription in 2016: “Massif de l’Ennedi: paysage naturel et culturel” (Chad), “Zuojiang Huashan Rock Art Cultural Landscape” (China), “Antequra Dolmens Site” (Spain) and “Gibraltar Neanderthal Caves and Environments” (United Kingdom). The nominations of “Dilmun Burial Mounds” (Bahrain), “Caves with the oldest Ice age art” (Germany) and “Tehuacán-Cuicatlán Valley: originary habitat of Mesoamerica” are proposed for 2017.
76. The project “Rock Art World Archive in Mexico” aims at recording more than 1000 elements of rock art manifestations in a systemized documentary register. In the course of three years, the project, led by the UNESCO Office in Mexico, will develop a web platform that is interoperable with state and national archives as well as archives from research centres and academic institutions.
77. In November 2014, the World Heritage Centre published World Heritage Papers 39 “HEADS 3: Human Origin Sites and the World Heritage Convention in Asia”. The publication addresses the Outstanding Universal Value of sites related to human evolution and the history of paleoanthropological research in Asia.
78. In September 2015, another World Heritage Papers 41, “HEADS 4: Human Origin Sites and the World Heritage Convention in Eurasia” was published. It focuses on the topic of Human Origins in Eurasia and on the case of the Swabian Jura Aurignacian that is particularly important in relation to some of the major research issues surrounding the dispersal of modern humans.
79. World Heritage Papers 42 “HEADS 5: Human Origin Sites and the World Heritage Convention in the Americas” informs about research into human origins in the Americas. The Americas hold many properties with strong links to human origins, some of which are insufficiently represented on the World Heritage List and their value is under-recognized. The publication addresses questions related to the management of these vulnerable properties. All papers are available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/series/>

Way forward

80. The HEADS Thematic Programme has successfully contributed to a representative and balanced World Heritage List reflecting the diversity of cultural and natural sites of Outstanding Universal Value. The Programme has promoted the development of research that recognizes the importance and relevance of the earliest heritage related to Human Evolution to the origin of our cultural diversity across all continents.
81. In light of the results achieved by the Programme and in the absence of extra-budgetary resources for its overall coordination and implementation, it is proposed to phase out this Thematic Programme.

H. Astronomy and World Heritage Initiative (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/astronomy/>)

Mission

82. The Initiative was launched in 2005 and aims to establish a link between science and culture towards recognition of specific properties related to astronomical observations across all the geographical regions.
83. This Initiative is the only cultural activity implemented in support of 33C/ Resolution 25 of the General Conference on the Proclamation of 2009 as International Year of Astronomy, which

provides an opportunity to raise public awareness, especially among youth, about scientific heritage and to enhance the links between science, education, culture and communication

84. The Initiative was developed in 2004 thanks to the voluntary contributions from States Parties (Netherlands, United Kingdom) and from a scientific organization (Royal Astronomical Society of the United Kingdom). The main activities have been implemented with in-kind contribution from States Parties (China, Egypt, France, Germany, Russian Federation) and from international organisations (International Astronomical Union - IAU, Committee on Space Research – COSPAR).

Major activities (July 2014-today)

85. The Integrated Implementation Strategy of the Initiative aims to improve the identification, conservation and management of properties connected with astronomical observations and traditional astronomical knowledge (document WHC-08/32.COM/INF.5C).
86. As no extra-budgetary funding has been received by UNESCO for this Initiative during the last biennium, the operational activities, including the elaboration of the Second volume of the Thematic study (Heritage Sites of Astronomy and Archaeoastronomy in the context of the World Heritage Convention: A Thematic Study), case-studies and research and expert meetings, are primarily implemented by the IAU in consultation with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS.
87. In August 2014, an international expert meeting on the “Role of the Archaeoastronomy in the Mayan World: The Case of the Island of Cozumel” was organized by the Municipal Government of the Island of Cozumel (Mexico) and UNESCO, in collaboration with the Government of the State of Quintana Roo, the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) and the National Commission of Natural Protected Areas (CONANP). The objective of the meeting was to identify the values of the island prehispanic sites related to astronomy and define the importance of Cozumel in the development of the Maya civilization.
88. In August 2015, the First Focus Meeting “Astronomical Heritage: Progressing the UNESCO–IAU Initiative” was organised during the 29th IAU General Assembly (Hawaii, USA) as well as an International Year of Light event “Hawaiian, Oceanic and Global Cultural Astronomy: Tangible and Intangible Heritage”. In July 2015, a side-event “Astronomy and the World Heritage Initiative — achievements and issues” took place during the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee (Bonn, 2015).
89. Moreover, in line with Decision **36 COM 5D**, the World Heritage Centre established a collaboration with specialized agencies on studies and research concerning technological heritage connected with space exploration. A side-event “UNESCO World Heritage and Aerospace History” was organised during the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee (Bonn, 2015). Furthermore, an Associated Event “Odyssey of human creative genius: towards protection of technological heritage connected with space exploration” took place during the 40th COSPAR Scientific Assembly (Moscow, 2015).
90. In January 2016, an international meeting on the right to the dark skies was organized in Mexico organized by the UNESCO Office in Mexico, the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT), the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the Mexican Academy of Sciences (AMC) and the Consultative Scientific and Technological Forum.

Way forward

91. In light of the current financial constraints of UNESCO and the lack of extra-budgetary funding apart from limited support for some activities, the World Heritage Centre will only be in a position to ensure the Initiative’s statutory and institutional coordination if voluntary contributions are made available by States Parties.
92. Financial support is needed for the overall implementation of the initiative, as well as for drafting a global thematic study on Heritage of Science and Technology, including studies and research on technological heritage connected with space exploration, requested by the

World Heritage Committee at its 36th session (St. Petersburg, 2012); the organization of an international seminar on serial nomination of properties connected with science and technology; and of a first global meeting and regional meetings of the national Focal Points.

93. It is proposed that the coordination of this Programme is entrusted to the IAU, with institutional supervision and guidance by the World Heritage Centre. In this regard, it is to be noted that in 2015, an official partnership (consultative status) was established between UNESCO and IAU. A new Commission (C4) on World Heritage and Astronomy was established by the IAU Executive Committee. (<http://www3.astronomicalheritage.org/>). Collaboration between ICOMOS and IAU in order to provide the necessary expertise to the State Parties for the identification and nomination of properties on the World Heritage List is on-going.
94. Regarding specific follow-up activities on Space Technological Heritage, a partner organisation will be identified by World Heritage Centre. The involvement of World Heritage Centre regular programme staff in its future activities requested by the States Parties should be compensated by way of staff cost recovery charged to the relevant extra-budgetary funds.

I. Initiative on Heritage of Religious Interest (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/religious-sacred-heritage/>)

Mission

95. The issue of the protection and management of properties of religious interest is increasingly prominent in contemporary conservation debates. The properties associated with religions and traditional beliefs constitute one of the largest thematic categories on the World Heritage List and require specific policies for sustainable management and use that take into account their distinct spiritual nature as a key factor for their protection.
96. In 2010, within the context of the United Nations International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures, the World Heritage Centre initiated discussions and capacity-building activities on management and use of religious and sacred heritage, involving active participation of the religious communities – site managers of the World Heritage properties of religious interest.
97. The World Heritage Committee, at its 35th session (Decision **35 COM 5A**), “requested the World Heritage Centre, in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies, to elaborate a thematic paper proposing to States Parties general guidance regarding the management of their cultural and natural heritage of religious interest, and in compliance with the national specificities, inviting States Parties to provide voluntary contributions to this end.”
98. In this regard, the Initiative on Heritage of Religious Interest plays an important leading role in the development of such guidance and in the coordination of related activities worldwide. It aims at addressing the challenges faced in the conservation of cultural and natural properties and related management issues.
99. At its 37th session (Decision **37 COM 5A**), the World Heritage Committee “took note of the consultations between the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, the progress report on this activity, as well as of the establishment of a Steering Group in charge of coordinating the elaboration of this thematic paper and invited States Parties to support this Initiative.”

Major activities (July 2014-today)

100. The World Heritage Centre ensures the statutory and institutional coordination of the initiative implemented by the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre Steering Group on Heritage of Religious Interest.
101. Studies were carried out to identify major conservation issues for World Heritage properties of religious interest in order to identify major threats facing these properties and shortcomings in the management systems. A new database was thus created and guidance

for selection of case studies was developed as part of the analysis, including a case-study questionnaire. Furthermore, a multidisciplinary research programme proposal was prepared to the attention of the relevant UNESCO Chairs.

102. A cycle of regional thematic consultations towards the elaboration of the thematic paper was launched (UNESCO, 16 February 2016). The first Thematic Expert Consultation meeting, organized thanks to the voluntary contribution of Bulgaria at UNESCO (16 - 18 February 2016), focused on South-Eastern and Mediterranean Europe. National and regional Experts presented Case-studies illustrating the main challenges in governance, management and use of World Heritage properties of religious interest. The participants highlighted that the Initiative provides a platform for establishing a cross-cutting approach towards the implementation of different policies and recommendations, such as the Policy on World Heritage and Sustainable Development, the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL), the Policy on the Impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage properties, Strategy for Reducing Risks from Disasters at World Heritage properties and others. They recommended that special reference be given to developing indicators for the Policy on World Heritage and Sustainable Development.
103. The network of professionals and UN interagency cooperation was reinforced through the UNWTO International Conference “Religious heritage and tourism: types, trends and challenges” (27 – 28 November 2014, Elche, Spain), the 1st UNWTO International Congress on Tourism and Pilgrimages (18 – 20 September 2014, Santiago de Compostela, Spain) and the International Conference “Promotion, Protection and Preservation of Buddhist Culture and Heritage” at Lumbini, the birthplace of the Lord Buddha, Nepal (2014).
104. The activities increased awareness and reinforced the involvement of religious communities in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. In this regard, a module for a capacity-building workshop for representatives of religious communities and site managers in charge of World Heritage properties of religious interest was developed and tested.

Way forward

105. In the long-term, this UNESCO initiative is intended to assist in integrating a number of guiding principles into policies at the local, national, regional and international levels so as to contribute to the rapprochement of cultures and harmonious relations among peoples.
106. The development of general guidance on the management of heritage of religious interest, prepared in close collaboration and mutual agreement of all communities and based on the fundamental principles of the World Heritage Convention, represents one main action aiming to promote and increase understanding and respect between all cultures of the world.
107. The properties of religious interest could no longer be considered only as cultural, religious, sacred or holy sites, but also as potential “cross-cutting values sites” and “educational places” for enhancing mutual respect, knowledge and understanding between communities. UNESCO’s leading role is also to support this dialogue, to ensure the conditions for development of a universal vision for the protection of heritage of religious interest and to coordinate the implementation of activities world-wide.
108. This initiative could also contribute to the following intersectoral issues:
 - The promotion of key principles of the Global citizenship education (GCED) during training and capacity-building activities for representatives of religious communities and site managers of the World Heritage properties of religious interest;
 - The understanding of the linkages between biodiversity and cultural diversity, recognition of the importance of Sacred Natural Sites for Biodiversity Conservation, as well as to the implementation of Guidelines for the Conservation and Management of Sacred Natural Sites developed within the framework of UNESCO’s Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB);

- The implementation of the main areas of the Action Plan for the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2013-2022), and in particular to the “promotion of mutual understanding and reciprocal knowledge of cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity”;
- The implementation of the Strategy for reinforcing UNESCO’s action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict adopted in 2015 and the Global Coalition “Unite for Heritage” launched during the World Heritage Committee (Bonn, 2015).

109. Since the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee, the Initiative has benefited, for the organisation of the Thematic Expert Consultation meeting, from extra-budgetary support of Bulgaria which has also pledged additional funds for the further implementation of the Initiative. The States Parties and other stakeholders could be encouraged to provide further financial support including for the organization of regional thematic expert consultation meetings, for the organization of capacity-building workshops for the representatives of religious communities and site managers in charge of heritage of religious interest, and for the ICOMOS thematic study on sites with associative values, such as sacred sites (see Decision **36 COM 13.I**).

II. DRAFT DECISION

Draft Decision: 40 COM 5D

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC/16/40.COM/5D,*
2. *Recalling Decisions **32 COM 10**, **32 COM 10A**, **34 COM 5F.1**, **36 COM 5D**, **36 COM 5E** and **38 COM 5E**, adopted at its 32nd (Quebec City, 2008), 34th (Brasilia, 2010), 36th (Saint Petersburg, 2012) and 38th (Doha, 2014) sessions respectively,*
3. *Welcomes the progress report on the implementation of the World Heritage Thematic Programmes and Initiatives and thanks all States Parties, donors and other organizations for having contributed to achieving their objectives;*
4. *Acknowledges the results attained by the Forest Programme, which has achieved its key objectives, and decides to phase it out; requesting the World Heritage Centre to continue to provide support in identifying, conservation and managing forests of Outstanding Universal Value,*
5. *Also acknowledges the contribution of the World Heritage Programme on Earthen Architecture to the state of conservation and management of earthen architecture worldwide and requests the World Heritage Centre to undertake the necessary steps for entrusting the main partner of the Programme, CRATerre, with the operational implementation of the Programme and to ensure the necessary institutional overview and guidance;*
6. *Further acknowledges the results achieved by the World Heritage Cities Programme and calls States Parties and other stakeholders to provide human and financial resources ensuring the continuation of this Programme in view of its crucial importance for the conservation of the urban heritage inscribed on the World Heritage List, for the implementation of the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape and its contribution to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals related to cities;*
7. *Acknowledges furthermore the results achieved of the World Heritage Marine Programme, thanks Flanders, the Netherlands and France for their support, notes the possible departure*

of key donors in 2017 and invites States Parties and other stakeholders to continue to provide support for the implementation of the Programme;

8. Notes the results achieved in the implementation of the World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Programme, expresses appreciation for the funding provided by the European Commission and thanks Flanders, Germany, Malaysia, Norway and the Netherlands for their support in the implementation of the Programme's activities;
9. Also notes the results achieved by the HEADS Programme, thanks Ethiopia, Germany, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Spain, South Africa and Turkey for their generous support and decides to phase out the Programme, requesting the World Heritage Centre to continue to provide relevant support in identifying, conservation and managing of human-evolution related heritage of Outstanding Universal Value,
10. Further notes the progress in the implementation of the Small Island Developing States Programme, its importance for a representative, credible and balanced World Heritage List, thanks Japan and the Netherlands for their support and requests the States Parties to continue to support the Programme's activities;
11. Notes furthermore the results achieved in the framework of the Thematic Initiative "Astronomy and World Heritage", and requests the World Heritage Centre to undertake the necessary steps for entrusting IAU with the operational implementation of the Programme and to ensure the necessary institutional guidance;
12. Also takes note of the progress report on the Initiative on Heritage of Religious Interest, endorses the recommendations of the first Thematic Expert Consultation meeting, thanks Bulgaria for its generous contribution and reiterates its invitation to States Parties and other stakeholders to continue to support this Initiative;
13. Urges States Parties, international organizations and donors to contribute financially to the Thematic Programmes and Initiatives as the implementation of thematic priorities is no longer feasible without extra-budgetary funding;
14. Further requests the World Heritage Centre to submit an updated result-based report on Thematic Programmes and Initiatives, under Item 5A: Report of the World Heritage Centre on its activities, for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 42nd session in 2018.