

Summary records
15th Extraordinary session of the World Heritage Committee

29 March 2021
(online meeting)
12.00 p.m. – 3.00 p.m.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Heritage Committee, by Decision **14 EXT.COM 4** taken at its 14th Extraordinary session in November 2020, had decided “to hold an extended 44th session in June/July 2021 in Fuzhou (China)”. The Chairperson then convened an 15th Extraordinary session to determine the exact dates and meeting modalities for the holding of the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee. 123 participants, including the 21 Members of the Committee and 73 Observers States Parties, as well as the Advisory Bodies (IUCN, ICOMOS, ICCROM), attended the 15th Extraordinary session of the World Heritage Committee.

Item I. Opening of the session

The **Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee, H.E. Mr. Tian Xuejun**, welcomed all participants to this extraordinary session of the Committee and took the opportunity to thank them for overcoming inconveniences to participate in the meeting.

The Chairperson then reminded that due to the COVID-19 pandemic the World Heritage Committee, at its 14th Extraordinary session, decided to hold an extended 44th session in June / July 2021 in Fuzhou, China. He recalled that with the consent of Committee members, this extraordinary session was convened to discuss to agree on the exact dates of the extended 44th session and to discuss the modalities for its holding.

The Chairperson indicated that in order to assist the Committee with its work, the Secretariat had consulted with the Host Country and himself and prepared the Working Document WHC/21/15EXT.COM/3, which presented the possible modalities for the holding of the session. He underscored that the Committee will have to take during this session critical decisions for calibrating common efforts to make the extended 44th session of the Committee a reality and a success. He indicated looking forward to a fruitful discussion and consensus-based decisions during a productive and efficient session.

Before starting the examination of the Agenda of the session, the Chairperson gave the floor to the **Director of the World Heritage Centre (DIR/WHC), Ms. Mechtild Rössler**, for some technical explanation for the conduct of the meeting. The Chairperson furthermore added that due to time constraints of this meeting, speakers were strongly encouraged to be as concise as possible in their intervention and that States Parties Observers will be invited to speak at the end of the meeting.

Item 2. Adoption of the Agenda

The **Chairperson** invited the Committee to adopt the Agenda of the 15th Extraordinary session of the World Heritage Committee. He recalled that the Delegation of the Russian Federation had expressed its wish to add an item to the agenda concerning the dates and place of the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee in 2022. After recalling that this request had been communicated to all Committee members by letter of 18 March 2021, the Chairperson gave the floor to the Delegation of the Russian Federation.

The representative of the **Russian Federation** explained that his Delegation had proposed the inclusion of this item taking into account Decision **14 EXT.COM 4**, by which the Committee took note of the invitation by the Russian Federation to host the session of the World Heritage

Committee in 2022, and noting that no other invitation had been received. In order to thoroughly prepare the hosting of the session, considerable financial resources from the federal budget will be allocated to it. He added that due to the unusual circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, a formal decision by the Committee in the end of July 2021 would create serious difficulties in the preparation of such budgetary and, as a matter of fact, would leave too little time to work appropriately. Therefore, he asked the Committee to consider deciding on this matter at its present session on a strictly exceptional basis and without creating any precedent, and with the understanding that, as per usual practice, the exact dates of the session would be adopted during the extended 44th session and that the Bureau of the 45th session of the Committee will be elected at the end of the extended 44th session.

The **Chairperson** then gave the floor to the Director of the World Heritage Centre to provide procedural explanations.

DIR/WHC explained that if the Committee was to take a decision at this 15th Extraordinary session on the dates and place of the 45th session, Rule 4.1 of the Committee's Rules of Procedure, which states that "*The Committee shall determine at each session, in consultation with the Director-General, the date and the place of the next session*", would first have to be suspended. She further explained that in accordance with Rule 52 of the Rules of Procedure, the suspension of this Rule would require a decision taken by a two-thirds majority of the States members present and voting. DIR/WHC then indicated that, should the Committee decide to add an Agenda item 4, it is proposed that the Committee, when examining this additional agenda item, first suspends Rule 4.1 of its Rules of Procedure, and then decides on the dates and place of the 45th session.

The **Chairperson** thanked the Director of the World Heritage Centre and asked whether members of the Committee had objections to the addition of the items proposed by the Russian Federation to the Agenda of the meeting, indicating that this would constitute item 4, which would be discussed at the end of the session.

The representative of **Australia** recalled Decision **14 EXT.COM 4** and noted that no other invitations have since been addressed nor objections raised by Committee members to this proposal. While not objecting to the hosting of the 45th session by the Russian Federation in Kazan, the representative indicated to have raised some concerns – along with other States Parties – with regard to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 68262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine (27 March 2014) and further noted the concerns raised by the Ambassador of Ukraine in that regard. She furthermore indicated – for the record – welcoming the Russian Federation continued efforts and collaboration of in resolving the issues in the autonomous region of Ukraine.

The **Rapporteur** presented draft Decision **15 EXT.COM 2**, reflecting the addition of item 4 concerning the dates and place of its 45th session.

The **Chairperson** then declared the Agenda adopted, as well as Decision **15 EXT.COM 2**.

Item 3. Dates and modalities for the holding of the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee

The **Chairperson** opened item 3 of the Agenda concerning the dates and modalities for the holding of the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee.

He stated that China, as the Host Country, would like to propose that the session be held from mid to end of July 2021. However, before adopting the exact dates for the session, the Chairperson suggested that the Committee agrees first on the format to be chosen as the duration of the session will vary according to this format. Before doing so, he invited the **Assistant Director-General for Culture (ADG/CLT), Mr. Ernesto Ottone R.**, to present Working Document WHC/21/15EXT.COM/3, which presents a number of possible formats and

contains Timetables of work for each format as well as methods of works that the Committee will have to adopt.

Lors de ses remarques introductives, le **Sous-Directeur général pour la Culture** remercie le Président et souligne l'importance des décisions qui seront prises par le Comité durant la réunion, en particulier concernant les dates effectives et le format de la 44^e session élargie du Comité du patrimoine mondial. Il rappelle que le pays hôte propose la période de mi à fin juillet pour son déroulement. Il souligne également la nécessité de décider du format à retenir - et donc des dates exactes de la session, afin de garantir que les lettres d'invitation soient envoyées « au moins soixante jours à l'avance », conformément à l'article 3.2 du Règlement intérieur.

Le Sous-Directeur général pour la Culture présente ensuite le document de travail, lequel a été préparé par le Secrétariat sur la base de l'expérience des réunions statutaires de l'UNESCO tenues au cours de la période de pandémie et qui décrit deux possibilités de format de réunion. La première est une session *in presentia* session à Fuzhou (Chine), avec au moins un représentant de chacun des membres du Comité physiquement présent dans la salle afin qu'ils puissent exercer leurs droits en vertu du Règlement intérieur, y compris le droit de vote. Il précise que le nombre de représentants par Délégation membre du Comité sur place serait limité à 3 personnes tandis que tous les observateurs, y compris les États parties, participeraient en ligne via une plateforme accessible à tous les participants. Il souligne que sous ce format la durée de la session serait de 12 jours au total avec des sessions de travail quotidiennes de 6 heures et l'examen de certains points (état de conservation, propositions d'inscriptions, Rapports périodiques) serait mené par région afin de tenir compte des décalages horaires et de faciliter la participation de toutes les parties prenantes.

Il explique que le deuxième format possible serait une session entièrement en ligne présidée par le Président du Comité depuis Fuzhou (Chine). Il indique que ce format impliquerait une participation en ligne de tous les acteurs, et que les sessions de travail quotidiennes seraient ainsi réduites à 4 heures en raison du décalage horaire et entraînerait ainsi un allongement de la session à 15 jours au total. En conséquence, il serait suggéré d'examiner sans débat le plus grand nombre possible de points à l'ordre du jour et d'examiner certains points par région afin de tenir compte des décalages horaires. Le Sous-Directeur général pour la Culture attire l'attention sur le fait que sous les deux formats, les réunions du Bureau et des groupes de travail se tiendraient entièrement en ligne afin de garantir l'égalité de traitement de tous les participants, ce qui serait également le cas pour le Forum des jeunes professionnels du patrimoine, le Forum des gestionnaires de sites du patrimoine mondial et d'autres événements parallèles. Il insiste sur le fait qu'indépendamment du format sélectionné, il est recommandé le Comité adopte des méthodes de travail qui ont été développées en tenant compte de la situation exceptionnelle actuelle et des recommandations générales pertinentes adoptées par le Conseil exécutif.

En outre, le Sous-Directeur général pour la Culture rappelle les circonstances particulièrement exceptionnelles et met l'accent sur les décisions complexes à venir. A cet égard, il souligne que la 44^e session élargie ne peut être repoussée davantage étant donné les échéances calendaires en terme de réunions au sein de l'UNESCO (Conseil exécutif en octobre, Conférence Générale, Assemblée Générale des États parties à la Convention en novembre). Il souligne également que toute option implique que le Secrétariat puisse être à l'entière disponibilité du Comité pour mener la session dans les meilleures conditions possibles. Enfin, il rappelle que la situation continue d'être hautement incertaine, compliquant ainsi les prises de décisions par les États parties qui doivent prendre en compte les restrictions de déplacement, les confinements et les mesures de quarantaine.

The representative of **China** congratulated the Secretariat for the preparation of the extraordinary session and thanked ADG/CLT for introducing the two options. He underlined that China attached great importance to hosting the extended 44th session of the Committee and that they had been working in its preparation for 2 years, resulting in the readiness of the

venue facilities. The representative informed that the Opening Ceremony was planned and it would be transmitted online, should the session not be held *in presentia*. Thereafter, he explained the special considerations given by the Host country regarding the holding of the session while the COVID-19 pandemic still affects large parts of the world. In this regard, he indicated that China's main concern was a smooth organization and to ensure the health and safety of all Delegates. With this in mind, he stated that the Chinese authorities conducted thorough consultations with renowned experts in the field of epidemic prevention and that the conclusions were that a 14-day quarantine would be required for all Delegates entering the country. He further explained that one of the main reasons for this measure was the difficulties in detecting all infected persons only with entry medical testing. In overall, experts concluded that without this mandatory quarantine, there would be a risk of infection of Delegates during the session, resulting in its interruption to avoid further spread of the virus and creation of a cluster. The representative added that this quarantine measure was effective in China for every individual entering the country. Nonetheless, the representative noted that there were still a few months before the start of the session and commented that these measures could still be adapted according to the evolution of the sanitary situation. He concluded by hoping that Committee members would understand such disease prevention measures and added that Chinese authorities would provide Delegates with all necessary assistance.

The representative of the City of **Fuzhou** reiterated the great honor and pride of the people of Fuzhou to have their city designated to host the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee. She thanked the Secretariat for its close cooperation in orderly organizing the session. She briefed the Committee that the venue and all facilities among other preparation work were complete and ready for the holding of the session, including all requirements for the prevention of the COVID-19 disease. In this regard, she reiterated that all had been carefully considered to ensure the health of all participants. She extended them the full assistance of the local authorities of Fuzhou and announced that the Municipality would bear the costs of the quarantine for all participants. She concluded by stating that she looked forward to welcoming the Delegates.

The **Chairperson** opened the floor to Committee members to expose their views on the format to be adopted for the holding of the extended the 44th session.

Before stating their opinions, the Committee members representatives thanked the Chinese authorities for their invitation and their efforts in preparing the session in the best possible conditions, congratulated the Chairperson for convening this important meeting and expressed their satisfaction to the Secretariat with the elaborated Working Document and the suggested formats.

The representative of **Thailand** expressed that a full meeting *in presentia* in China would have been the best option but due to the exceptional circumstances related to the pandemic, efforts and adjustments were required to ensure its holding in a reduced manner. He stated the preference of his Delegation for an *in presentia* a meeting and asked whether it was still possible to envisage a session in September or early October to allow for the worldwide situation to improve. The representative drew attention to the difficulties that would encounter senior officials of his Delegation in undergoing such a 14-day quarantine. He thus asked about the possibility of reducing this, especially if Delegates had been vaccinated prior to their entry. The representative added that 3 persons per Delegation member of the Committee was too limited, even with the support of active connections, and asked whether it would be possible to extend to at least 5 persons in order to be better prepared.

The representative of **Australia** emphasized on the difficult decision ahead and recalled the particular circumstances. She stated that her country supported an outcome that would uphold the integrity of the Committee's processes, ensure equity of participation and above all ensure the safety of the Delegates. The representative expressed in this regard her support to the national measures announced by the Host Country to limit the impacts of the pandemic. While her Delegation would have preferred an *in presentia* meeting, the representative considered

that conditions were not met due to the sanitary situation, underlining that even vaccination would require time to be efficient globally. She added that given the current uncertainties, it was not guaranteed that her Delegation could be authorized to travel to international meetings in July. The representative stressed that holding the session *in presentia* in September would not provide any further guarantees. She remarked that despite these difficulties, the Committee would not face this situation alone, noting that many international fora had been held online. In her view, the only viable option ensuring an equitable participation and the safety of Delegates was to hold the session fully online and agreed with the duration of 15 days, noting that in the end it will represent less time. The representative concluded that her Delegation remained open to any dates from July until before the General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention and indicated it may be useful to have clarifications on why this option is not feasible. In order to support robust and transparent Committee processes, she encouraged the Chairperson and the Secretariat to provide written protocols ahead of the session to assist with the conduct of the online meeting, especially regarding Rules of Procedure and the operationalisation of the timetable.

The representative of **Norway** indicated that her country would have preferred an *in presentia* meeting as proposed by the Chinese authorities and thanked for their invitation. Should this format be retained, she underlined that the number of persons per Delegation should be higher than 3, in order to ensure that heritage experts can engage in the discussions of the session in conformity with Article 9.3 of the Convention and Rule 5.2 of the Rules of Procedure. Nonetheless, she indicated that a quarantine would not be feasible for her Delegation and added that it was impossible to know in advance if Norwegian Delegates would be vaccinated or authorised to travel to China in July. Therefore, the representative expressed that the only feasible modality at that stage was an online session.

The representative of **Bahrain** seconded previous speakers regarding difficulties for officials of his country to participate in international meetings and raised concerns about travel restrictions that may still be in force in July, which would limit the participation of his Delegation. He nonetheless stated that it remained flexible on the format and dates and would adapt the composition of its members should it be an *in presentia* format.

The representative of **Ethiopia** echoed comments by previous speakers and stated his preference for a meeting in person. However, given the current circumstances, he supported the holding of the extended 44th session in a fully online manner and the corresponding timetable.

The representative of the **Russian Federation** appreciated the formats presented in the Working Document and expressed its support for the holding of the session *in presentia*, as some items would require substantial debates. He drew attention to the fact that online meetings generally required more time. However, he echoed the opinion of the representative of Thailand in indicating that a 14-day quarantine represented a huge challenge and also asked for more flexibility in this regard, taking account factors such as vaccinations and testing to reduce the time span.

The representative of **Spain** indicated her preference for an online session as the circumstances related to the pandemic would greatly complicate the attendance of many countries. She gave the example of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage that successfully held its last meeting online and underscored that, while challenging, an online option remained possible.

The representative of **St. Kitts and Nevis** paid tribute to the Government of China regarding the measures announced to mitigate the spread of the virus. However, he explained that a 14-day quarantine was too challenging for government officials of his Delegation. He did not see an end to the crisis in the near future, which led him to believe that further postponing the session would not solve the issue. While acknowledging that an online session was not ideal, the representative expressed his preference for the online format considering the circumstances.

The representative of **South Africa** supported the holding of the session *in presentia*, echoing comments by the Delegation of the Russian Delegation on the time necessary and the complexity of decision-making. Nonetheless, the representative added that her Delegation would go along with the consensus.

Le représentant du **Mali** soutient également une tenue *in presentia* de la session aux dates proposées. Cependant, il estime que la quarantaine de 14 jours est trop longue et demande une réduction de ce délai. Il souligne également que trois personnes par Délégation membre du Comité ne suffit pas et demande s'il est possible d'augmenter à 5-6 personnes. Il conclut en affirmant que sa Délégation travaillera à une décision consensuelle.

The representative of **Hungary** stated that the optimal option, which would be an *in presentia* meeting as per usual practice, was unfortunately not feasible. Hence, the Committee would have to decide between two options that have significant drawbacks and limitations compared to a usual meeting. However, he mentioned that the Committee had to consider these limitations against the exceptional conditions that the pandemic has created, and also considering that it would not be possible to postpone the session much further. In the representative's view, the physical presence in Fuzhou in July of officials/experts from his Delegation did not seem feasible, nor the physical presence of bilateral diplomats from Beijing. In the prevailing conditions, the representative concluded that a fully online session would be the more feasible and preferable option.

The representative of **Oman** supported the holding of the session through online modalities because of the two-week quarantine and the uncertainties inherent to the pandemic in the coming months. He echoed the request by the Australian representative to revise the protocol of the working methods for an online session in order to make them clearer and more concise.

The representative of **Uganda** underscored that current conditions for holding an *in presentia* session, notably the 14-day quarantine, were greatly challenging and expressed his support towards an online session.

The representative of **Brazil** agreed that the two possible options were not ideal. While acknowledging that both options would have several drawbacks, he believed that at this stage an online session was the most advisable. He mentioned that health measures worldwide raised complex issues such as equity between States Parties and concretely hindered the participation of Delegations, as several countries do not have a diplomatic personnel sufficiently prepared for a session of the World Heritage Committee, some countries even having no representation in China.

Le représentant de la **Bosnie-Herzégovine** exprime l'avis que la communauté internationale devra continuer dans les prochains mois d'adapter ses méthodes de travail aux modalités en ligne. Mettant l'accent sur le fait que nous vivons dans un monde changé, le représentant indique qu'une réunion en ligne serait acceptable pour la prochaine session et apporte ainsi son soutien pour le format en ligne.

The representative of **Guatemala** enquired, in the case of an online session, if it would be possible to have more active connections per Delegation, as 3 would be too limiting in terms of expertise. He also asked for a more flexible timetable better taking into account time zone differences to facilitate participation.

The representative of **Egypt** expressed his preference for an *in presentia* session because of the complexity of the issues to be discussed and bearing in mind the already heavy agenda of an extended session. However, he indicated that his Delegation remained flexible and would work towards a consensus. Regarding the dates of the session, the representative drew attention to the fact that 20 July was an important holiday in Arab States and asked to exclude this date from the working days of the session.

The representative of **Nigeria** supported the holding of an online session because of the current conditions. He added that should the sanitary situation improve Nigeria would be in favour of an *in presentia* meeting.

The representative of **Kyrgyzstan** supported an *in presentia* meeting via the chat box.

The representative of **Saudi Arabia** supported an *in presentia* session, echoing comments by previous speakers. She acknowledged the many challenging issues of such format but underlined that if all Committee members were willing to deal with these challenges, such as the quarantine period, it would provide the opportunity to hold the session *in presentia*. Nonetheless, she insisted on the need for a collective response and to seek consensus.

Le **Sous-Directeur général pour la Culture** précise que si l'option *in presentia* devait être retenue, et considérant les différentes mesures de quarantaine avant et après la session, cela signifierait une mission d'au moins 6 semaines pour le personnel du Secrétariat au vue de la pratique habituelle qui veut que le Secrétariat arrive dans le pays hôte une semaine avant la tenue de la session pour en finaliser les préparatifs, notamment les questions techniques et logistiques. Il mentionne également que les interprètes spécialisés ne pourraient vraisemblablement pas se joindre au Secrétariat. Concernant les demandes pour plus de flexibilité en terme de calendrier, il assure le Comité que le Secrétariat restera à son service et travaillera à une adaptation des sessions de travail quotidiennes tenant compte des décalages horaires du mieux possible. Quant au 20 juillet, il rappelle la pratique passée au sein de l'UNESCO et affirme qu'il serait possible de suspendre les travaux ce jour-là. Il réitère qu'il serait très difficile de repousser encore la 44^e session élargie en raison de conflits de calendrier, notamment avec la 23^e session de l'Assemblée Générale des États parties à la Convention. Il rappelle que les documents de travail devront être préparés dans un court laps de temps en six langues de travail, et rappelle avant toute chose que 12 membres du Comité devront être élus. Il conclut que le Comité reste bien entendu souverain dans sa décision mais qu'il serait souhaitable qu'il prenne une décision sur les dates de la 44^e session élargie pendant cette session extraordinaire afin de permettre une préparation adéquate de la session.

The **Chairperson** indicated that both options had their supporters with relevant logics behind such preferences and remarked that most of Committee members were in favor of an online session. He acknowledged that neither of the two formats were ideal but affirmed that a set of elements had to be taken into consideration: the global pandemic situation, the travel conditions, the participation of each category of stakeholders on an equal footing, etc. The Chairperson insisted that the Committee could not afford to postpone decisions, because of the large amount of preparation work ahead. Therefore, he encouraged Committee members to carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each format for the sake of not only their country but also the Committee and the States Parties as a whole, with purpose to find a consensus.

In answering questions, **DIR/WHC** explained that, in the case of an online format, in addition to active connections that can be shared among several individuals, the webcast would allow a greater number of persons to follow the meeting. She indicated that the possibility of increasing the number of active connections per Delegation would be checked and added that the Secretariat remained flexible and ready to do all necessary adaptations, including with respect to the timetable.

The representative of **China** reaffirmed the commitment of his country in achieving consensus among Committee members. He confirmed that the health of the participants was a top priority for the Chinese authorities and that the 14-day quarantine was imperative. However, he pointed out that a few months remained until the launch of the session and that it was possible to adapt prevention measures according to the evolution of the sanitary situation. He stressed the flexibility of China regarding the increase of the number of participants per Delegation.

Based on the discussion of the Committee members, and with a consensus reached, the **Chairperson** suggested to consider the Format B, i.e. to hold a session fully online. He noted that it was unprecedented in the history of World Heritage Convention and this presented many challenges. However, based on experiences of the Executive Board and other statutory meetings of UNESCO Conventions, he expressed his optimism and trusted that the Committee

will fulfil its missions through the online Format. The Chairperson reminded that Committee members would have to consider adopting methods of work and necessary conditions to make the online session as smooth and efficient as traditional sessions. As there was no objection, the Chairperson declared that the extended 44th session shall be held according to Format B (“online session”) and that the corresponding timetable contained in Working Document WHC/21/15.COM/3 was therefore adopted.

The Chairperson then invited Committee members to adopt the exact dates of the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee and proposed that this session be held from 16 to 30 July 2021, in conformity with Decision **14 EXT.COM 4**.

The representatives of **Egypt** and of **Oman** took the floor to support the dates with the understanding that 20 July shall not be a working day.

The representative of **Saint Kitts and Nevis** drew attention to the fact that for many countries the end of July is traditionally a holiday period and called for taking it into account to the best extent possible despite the crisis. He asked whether possible to reconsider original dates of the session (29 June to 9 July).

The representative of **China** clarified that the meeting could be adjourned on 20 July and be held from 16 to 31 July. He understood the considerations regarding the holiday season during summer but emphasized on the importance to complete the session by the end of July due to calendar conflicts with other major statutory meetings, as indicated earlier by the Secretariat.

Le **Sous-Directeur général pour la Culture** clarifie qu’il revient au Comité de décider des dates de la session mais précise qu’il serait compliqué de la tenir plus tôt en raison de l’indisponibilité des salles permettant les réunions en ligne au Siège de l’UNESCO (réservées pour des réunions du secteur des Sciences).

The representative of **Oman** echoed the question by the representative of Saint Kitts and Nevis regarding the possibility to consider the original dates of the session.

DIR/WHC recalled that Decision **14 EXT.COM 4** adopted June/July as dates for the extended 44th session without specification and in conformity with this decision, the Host Country had later proposed dates for the session. She further confirmed 20 July as a possible break.

As there were no further comments, the **Chairperson** declared the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee will take place **from 16 to 31 July 2021**, with a break on 20 July.

The **Rapporteur** presented the draft Decision **15 EXT.COM 3**, reflecting the discussions and elements adopted by the Committee during its session and taking into account the amendments proposed by Norway and Australia.

DIR/WHC clarified that the adopted timetable (Annex 3 of Document WHC/21/15EXT.COM/3) would be adapted to add one day, following the decision to have a break on 20 July.

The **Chairperson** then declared draft Decision **15 EXT.COM 3** adopted, as amended.

Item 4. Dates and place of the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee in 2022

The **Chairperson** opened the next item of the Agenda concerning the dates and place of the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee in 2022. He reminded that the Russian Federation proposed to confirm the city of Kazan (Russian Federation) as the place of the 45th session in June/July 2022.

The representative of the **Russian Federation** presented Kazan as the candidate city to host the 45th session and expressed the honour it would be to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Convention there. He highlighted that Kazan was famous for the successful holdings of prominent international events. Furthermore, he indicated that three World Heritage properties were situated in the Republic of Tatarstan and that Kazan was also renowned for its atmosphere of peace and tolerance, reflecting UNESCO values and the promotion of

cultural dialogue. He concluded that all of this favoured the candidacy of Kazan for the hosting of the 45th session in 2022.

The **Chairperson** recalled that if the Committee was to take a decision at this 15th Extraordinary session on the dates and place of the 45th session, Rule 4.1 of the Committee's Rules of Procedure would first have to be suspended by a two-thirds majority in accordance with Rule 52.

As there were no objections, the **Chairperson** declared Rule 4.1 suspended.

The representative of **Australia** reiterated her remarks regarding Australia's concerns raised earlier during the meeting and stated her country will go with the consensus.

As there were no objections, the **Chairperson** declared that the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee will take place in Kazan, Russian Federation, in June/July 2022.

The **Rapporteur** presented the draft Decision **15 EXT.COM 4**, taking into account the amendment proposed by Norway.

The **Chairperson** then declared draft Decision **15 EXT.COM 4** adopted, as amended.

The representative of the **Russian Federation** thanked the Committee for this decision while the **Chairperson** congratulated the Russian Federation.

interventions by Observer States Parties

Before closing the meeting, the **Chairperson** gave the floor to the representatives of Observer States Parties:

La représentante de la **France** exprime son regret de n'avoir pu prendre la parole plus tôt en tant qu'État partie observateur et de n'avoir pu ainsi participer davantage au processus décisionnel du Comité. Elle souligne qu'une seule connexion active par Délégation non-membre du Comité n'est pas suffisante pour assurer une composition équitable des Délégations. La représentante demande également pourquoi les dates originelles de la session n'ont pas été retenues.

La représentante de la **Syrie** regrette également que les États parties observateurs n'aient pu prendre la parole plus tôt pendant les discussions du Comité. Elle exprime en outre la volonté de son pays de participer en présentiel à la session et a soulevé son inquiétude de voir généraliser le format en ligne pour les réunions de la Convention de 1972. Elle demande davantage de connexions en ligne actives et demande également des clarifications sur les préparations du Forum des jeunes professionnels du patrimoine.

The representative of **Greece** asked for more active connections per Observer State Party given the importance and complexity of the next session, arguing that one connection would not allow the participation of national experts.

The representative of the **Republic of Korea** praised the Committee's decision and emphasized the necessity to uphold the quality of its work. In this regard, he mentioned that some reports might be subject to questions and reservations and hoped that the online format would not hinder quality debates. He echoed previous speakers in requesting more active connections to Observer States Parties.

The representative of **Mexico** also asked for more active connections and raised concerns over the allocated time to examine items 7 and 8 and requested adaptations in this regard.

The representative of **Lithuania** praised the decisions of the Committee and also asked in this regard more active connections. He also echoed the Mexican Delegation in requesting more time for items 7 and 8 of the agenda of the Committee.

The representative of **Germany** stressed the importance of allowing the participation of Observers and NGOs during the discussions of the Committee.

The representative of **Japan** supported previous countries regarding increased connections to enrich the debates of the Committee and in order to provide accurate information in relation to complex issues and items.

Le représentant de la **Tunisie** félicite le Comité pour cette décision difficile mais qui, au final, soutiendra la mise en œuvre de la Convention dans des moments difficiles. Il insiste sur les responsabilités incombant au Comité mais également aux Etats parties observateurs dans la conduite d'une session de qualité sous ce format inédit assurant la pleine mise en œuvre de la Convention.

The representatives of **Palestine, Barbados, Islamic republic of Iran, Costa Rica, Zimbabwe** and **Chile** supported via the chat box the requests to have more than one active connection for Observer State Party.

Le représentant de l'**Algérie** souligne l'importance de la participation des Etats parties observateurs durant la 44^e session élargie et demande plus d'opportunités pour leur pleine participation.

The representative of **Uruguay** emphasised the importance of allowing enough time for the discussion of important agenda items, especially on Nominations.

The representatives of the **Secretariat** reiterated the readiness of the Secretariat to adapt the number of active connections for every Delegation in order to ensure the holding of the session in the best possible conditions. Bearing in mind technical limitations, the representatives insisted nonetheless that no efforts will be spared in finding increased capacities and that States Parties will be informed accordingly in advance of the session. They explained that the timetable for an online format already foresaw more time for the examination of items 7 and 8, but that further consideration will be given to this request.

Closure of the session

Before closing the 15th Extraordinary session of the World Heritage Committee, the **Chairperson** renewed his thanks to all participants for their cooperation and for reaching consensus resulting in a successful session. He concluded by thanking interpreters and the staff from both Paris and Beijing for their indispensable support and looked forward to meeting participants on the occasion of the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee.

The session rose at 2.45 p.m.