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**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

**CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF
THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Extended forty-fourth session

Fuzhou (China) / Online meeting

16 – 31 July 2021

Item 8 of the Provisional Agenda: Nomination process

INF.8.1: Outcomes of the Expert meeting on sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories (Paris, 4-6 December 2019)

SUMMARY

By its Decisions **42 COM 5A**, **42 COM 8** and **42 COM 8B.24**, the Committee requested the World Heritage Centre to organize a comprehensive reflection, whether and how sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories might relate to the purpose and scope of the *World Heritage Convention*. In particular, the Committee decided (Decision **42 COM 5A**) to convene an Expert meeting on this subject.

This document presents the report and recommendations of the “Expert meeting on sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories” (Paris, 4-6 December 2019).

This information Document is presented pursuant to the decisions mentioned above and should be read in conjunction with Document WHC/20/44.COM/8.



Expert meeting on sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories

4-6 December 2019
UNESCO IIEP, Paris, France
ROOM II

REPORT

This meeting has been organized by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre thanks to the financial support of the governments of Australia, France, Kuwait, Republic of Korea and UNESCO, as well as in-kind support of the African World Heritage Fund.



BACKGROUND

1. In view of the increasing number of nominations submitted or under preparation related to sites associated with memories of recent conflicts, the World Heritage Committee at its 42nd session (Manama, 2018) in three of its decisions requested to convene an Expert Meeting on sites associated with memories of recent conflicts. These decisions are presented in chronological order here below.
2. In its Decision **42 COM 5A** (Manama, 2018), the World Heritage Committee, noting the discussion paper by ICOMOS on Evaluations of World Heritage Nominations related to Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts, decided to convene an Expert Meeting on sites associated with memories of recent conflicts to allow for both philosophical and practical reflections on the nature of memorialization, the value of evolving memories, the inter-relationship between material and immaterial attributes in relation to memory, and the issue of stakeholder consultation; and to develop guidance on whether and how these sites might relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention, provided that extra-budgetary funding is available and invited the States Parties to contribute financially to this end.
3. In its Decision **42 COM 8B.24** (Manama, 2018), while recalling the reservations it has expressed concerning the inscription of sites related to negative memories, the Committee decided to adjourn consideration of the nomination of the Funerary and Memorial sites of the First World War (Western Front), Belgium and France, until a comprehensive reflection has taken place and the Committee at its 44th session (Fuzhou, China, 29 June to 9 July 2020) has discussed and decided whether and how sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories might relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines. In the same decision the Committee noted that the nomination of the Funerary and Memorial sites of the First World War (Western Front), could only be considered by the Committee upon further review by the Advisory Bodies in light of Committee decision referred to above and upon receipt of additional information to be provided by the States Parties concerned.
4. Finally, in its Decision **42 COM 8** (Manama, 2018), the Committee also decided that the evaluation of “sites associated with recent conflicts” shall be undertaken once a comprehensive reflection has taken place and once the Committee at its 44th session has discussed and decided how these sites might relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines.

EXPERT MEETING

5. The meeting was held in Paris from 4 to 6 December 2019 (see Agenda of the Meeting in Annex I) and was organized by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre thanks to the financial support of the governments of Australia, France, Kuwait, Republic of Korea and UNESCO, as well as in-kind support from the African World Heritage Fund.

6. The meeting brought together 29 experts from different constituencies and backgrounds from all regions of the world, including representatives of the Advisory Bodies, UNESCO Category 2 Centres, World Heritage Centre as well as the Communication and Information Sector, Education Sector and Science Sector of UNESCO (List of participants in Annex II).
7. Ms Isabelle Longuet (France) was chosen as Chairperson of the meeting and Ms Eugene Jo (ICCROM), as Rapporteur.
8. In preparation of the meeting, the World Heritage Centre (WHC) had shared a number of relevant documents including the text of the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the 2019 Operational Guidelines, the full text of Decisions **42 COM 5A**, **42 COM 8** and **42 COM 8B.24**, the Report of the International World Heritage Expert Meeting on Criterion (vi) and associative values (Warsaw, Poland, 2012), the Wannsee Memorandum (Berlin, 2017), “What is OUV? Defining the Outstanding Universal Value of Cultural World Heritage Properties” (ICOMOS Study, 2008), Evaluation of World Heritage Nominations related to Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts (ICOMOS Paper, 2018), Guidance and Capacity Building for the Recognition of Associative Values using World Heritage Criterion (vi) (2018) and the Study on the Interpretation of sites of memory (2018).
9. The meeting benefitted from the presentations of two ongoing studies, the Scoping Study on sites associated with recent conflicts, and the ICOMOS study on Sites associated with Memories of recent conflicts: whether and how these might relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines.

OUTCOME

10. In response to the trend indicating that a significant number of sites on Tentative Lists, many of which might be submitted as World Heritage nominations in the near future related to sites associated with memories of recent conflicts, and in the absence of clear parameters/frameworks for how such sites might relate to the World Heritage Convention, the Expert Meeting allowed, through a representative panel of 29 experts from all regions, to discuss in-depth the issues raised by the World Heritage Committee at its 42nd session.
11. In particular, the Expert Meeting focused its discussion on whether and how sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories might relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines. The full complexity of the issues was thoroughly discussed within the meeting.
12. The experts considered that, in the context of this expert meeting, the term “*conflict*” is considered to cover events such as wars, battles, massacres, genocide, torture and mass violations. The term “*recent*” is considered to be from the turn of the twentieth century. However, the expert meeting recognized that in some cases negative memories resulting from conflicts can endure for centuries, exceeding the general timeframe of recent.
13. Past decisions and reflections relating to the issue of sites associated with conflict were recalled. While the experts recognize that there are a few exceptional cases where such sites were inscribed especially in the early years of the Convention, they noted the need to understand them in the context of the following decisions and reflections. From the earliest days of the Convention, the Committee has had concerns over the inscription of Sites of Memory.
 - In 1979, ICOMOS advised the Committee:
In any case, we would favour an extremely selective approach towards places like "famous battlefields", where there are no architectural features of note within the area in question. sites representing the positive and negative sides of human history will only be invested with real force if we make the most remarkable into unique symbols, each one standing for the whole series of similar events. (CC-79/CONF.003/11)
 - Following this advice, the Committee decided, when inscribing Auschwitz:
to enter Auschwitz concentration camp on the List as a unique site and to restrict the inscription of other sites of a similar nature;

Particular attention should be given to cases which fall under criterion (vi) so that the net result would not be a reduction in the value of the List, due to the large potential number of nominations as well as to political difficulties. Nominations concerning, in particular, historical events or famous people could be strongly influenced by nationalism or other particularisms in contradiction with the objectives of the World Heritage Convention. (CC-79/CONF.003/13)
14. In dealing with subsequent proposals for inscription of Sites of Memory, the Committee has continued to show great caution and to regard such sites as exceptional cases, in line

with the constraints placed on the use of criterion (vi) in successive versions of the Operational Guidelines.

15. The meeting took account of the purposes of the World Heritage Convention and its reference to the Constitution of UNESCO (Preamble). The Convention must answer to UNESCO's general mission of promoting peace and cooperation, and measures have been taken to align its objectives, as was seen in the adoption by the World Heritage Committee and the General Assembly of States Parties of the *Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the processes of the World Heritage Convention (2015)*. Following on from this, the Operational Guidelines have been amended in 2019 to include guidance on incorporating into the implementation of the Convention sustainable development principles, a respect for diversity, equity, gender equality and human rights and the use of inclusive and participatory planning and stakeholder consultation processes (e.g. paragraphs 111b, 119 of the Operational Guidelines). The justification for inscription of sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories must be in line with the spirit of the World Heritage Convention.
16. The meeting acknowledged the range of risks involved in inscribing sites associated with memories of recent conflicts. The risk of fixing Outstanding Universal Value might interfere with on-going reconciliation processes and could re-ignite divisions between stakeholders. There is also risk that UNESCO could be seen as the arbitrator in deciding a singular version of a narrative associated with a conflict, whilst inscription could encourage a hierarchy of victims and create barriers between people. It also runs the risk of promoting selective interpretation, manipulation of messages and exclusion of alternate narratives.
17. The experts discussed ethical considerations in dealing with sites associated with memories of recent conflicts. Ethical considerations include honesty, integrity, fairness and respect. The danger of inscribing such sites on the World Heritage List is that the interpretation of these sites is particularly vulnerable to being manipulated by political parties and instrumentalized by interest groups with divisive agendas.
18. The experts discussed practical difficulties in accommodating sites associated with memories of recent conflicts to the World Heritage Convention. Aligning sites which have evolving values with the idea of immutable Outstanding Universal Value is problematic, in terms of identifying one fixed value in sites that may have multiple, evolving or contested values associated with multiple stakeholders. It is also difficult to determine how sites associated with memories of recent conflicts might justify the inscription criteria as currently worded. Ensuring authentic, broad consultation of stakeholders is difficult, if not impossible. It is also problematic to compare the relative value of memories or the relative value of conflicts.
19. The meeting benefited from presentations of different programmes related to recognizing memories associated with recent conflicts. The experts recognized that for

documentary heritage of some memory places, the UNESCO Programme Memory of the World would be suitable, and for many sites the network of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience might be appropriate. They also considered that regional programmes such as the European Heritage Label and potential programmes in other regions may also be a future option. They further considered that educational programmes as identified in the Wannsee Memorandum would be beneficial for all memory sites. ICOM Germany and ICOM Nord Conference on Difficult Issues (September 2017) and the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums (1986, revised in 2004) were also considered as important references on advancing these considerations.

20. The experts also recalled the remaining work that has to be carried out regarding the use of criterion (vi) as was outlined in the recent study conducted in 2018. They recommended new in-depth guidance using case studies as illustrations to help explain how to approach associations (events, living traditions, ideas, beliefs, artistic works, literary works) with clear and consistent language, how to measure links with a place, and how to develop a robust comparative analysis. This work remains to be carried out.
21. It was also concluded that further studies and research would be needed, within the scope of the World Heritage Convention, on associations in general as well as on the subject matter of sites associated with recent conflicts and negative and divisive memories and peace, inclusive narratives, educational values, interpretation and healing and reconciliation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

22. With regard to sites associated with recent conflicts and other negative and divisive memories, the experts consider that such properties do not relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines, although there are properties that were previously inscribed on an exceptional basis, especially in the early years of the Convention.
23. The experts recommend to the States Parties to consider other instruments and programmes as mentioned in paragraph 19 (of the present document), notably, for documentary heritage of some memory places, the UNESCO Programme Memory of the World, the network of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, the regional programmes such as the European Heritage Label and potential programmes in other regions as well as educational programmes as identified in the Wannsee Memorandum. The ICOM Germany and ICOM Nord Conference on Difficult Issues and the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums should also be considered as important references.

**Expert meeting on sites associated with recent conflicts
and other negative and divisive memories**

**4-6 December 2019
UNESCO-IIPE (Paris)**

Agenda

WEDNESDAY 4 DECEMBER 2019

- 09.30 – 10.00 **Registration – Entrance at 7-9, rue Eugène Delacroix, 75116 Paris**
Welcome coffee offered to participants (2nd floor)
- 10.00 – 10.20 **Welcome and opening remarks**
Mechtild Rössler, Director, UNESCO World Heritage Centre
- 10.20 – 10.30 **Election of Chairperson and Rapporteur of the Meeting**
- 10.30 – 12.50 **FIRST SESSION | Background to the Meeting, Decisions of the World Heritage Committee and Related Studies**
- Mechtild Rössler**, Director, UNESCO World Heritage Centre and **Alessandro Balsamo** Chief of Nominations Desk, UNESCO World Heritage Centre: Sites of Memory, UNESCO's approaches (30 min)
- Christina Cameron** and **Olwen Beazley**: Exploring the issues concerning the just-initiated study on sites associated with recent conflicts (30 min)
- Jean Louis Luxen** and **Christopher Young**: Interpretation of Sites of Memory - (20 min)
- Fackson Banda, UNESCO/Communication and Information Sector**: Brief overview of the Memory of the World Programme (10 min)
- Cecilia Barbieri, UNESCO/Education Sector**: Brief overview on memory and education (10 min)
- Nigel Crawhall, UNESCO/Science Sector**: Brief overview on UNESCO policy on engaging with indigenous peoples (10 min)
- Group Discussion
- 12.50 – 13.00 **Wrap-up with most salient points of the session**
Rapporteur of the Meeting

13.00 – 14.30 LUNCH BREAK IIEP Canteen, Ground floor

- 14.30 – 17.30 **SECOND SESSION | Evaluating associative values**
- Susan Denyer** and **Gwenaëlle Bourdin**: Presentation of ICOMOS Discussion Paper on Evaluations of World Heritage Nominations related to Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts (30 min)
- Group Discussion

17.20 – 17.30 **Wrap-up with most salient points of the session**
Rapporteur of the Meeting

THURSDAY 5 DECEMBER 2019

09.30 – 10.00 Welcome coffee offered to participants (2nd floor)

10.00 – 12.50 **THIRD SESSION | Challenges: biased views versus Outstanding Universal Value**

Can sites associated with memories of recent conflicts be compatible with the spirit of the World Heritage Convention and the notion of Outstanding Universal Value?

Group discussion

12.50 – 13.00 **Wrap-up with most salient points of the session**
Rapporteur of the Meeting

13.00 – 14.30 **LUNCH BREAK** IIEP Canteen, Ground floor

14.30 – 17.30 **FOURTH SESSION | The way forward**

Develop guidance on whether and how these sites might relate to the purpose and scope of the World Heritage Convention

Group discussion

17.20 – 17.30 **Wrap-up with most salient points of the session**
Rapporteur of the Meeting

18.00 [Meeting of the Drafting Group working on the first draft of the final report]
Restricted participation

FRIDAY 6 DECEMBER 2019

09.30–10.00 Welcome coffee offered to participants (2nd floor)

10.00 – 13.00 **FIFTH SESSION | Collective review of the first draft of the final report and recommendations**

Led by the **Chair of the Meeting** and **Mechtild Rössler, Director, UNESCO World Heritage Centre**

**Expert meeting on sites associated with recent conflicts
and other negative and divisive memories**

**4-6 December 2019
UNESCO-IIPE (Paris)**

List of participants

Experts

Mr Charles Akibodé

Director
Institute of Cultural Heritage
Cape Verde

Mr Antonio Arantes

Icomos International Committee on Intangible
Cultural Heritage
Vice-President
Department of Anthropology
UNICAMP – State University of Campinas
Brazil

Mr Ricardo Brodsky Baudet

Director
National Museum Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna
National Service of the Cultural Heritage
Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage
Chile

Mr Visoth Chhay

Museum Practitioner
Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum
Cambodia

Ms Isabelle Longuet

Heritage Expert
France

Mr Dawson Munjeri

Heritage Expert
Zimbabwe

Ms Katarzyna Piotrowska

Head of the Centre for World Heritage, focal
point for World Heritage
National Heritage Board of Poland
Poland

Ms Elizabeth Silkes

Executive Director
International Coalition of Sites of Conscience
United States of America

Mr Ahmed Skounti

Institut national des sciences de l'archéologie
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Department of Anthropology
Morocco

Ms Annie Tohmé-Tabet

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Mr Eric Zerrudo

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University of Santo Tomas
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Resource Persons

Ms Olwen Beazley

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Historic & World Heritage
Park Cultural Values and Planning
NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
Australia

Ms Christina Cameron

Professor and Chairholder
Canada Research Chair on Built Heritage
University of Montreal
Canada

Mr Albino Jopela

Head of Programmes
African World Heritage Fund

Mr Jean-Louis Luxen

President
Culture, Heritage and Development –
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Belgium

Mr Christopher Young

Heritage Consultant
United Kingdom

Ms Dacia Viejo Rose [written contribution]

University Lecturer (Heritage)
Department of Archaeology
University of Cambridge

Advisory Bodies

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Ms Susan Denyer

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Memory of the World Programme
Section for Universal Access and Preservation
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Communication and Information Sector

Ms Cecilia Barbieri

Chief of Section
Global Citizenship and Peace Education
Division of Peace and Sustainable
Development
Education Sector

Mr Nigel Crawhall [written contribution]

Chief of Section
Small Islands and Indigenous Knowledge
Science Sector