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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Thirty-second session

Quebec, Canada
2 – 10 July 2008

Item 7.2 of the Provisional Agenda: Proposal for the preparation of a new recommendation relating to Historic Urban Landscapes

SUMMARY

At its 29th session the World Heritage Committee recommended “that the General Conference of UNESCO adopt a new Recommendation to complement and update the existing ones on the subject of conservation of historic urban landscapes, with special reference to the need to link contemporary architecture to the urban historic context” (Decision **29 COM 5D**).

This document has been prepared to inform the World Heritage Committee of new approaches being developed on the conservation of historic urban landscapes and to provide an outline of a preliminary study of the technical and legal aspects of the regulation action proposed, as requested by the 179th session of the Executive Board (**179 EX/Decision 25**), with a view to updating and complementing existing standard-setting documents on the subject.

Draft Decision: **32 COM 7.2**, see Point V

I. Introduction

1. A corpus of standard-setting documents¹, including charters and recommendations, exists on the subject of historic cities and their broader setting, which have been useful to guide policies and practices worldwide, with good results. However, conditions have changed and historic cities are now subject to new development pressures and challenges not present at the time of adoption of the last UNESCO recommendation on urban sites more than thirty years ago, in 1976 (i.e. the UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas).
2. With the current size and foreseen increase of the world's population living in urban areas, supplemented by insufficient policies to recognize and facilitate sustainable use of heritage assets, pressures on historic cities will continue to rise, making the conservation of historic urban areas one of the most daunting tasks of our time. As a direct consequence, the time allocated at World Heritage Committee sessions to debating the impact of contemporary development inside or adjacent to World Heritage designated cities has increased dramatically since the 1990s, with issues ranging from traffic and tourism pressures, to high-rise constructions and inner-city functional changes.

II. Background

3. During its 27th session in Paris, in 2003, the World Heritage Committee called for the organization of a symposium to discuss how to properly regulate the needs for modernization of historic urban environments, while at the same time preserving the values embedded in inherited urban landscapes, in particular of cities inscribed on the World Heritage List. In response, the World Heritage Centre, in cooperation with ICOMOS and the City of Vienna, organized the international conference 'World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture – Managing the Historic Urban Landscape' in Vienna, Austria, in May 2005. At this conference a first outline of principles and guidelines was adopted, the so-called "Vienna Memorandum", which promoted an integrated and harmonious relationship between conservation and new architectural and urban developments in order to preserve the integrity of the historic landscape.
4. The World Heritage Committee at its 29th session in July 2005 in Durban, South Africa, welcomed this document as a necessary tool for discussing and assessing contemporary interventions, including high-rise constructions, in World Heritage cities and their wider setting. The World Heritage Committee furthermore recommended "that the General Conference of UNESCO adopt a new Recommendation to complement and update the existing ones on the subject of conservation of historic urban landscapes, with special reference to the need to link contemporary architecture to the urban historic context" (Decision **29 COM 5D**).
5. Following the Committee's decision, the Vienna Memorandum formed the basis for the 'Declaration on the Conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes' (HUL), which was adopted by the 15th General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage

¹ In particular the 1964 "International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites" (Venice Charter), the 1968 "UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Preservation of Cultural Property endangered by Public or Private works", the 1976 "UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas", the 1982 ICOMOS-IFLA "International Charter for Historic Gardens" (Florence Charter), the 1987 ICOMOS "Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas" (Washington Charter), the 1994 "Nara Document on Authenticity" drafted in occasion of the Nara Conference on Authenticity in Relation to the World Heritage Convention, as well as the HABITAT II Conference and Agenda 21, which was ratified by Member States in Istanbul (Turkey) in June 1996.

Convention in October 2005 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris (Resolution **15 GA 7**).

6. The General Assembly invited each State Party to reflect on the Vienna Memorandum and to integrate its principles into heritage conservation policies. Based on feedback from several regions, it appeared that this request was premature as some issues were still not clarified, among which the difference between cultural- and urban landscapes, the relationship with buffer zones, the test of authenticity and condition of integrity in cities, and proper assessments of impacts on Outstanding Universal Value.
7. Nevertheless, the Vienna Memorandum is considered valuable as an historical record of the state of the debate at that time. It is a transitional document, which hints at a vision of human ecology and signals a change towards sustainable development and a broader concept of urban space. The way forward appears to be through the concept of "landscape", not so much the designed and evolved landscapes that are familiar to most conservation specialists, but rather associative landscapes or "landscapes of the imagination". Its importance lies in its ability to open a dialogue among a broad cross-section of the community and between the disciplines on the issue of contemporary development in historic cities. By using ritual and experience as starting points for understanding the significance of historic urban spaces, conservation practitioners will be forced to challenge the legacy of twentieth century approaches. Dialogue is considered to be the main value of the Vienna Memorandum².

III. Regional Consultation Meetings

8. Subsequently, the World Heritage Centre has started a process of regional consultation meetings to receive expert input on concepts, definitions and approaches to historic urban landscapes as potential content material for a new UNESCO recommendation on the subject.
9. To date three of the regional expert meetings have been organized by the World Heritage Centre and its partners, held in Jerusalem (June 2006), Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation (January 2007) and Olinda, Brazil (November 2007), while others are foreseen to complement the regional contexts. In general, all three meetings resulted in a broad support for the ongoing review process concerning approaches and tools for historic urban landscape conservation, and the 2005 Vienna Memorandum was widely recognized as a useful basis and work-in-progress to improve existing tools for the preservation of historic cities, their setting and their wider urban and natural landscapes.
10. As regards to the specific recommendations resulting from the regional meetings, the following were particularly noteworthy³:
 - a) The **Jerusalem Meeting** called for:
 - a process of cultural mapping as a tool for the identification of the *genius loci* of historic areas in their wider setting;
 - enhanced impact assessment techniques (environmental, visual, cultural and social);
 - b) The **Saint Petersburg Meeting** emphasized the need for:

² Main outcome of the Round Table organized by Christina Cameron, Canada Research Chair on Built Heritage, Faculty of Environmental Design, Université de Montréal, 9 March 2006. A third Round Table was organized on *World Heritage: defining and protecting "Important Views"* from 18-20 March 2008. The proceedings are available at the following Web address: <http://www.patrimoinebati.umontreal.ca>

³ The full reports of these regional meetings is available at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/cities>

- further reflection on the links between cultural landscapes and urban landscapes;
- an integrated approach to urban planning and heritage conservation to accommodate urban growth and development, which are accelerating in large parts of Central and Eastern Europe at the moment.

c) At the **Olinda Meeting**, significant discussion took place on the need for:

- broadening the understanding of historic cities through a revision of the *Operational Guidelines* by including the notion of “sites” as an additional category for nomination of historic cities that would facilitate a holistic approach to heritage conservation;
- research and development on a robust toolkit for urban conservation;
- responding to social discrepancies and environmental sustainability in urban areas, particularly in relation to the Latin American context.

11. Additional regional consultation meetings are foreseen in 2008/2009 to raise awareness and receive expert input, including on the issue of authenticity and integrity in cities, as well as on the development of an expanded tool kit for urban conservation.

12. Further to this, the World Heritage Centre has started a process of reviewing the existing standard-setting documents and of the relevant sections of the *Operational Guidelines*, in particular the ‘UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas’ (Nairobi, 26 November 1976) and the ‘UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Preservation of Cultural Property endangered by Public or Private Works’ (Paris, 19 November 1968). To determine if there was a need for an update that included the notion of historic urban landscape, the World Heritage Centre organized a one-day expert meeting at UNESCO Headquarters on 25 September 2006. The group consisted of 15 international experts from different geo-cultural regions, professional backgrounds, international organizations and research institutions.

13. The analysis of the key Charters and Recommendations as well as of the Vienna Memorandum are presented in Annex 1. The main discussions concluded that new dynamics in architecture and urban development, including global/non-local processes, have brought about new challenges to urban heritage conservation and management, as especially experienced by the World Heritage Committee at its annual sessions. These require new approaches and critical review of the standards and guidelines set three decades ago. Furthermore, in December 2007 an information report, including the results and recommendations of the three regional consultation meetings (i.e. Jerusalem, St. Petersburg, Olinda) was sent to all three Advisory Bodies, as well as the partner organizations and institutions that are part of the ad hoc Working Group on Historic Urban landscapes (namely the International Union of Architects, the International Federation of Landscape Architects, the International Federation for Housing and Planning, the Organization of World Heritage Cities and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture) for their formal comments and suggestions. All these organizations have responded positively by welcoming the current debate and reacted in favour of a process of revision of the *Operational Guidelines* and working towards an updated recommendation in relation to the conservation of Historic Urban Landscapes.

IV. Proposal for the preparation of a new Recommendation relating to Historic Urban Landscapes

14. Following the evaluation of the key charters and recommendations, which led to the conclusion that fundamental changes in concept and perception of heritage have occurred during the past 30 years, this expert group supported the drafting of a new, or revised standard-setting document. This proposal was submitted to the Executive Board which, at its 179th session⁴, requested a preliminary study of the technical and legal aspects that should take stock of the different regional perspectives, an integrated approach, the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee and the regulatory action proposed. The study will be submitted for consideration to the Executive Board at its 181st session (spring 2009), in order to recommend to the General Conference at its 35th session (2009) whether or not a recommendation should be prepared for adoption by the General Conference at its 36th session (2011)⁵.
15. In spite of the fact that the general principles of the 1976 Recommendation have been considered still valid, at its 29th session the World Heritage Committee had recommended that the General Conference adopt a new recommendation (Decision **29 COM 5D**), in consideration of the fact that after 30 years many concepts concerning the conservation of urban historic areas have evolved, that policies are today much more articulated and tested, and that the very vocabulary of the planning profession has changed. This was recalled at the 179th session of the Executive Board in April 2008. In light of the above the Secretariat therefore proposes to prepare a new recommendation on the subject.
16. An outline of this preliminary study would build upon the existing standard-setting documents as well as the *Operational Guidelines*, to avoid contradictions and build upon useful elements, and in particular the following important definitions and guidelines established by the 1976 Recommendation concerning the Safeguarding and Contemporary Role of Historic Areas:
- The fundamental concepts that historic areas represent the living presence of the past in modern life and that they are expressions of the cultural diversity of human societies in time and space, as well as a powerful factor of identity of individuals and societies;
 - The need to consider historic areas and their surroundings as a totality and coherent whole, whose protection and conservation is a collective responsibility and should be the object of public policies and ad hoc legislation;
 - The need to preserve the character of the setting of historic areas and to adapt new interventions to the urban context;
 - The need to associate cultural and social revitalization to physical conservation, in order to preserve the traditional social fabric and functions of the historic areas;
 - The need to develop and implement appropriate measures for the conservation of historic areas, including land-use controls, building regulations, conservation plans, traffic management schemes, pollution controls, appropriate funding and subsidy mechanisms, participatory frameworks and public awareness and education activities.
17. The preliminary study would then discuss the key issues that have profoundly changed the discipline and practice of urban heritage conservation in the past 30 years, among

⁴ See Decision 179 EX/25.

⁵ In accordance with the *Rules of the Procedure concerning recommendations to Member States and international conventions covered by the terms of Article IV, paragraph 4, of the Constitution*.

which:

- The introduction within the framework of the *World Heritage Convention* of the Statements of Significance and of Outstanding Universal Value as guiding principles for the conservation and management of World Heritage properties;
- The increasing importance attributed to the concept of historic urban landscape, as a stratification of previous and current urban dynamics, with an interplay between the natural and built environment (previously handled by 'zoning').
- The greater role played by contemporary architecture in historic areas, and the issue of harmonization of the contemporary architectural expressions with the values of the historic context (and not just the 'contextualisation of new buildings');
- The economics and changing role of cities, with an emphasis on the non-local processes such as tourism and urban development, increasingly influenced by global economic and financial actors ;
- The issues of 'authenticity' and 'integrity' in relation to living historic cities;
- The meaning and the use of 'core and buffer zones' in relation to the conservation of historic areas and historic urban landscapes;
- The 'intangible' values associated to urban historic areas, and the role they play in the conservation process and in the social perception and understanding of the function of historic areas;
- The increasing relevance of impacts of climate change on built and natural environments within historic cities.

V. Draft Decision

Draft Decision: 32 COM 7.2

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC-08/32.COM/7.2,
2. Recalling Decision **29 COM 5D** (Durban, 2005) and Resolution **15 GA 7** (UNESCO, 2005),
3. Commends the Advisory Bodies ICOMOS, ICCROM and IUCN, and partner organizations UIA (International Union of Architects), IFLA (International Federation of Landscape Architects), IFHP (International Federation for Housing and Planning), OWHC (Organization of World Heritage Cities) and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture for their continued support and participation in this important initiative;
4. Requests the World Heritage Centre in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies to propose a revision of relevant sections of the Operational Guidelines relating to historic cities, exploring the possibility of a broadening of categories under which cities can be inscribed and facilitating a more holistic approach to historic urban landscape conservation, for submission at its 33rd session;
5. Strongly encourages the Executive Board to recommend to the 35th session of the General Conference that the conservation of historic urban landscapes be regulated at the international level in the form of a new UNESCO Recommendation;
6. Further requests the World Heritage Centre to prepare a road map for the preparation of a new Recommendation, should the General Conference authorize the Director-General to initiate such a process for submission of a new Recommendation.

Annex 1: Comparative analysis of key Charters and Recommendations

	1968 RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL PROPERTY ENDANGERED BY PUBLIC OR PRIVATE WORKS	1976 NAIROBI RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE SAFEGUARDING AND CONTEMPORARY ROLE OF HISTORIC AREAS	1987 WASHINGTON CHARTER FOR THE CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC TOWNS AND URBAN AREAS	2005 VIENNA MEMORANDUM ON WORLD HERITAGE AND CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE – MANAGING THE HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE
DEFINITIONS	a) Immovable: Archaeological, historic and scientific sites including groups of traditional structures, <u>historic quarters</u> in urban or rural built up area and ethnological structures b) Movable: (not relevant here)	<u>Historic and architectural areas</u> : group of buildings, structures and open spaces in an urban or rural environment, the cohesion and value of which are recognised from the archaeological, architectural, prehistoric, historic, aesthetic or sociocultural point of view. Environment: Natural or man-made setting which influences the static or dynamic way these areas are <u>perceived</u> or which is <u>directly linked</u> to them in space or social, economic or cultural ties.	<u>Historic urban areas</u> , large and small, including cities, towns and historic centres or quarters together with their <u>natural and man-made environments</u> .	<u>Historic urban landscape</u> goes beyond the notions of historic centres, ensembles, surroundings to include the <u>broader territorial and landscape context</u> . Composed of character-defining elements: land use and patterns, spatial organisation, visual relationships, topography and soils, vegetation and all elements of the technical infrastructures.
GENERAL PRINCIPLES	a) Preservation of the entire site or structure from the effects of private or public works b) <u>Salvage or rescue</u> of the property if the area is to be transformed, including preservation and removal of the property	a) Historic areas and its <u>surroundings</u> to be considered in their totality as a coherent whole whose balance and specific nature depend on the parts of which it is composed. b) Elements to be preserved include human activities, buildings, spatial organisation and their surroundings	a) Conservation should be integral part of <u>coherent policies</u> of economic and social development and of urban and regional planning. b) Qualities to be preserved include urban patterns, relationships between buildings and open spaces, formal appearance of buildings, relationship with surrounding setting and functions.	a) <u>Continuous change</u> acknowledged as part of city's tradition: response to development dynamics should facilitate changes and growth while respecting inherited townscape and its landscape as well as historic city's authenticity and integrity. b) Enhancing quality of life and production efficiency help strengthening identity and social cohesion.
IDENTIFIED THREATS	a) Urban expansion and renewal projects removing structures <u>around scheduled monuments</u> . b) Injudicious modifications to <u>individual buildings</u> c) Dams, highways, bridges, cleaning and levelling of land, mining, quarrying, etc...	a) Newly developed areas that could ruin the environment and character of <u>adjoining historic areas</u> b) <u>Disfigurement of historic areas</u> caused by infrastructures, pollution and environmental damage c) Speculation which compromises the interests of the community as a whole.	a) <u>Physical degradation and destruction</u> caused by urban development that follows industrialisation. b) Uncontrolled Traffic and parking, construction of motorways inside historic towns, natural disasters, pollution and vibration.	Socio-economic changes and growth that would not respect historic cities authenticity and integrity as well as their inherited townscape and landscape.
PROPOSED POLICY AND RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES	a) Enact and maintain legislative measures necessary to ensure the <u>preservation or salvage</u> of endangered cultural properties b) Ensure adequate <u>public budgets</u> for such preservation or salvage c) Encourage such preservation thru favourable tax rates, grants, loans, etc... d) Entrust responsibility for the preservation to appropriate official bodies at national and local levels. e) Provide advice to the population and develop educational programmes	a) Prepare detailed surveys of historic areas and their surroundings including architectural, social, economic, cultural and technical data. b) Establish appropriate plans and documents defining the areas and items to be protected, standards to be observed, conditions governing new constructions, etc... c) Draw up <u>priorities for the allocation of public funds</u> d) Protection and restoration should be accompanied by <u>social and economic revitalization policy</u> in order to avoid any brake in the social fabric	a) Conservation plans must address all relevant factors including history, architecture, sociology and economics and should ensure <u>harmonious relationship</u> between the historic urban area and the town as a whole. b) New functions and activities should be compatible with the character of the historic area. c) Special educational and training programmes should be established.	a) Planning process in historic urban landscapes requires a thorough formulation of <u>opportunities and risks</u> in order to guarantee a well-balanced development. b) <u>Contemporary architecture</u> should be complementary to the values of the historic urban landscape and should not compromise the historic nature of the city. c) <u>Economic developments</u> should be bound to the goals of long-term heritage preservation.