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

**WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE**

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**Item 17 of the Provisional Agenda: Progress report on the implementation  
of the recommendations of the 2007 Audit**

**INF.17: Collaboration between UNESCO's Culture Sector/World Heritage  
Centre and Natural Sciences Sector**

**SUMMARY**

This document presents the document submitted to the members of the Executive Board at its 179th session for information on the Collaboration between UNESCO's Culture Sector/World Heritage Centre and Natural Sciences Sector.



United Nations  
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# Executive Board

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda

## **REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME AND BUDGET (33 C/5), AND ON RESULTS ACHIEVED IN THE PREVIOUS BIENNIUM (2006-2007) (DRAFT 35 C/3)**

### **Collaboration between UNESCO's Culture Sector/World Heritage Centre and Natural Sciences Sector**

#### **SUMMARY**

In line with the decisions taken at the 31st session of the World Heritage Committee (Christchurch, New Zealand, 2007) and further to the consultations between the Director-General and the members of the Executive Board, measures have been taken to reinforce coordination and collaboration between the Natural Sciences Sector and the Culture Sector and its World Heritage Centre. This document summarizes the progress achieved to date as well as plans for future action. It is hereby submitted to the members of the Executive Board for information.

## Introduction

1. As mentioned by the Director-General during the information meeting of the Executive Board on 18 January 2008 (179 EX/Information Meeting), measures have been taken to reinforce coordination between the Culture Sector/World Heritage Centre and the Natural Sciences Sector as requested by the World Heritage Committee at its 31st session in 2007 and further to the consultations with the Members of the Executive Board at its 177th session.
2. In particular, during the 16th General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, that took place during the 34th session of the General Conference of UNESCO, both the Assistant Director-General for Culture and the Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences addressed the States Parties and presented the programmatic and operational cooperation planned between their respective sectors. At the same occasion, the Director-General announced the creation of a Steering Committee to ensure effective collaboration between the Natural Sciences Sector and the World Heritage Centre. The Steering Committee was originally set up by his Blue Note DG/Note/08/01 of 7 January 2008. The Committee is composed of the two ADGs of Culture and Natural Sciences, as well as the Director of the World Heritage Centre and the Director of the Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences. The Committee will meet prior to the preparation of each C/5 document and the corresponding work plans to ensure the complementarity of the orientations pursued by the two major programmes.
3. The first meeting of the Steering Committee was held on 11 January 2008 to discuss this complementarity and to prepare a strategy (presented below) for a more systematic and meaningful collaboration.

## Strategy for reinforced collaboration between UNESCO's Culture Sector/World Heritage Centre and Natural Sciences Sector

### *Background*

4. World Heritage sites inscribed under the 1972 World Heritage Convention and biosphere reserves designated under the Man and the Biosphere Programme provide an important contribution to increasing the effectiveness of action focused on conservation, sustainable development, education and research through international recognition of their value and importance.
5. Even though biosphere reserves and world heritage sites, including Natural Heritage sites, may have different purposes, objectives, legal status and management principles, both have co-evolved to a point where they have strong complementarity. Currently 85 sites have overlapping designations – they are thus both World heritage sites and biosphere reserves. In general, world heritage sites represent the core area or part of the core area of biosphere reserves, where conservation of the identified outstanding universal values is the priority. Building on these complementarities of purpose and function, some collaborative activities have been undertaken under the two programmes, but there is need for a more strategic collaboration and increased coordination between CLT/WHC, MAB, as well as other SC and broader Culture Sector initiatives.

### *Objectives of collaboration*

6. Main objectives of a more systematic and strategic collaboration between SC and CLT/WHC can be summarized as follows:
  - (1) To develop synergistic activities to maximize the comparative advantage of UNESCO's work in the field of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development with particular attention given to addressing the impacts of new global challenges such as climate change, urbanization, pressure from unsustainable tourism and internal migration.

- (2) To demonstrate the value added of UNESCO's sites – biosphere reserves, world heritage sites, including sites with these twin designations – for integrated landscape management, leveraging biodiversity conservation and sustainable use actions at the landscape level and contributing to achieving international goals for biodiversity conservation (such as the 2010 target).
- (3) To increase the visibility and the use of UNESCO sites, both within UNESCO and across the United Nations system.
- (4) To promote the use of these sites as references for ensuring effective conservation-development equations and monitoring change across a wide range of representative ecosystems.
- (5) To contribute to the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development through activities aimed at building capacity and disseminating information, experience and lessons learned.

*Implementing the strategy: Work plan for the 2008-2009 biennium*

7. During the current biennium (2008-2009), the following actions and working methods are being developed jointly so as to implement the SC-CLT/WHC Collaboration Strategy:

- (1) Strengthening cooperation in promoting the effective and sustainable management of sites which are designated under both the World Heritage Convention and the MAB Programme (joint sites):
  - CLT/WHC inputs to the third World Congress of Biosphere Reserves (4-9 February 2008, Madrid, Spain) in the context of:
    - (a) the session on regional meetings;
    - (b) the session on thematic meetings;
    - (c) ministerial round table discussions on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in Congo, Uganda and Rwanda.
  - Selection of four to six key sites to demonstrate the value added of joint biosphere reserve and World Heritage designations as complementary tools for ensuring biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in site-specific contexts.
  - Development of Community Management for Protected Areas (COMPACT)-type initiatives that contribute to on-ground implementation of the ecosystem approach in selected joint UNESCO sites.
  - Collaboration in the context of International Year of Planet Earth (2008), Year of Astronomy (2009) and Year of Charles Darwin (2009).
- (2) Undertaking capacity-building activities focusing on the development of region-specific training materials on integrated conservation-development approaches:
  - Training courses and materials on protected areas in productive landscapes.
  - Training courses and materials on management effectiveness, sustainable financing, sustainable tourism (e.g. public use planning, interpretation).
  - Training courses and materials on reducing risks from disasters and global change.

- (3) Strengthening collaboration between the CLT/WHC and IOC/UNESCO with regard to marine world heritage sites including identification, nomination, management planning and capacity-building activities:
- Working with IOC/UNESCO to respond to management and conservation challenges at marine world heritage sites, including coral reef conservation, as a part of the site monitoring process.
  - Exploring the feasibility of enlisting the support of the International Maritime Organization's Particularly Sensitive Sea Area designation for marine world heritage sites at risk from international shipping.
- (4) Promoting the use of space technologies and tools for monitoring the state of conservation of sites, in risk preparedness planning, etc.:
- "Rapid response through space technologies" to build a partnership with the space agencies which provide images and a number of universities with image interpretation capacities, to allow a rapid reaction in case of emergency, documenting impacts of major natural or anthropogenic disasters.
  - Monitoring of sites where deforestation, desertification, climate change, etc. are conservation and management challenges.
  - Specifically employing the use of satellite imagery in management planning, including planning for public use and visitor management, interpretation and environmental education.

### **Progress in the implementation of the Strategy**

8. The following actions have recently been undertaken to strengthen collaboration between the Natural Sciences Sector and CLT/WHC in line with the above-mentioned Collaboration Strategy:

- Following the meeting of the Steering Committee on 11 January 2008, when it was noted that there were very few activities pertaining to natural heritage under MLA 1 (World Heritage Centre) in document 34 C/5, CLT/WHC undertook an exercise to identify and/or redefine some activities to specifically address natural heritage concerns. The resulting list of 22 activities, with a budget outlay of \$678,950 for the biennium, was communicated by ADG/CLT to the field offices concerned and to ADG/SC to implement the activities in close coordination with the Natural Sciences Sector.
- The list of 154 World Heritage cultural and natural sites on which State of Conservation reports will be submitted to the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee has been communicated to the Natural Sciences Sector for their input, particularly in relation to issues affecting the joint sites.
- CLT/WHC's Deputy Director of the World Heritage Centre and two natural heritage Programme Specialists participated in the third World Congress of Biosphere Reserves (4-9 February 2008, Madrid, Spain), particularly in the meeting of the International Coordinating Council of the MAB Programme, to discuss and finalize the Madrid Action Plan, in the context of the forest ecosystems thematic session and the ministerial round table discussions on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development in Congo, Uganda and Rwanda. This high-level round table resulted in signing the Tripartite Declaration on the Central Albertine Rift Valley Transboundary Biosphere Initiative with the objective of promoting "sustainable development pathways for the transboundary region so as to ensure the conservation of the unique biodiversity of the region while

promoting the socio-economic and cultural well-being of human communities in the region”.

- Representatives of the Natural Sciences Sector participated in the meeting on “World Heritage, Science and Technology” held in London, United Kingdom, from 21 to 23 January 2008. Based on the results of this meeting, several joint actions between the Natural Sciences Sector and CLT/WHC are currently being developed.
- At its 31st session in 2007, the World Heritage Committee decided to apply the new “Reinforced Monitoring Mechanism” to the five world heritage sites in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, all inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger and requested the Director-General of UNESCO and the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee to convene a meeting with the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, together with representatives of the African Union and appropriate subregional organizations and the President of IUCN to discuss progress in addressing the deterioration of the state of conservation of the five sites. CLT/WHC is working with the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to organize this high-level meeting. As all five sites also contain important populations of great apes, CLT/WHC will collaborate with the Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences, the UNESCO Focal Point for the joint UNEP/UNESCO Great Apes Survival Project (GRASP), in the organization of the meeting.
- As of early 2008, the UNESCO-ESA “Open Initiative on the use of space technologies to monitor natural and cultural heritage of UNESCO sites” has attracted over 30 partners, including space agencies, research institutions and universities. The associated activities vary from deriving cartography for natural and cultural sites, making archaeological inventories (e.g. Altai mountains), measuring landslides (e.g. Machu Picchu), deriving 3-D models and virtual tours for Calakmul (both a world heritage site and biosphere reserve) as well as working jointly with the Convention on Biological Diversity to make an overall assessment of the Meso-American corridor using world heritage sites as pilot cases). Activities are implemented if the associated country agrees to work in close partnership with UNESCO and space partners.
- In March 2008 UNESCO established a specific partnership with the space agencies in order to use Earth observations from space to assess the impact of climate change on UNESCO-designated sites.

### **Future activities**

9. Based on the outcomes of the above, the following activities are currently being developed to support the implementation of the actions foreseen in the work plan for the 2008-2009 biennium:

- Follow-up on the Madrid Action Plan adopted at the third World Congress of Biosphere Reserves, namely with regard to increasing cooperation and coordination of biosphere reserves with existing international programmes and initiatives, including the World Heritage Convention.
- Follow-up on the Tripartite Declaration on the Central Albertine Rift Valley Transboundary Biosphere Initiative as an opportunity for collaboration between the MAB Programme and the CLT/WHC on the ground (e.g. in Volcanoes National Park and Biosphere Reserve, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and world heritage site, Queen Elizabeth National Park and Biosphere Reserve, Semliki National Park, Ruwenzori Mountains National Park and world heritage site and Virunga National Park and world heritage site).
- Follow-up on the “World Heritage, Science and Technology” meeting, namely with regard to possible cooperation in the design and conduct of a framework thematic study on the

heritage of science and technology and the World Heritage; cooperation focused on Galapagos world heritage site which is also part of the Archipiélago de Colón (Galapagos) Biosphere Reserve in the context of the Year of Charles Darwin (2009); and exploring science education potential in current and future world heritage sites that are or can be biosphere reserves.

- Inputs from the ADG/SC to the 32nd session of the World Heritage Committee to be held in Quebec City, Canada, from 2 to 10 July 2008.

