



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

World Heritage

33 COM

Distribution Limited

WHC-09/33.COM/INF10B
Paris, 29 May 2009
Original: English/French

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

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

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Thirty-third session

Seville, Spain
22 – 30 June 2009

Item 10 of the Provisional Agenda: Global Strategy for a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List

INF.10B : Progress report on the development of the project of establishment of an Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH), as Category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO

SUMMARY

This document contains information on the progress achieved in the development of the project of establishment of an Arab Regional Center World Heritage (ARC-WH), as Category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO.

This document is composed of six parts:

Part I: introduction of the 5th article of the *World Heritage Convention*

Part II: background of the initiative

Part III : objectives of the ARC-WH

Part IV : institution and functioning of the ARC-WH

Part V : future steps towards the establishment of the ARC-WH

Part VI : conclusion

I - Introduction

1. The *World Heritage Convention* stipulates in its Article 5, that in order:

"To ensure that effective and active measures are taken for the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage situated on its territory, each State Party to this Convention shall endeavor, in so far as possible, and as appropriate for each country:...

[...]

- (e) *to foster the establishment or development of national or regional centres for training in the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage and to encourage scientific research in this field."*

2. The Kingdom of Bahrain wishes through the project of establishment of an Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH), as Category II centre under the auspices of UNESCO, to contribute to the efforts developed by the international community in favour of the reinforcement of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and the promotion and protection of human heritage in all its forms.

II. Background of the initiative

3. In **December 2000**, the results of the First Cycle of Periodic Reporting on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Arab Region, submitted to the World Heritage Committee at its 24th session (Cairns, Australia), revealed the need to enhance the knowledge of the World Heritage Convention, the application of the Operational Guidelines and the cooperation between the States Parties of the region.
4. In **July 2003**, the World Heritage Committee, at its 27th session (Paris), approved the "Regional Programme for the Arab Region, 2000 - 2003", proposed by the World Heritage Centre on the basis of the outcomes of the First Cycle of Periodic Reporting in the Arab Region.
5. In **December 2005**, the "Regional meeting on Follow-up to Periodic Reporting and Information Management" (Abu Dhabi, 4 to 8 December) allowed the Arab States Parties, in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, to revise and adopt the final version of the Regional Programme for the Arab Region.
6. In **May 2007**, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the World Heritage Centre launched a bilateral cooperation programme for the reinforcement of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, with a focus on the Arab Region.
7. In **October 2007**, the Kingdom of Bahrain became for the first time a member of the World Heritage Committee for a 4 year-term.
8. In **November 2007**, on the basis of the decision taken at the 15th session of the meeting of Arab Ministers of Culture (Muscat, Oman, 2006), the 18th Conference on the Archaeology and Cultural Heritage of the Arab Region (Algiers, 19 to 21 November) was dedicated to the exploration of ways to reinforce the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Arab States.
9. In **January 2008**, a delegation from the Kingdom of Bahrain met the Director-General of UNESCO at the Organization's Headquarters (Paris), in the presence of the Director of the World Heritage Centre and the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee, and presented a project proposal for the establishment, in Bahrain, of a regional institution

dedicated to the support of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Arab Region. The proposal of Bahrain was welcomed by the Director-General who invited the State Party to consider establishing the regional centre as a Category II centre under the auspices of UNESCO. He also invited the State Party to prepare a document introducing the project for the consideration of the World Heritage Committee at its 32nd session (Quebec, Canada).

10. In **February 2008**, the Kingdom of Bahrain organized a first consultation meeting to further develop the initial concept of the project presented to the Director-General of UNESCO. This consultation, bringing together representatives of international specialized institutions in the field of World Heritage and of heritage conservation (list of participants in Annex 1) allowed the State Party defining the mandate of the future regional centre and the steps to be followed towards its establishment as Category II centre under the auspices of UNESCO.
11. In **July 2008**, the World Heritage Committee examined the proposal of Bahrain (Document 32COM11.B.INF) and, in its decision 32COM11.B, paragraph 10:

"Warmly welcome(d) the proposal of the State Party of Bahrain to create a Regional Centre for World Heritage, encourage(d) it to undertake a feasibility study and all necessary steps for its establishment as a Category II Centre under the auspices of UNESCO, and invite(d) it to submit a progress report of the project to its 33rd session in 2009".

12. In **October 2008**, the Council of Ministers of Bahrain endorsed the project of establishment of the ARC-WH, as Category II centre under the auspices of UNESCO.
13. In **November 2008**, the Kingdom of Bahrain submitted to UNESCO a "Request for action towards the establishment of the ARC-WH, as a Category II centre under the auspices of UNESCO".
14. In **December 2008**, a second consultation meeting on the establishment of the ARC-WH was held in Bahrain (list of participants in Annex 2). This meeting provided substantial feedback to the Bahraini authorities in terms of objectives and possible modes of operation of the future institution.
15. In **January 2009**, the feasibility study on the establishment of the ARC-WH was carried out by UNESCO and a report was finalized in view of the 181st session of the Executive Board of UNESCO.

III. Objectives of the ARC-WH

16. The global objective of the ARC-WH is to assist efforts of States Parties in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Arab States region, in close cooperation with the World Heritage Centre. The ARC-WH aims principally at being a relay for the action of the World Heritage Centre and its partners in the region by federating regional energies for the conservation, promotion and presentation of the region's cultural and natural heritage. The purpose of these actions is to increase balanced representation of Arab States properties on the World Heritage List, promote better protection and management of such World Heritage properties, mobilize regional and international financial support for these purposes, and raise awareness of World Heritage in the region.
17. The ARC-WH will organize its activities along three main axes:
 - a) The provision of information relating to the World Heritage Convention and its application, including development and management of an Arabic language website, the translation

and publication of relevant documents, and promotion of the establishment of new conservation programmes at universities, in all the Arab region States;

- b) The provision of assistance to States Parties in the region to improve their ability to implement the World Heritage Convention (including understanding of WH policy, concepts, rules of procedure, preparation of tentative lists, preparation of nominations, monitoring of state of conservation, education programmes etc.) by facilitating organization of appropriate World Heritage training at the ARC-WH's premises or anywhere else in the region, and responding to State Party requests for assistance;
- c) The provision of logistical and financial support for regional activities in support of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention including hosting of meetings, conferences, training workshops or exhibitions in the region; identifying appropriate facilities and services (lecture rooms, equipment, competent translators, etc.) for meetings planned by the World Heritage Centre and other international institutions in the region, and raising funds to support World Heritage activities in the region.

IV. Institution and functioning of the ARC-WH

- 18. The ARC-WH will be established as a **public institution**, by **Royal Decree** on the basis of a legal consultation of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain and approval by the Council of Ministers.
- 19. The ARC-WH will be an **independent entity** exerting its functions and executing its activities and programmes using its own capacity.
- 20. The Royal Decree will ensure that the ARC-WH benefit from a **separate budget** to be allocated, on annual or biennium basis, by the Ministry of Finance following a decision of the Council of Ministers.
- 21. The ARC-WH will recruit **Arabic speaking staff** and rely on national, regional and international expertise to accomplish its mission.
- 22. The governance structure of the ARC-WH will function as required for UNESCO Category II centres and institutes. This includes:
 - a) a Governing Board to guide the activities of the Centre and to oversee its operations and management;
 - b) an Executive Committee whose members are chosen from the Governing Board, and representing the Board between meetings;
 - c) an Advisory Committee offering technical advice on the Centre's programmes and activities;
 - d) a Secretariat, functioning as Headquarters of the Centre, which shall be composed of a Director and any other staff required for the effective operations of the Centre.

V. Future steps towards the establishment of the ARC-WH

- 23. In April 2009, the Ministry of Culture and Information of Bahrain established, at its Sector of Culture and National Heritage, a "Unit for the establishment of the ARC-WH". This unit's tasks are to focus on the coordination of the institutional building of the ARC-WH, the development of an information and technology framework (notably to host a web site, foreseen to be in Arabic, English and French) and the promotion of the project at national and international levels.

24. At the initiative of the Ministry of Culture and Information, a formal consultation meeting is planned to be held in early June 2009 and should involve representatives of the concerned governmental institutions, notably the Royal Court, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, as well as legal experts. This working group will define the terms of preparation of the Royal Decree which will lead to the establishment of the ARC-WH.
25. The knowledge of the concepts and trends of the World Heritage Convention by the staff of the Unit for the establishment of the ARC-WH is an essential requirement towards the efficient building of the institution. Therefore, the delegation of Bahrain to the World Heritage Committee is planning to be accompanied by three staff members of the Unit for the establishment of the ARC-WH. They will submit, in due time, a request to attend the 33rd session of the World Heritage Committee and 17th General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention, as observers.
26. Furthermore, on the basis of an agreement between the Ministry of Culture and Information and the World Heritage Centre, two staff members of the Unit for the establishment of the ARC-WH will benefit from a training at UNESCO Headquarters for a period of one to two months (July-August 2009). These two people, a Webmaster and a Public Relations and Communication Specialist should have the opportunity to acquire the necessary knowledge in the framework of their functions at the Unit for the establishment of the ARC-WH by working respectively at the "Informatics, Management and Systems" and "Communication, Education and Partnership" sections of the World Heritage Centre. If satisfactory to all parties, this first experience could be renewed in the future.
27. The Kingdom of Bahrain will eventually take the necessary additional measures, during the coming months, to respond to any enquiry of UNESCO in view of the 35th session of the General Conference of the Organization (October 2009), looking forward to the decision of the latter to approve the establishment in Bahrain of the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH), as Category II centre under the auspices of UNESCO.

VI. Conclusion

28. The Kingdom of Bahrain believes that the future ARC-WH will contribute to the reinforcement of the application of the World Heritage Convention in and outside the Arab Region and to support the efforts of the World Heritage Committee in favour of the safeguarding of the human heritage of Outstanding Universal Value.

Annex 1: List of the participants of the 1st consultation meeting on the establishment of the ARC-WH – Bahrain, 19 and 20 February 2008

UNESCO

World Heritage Centre (WHC)

Mr. Francesco Bandarin Director
Ms. Véronique Dauge Chief of the Arab States Unit

Bahrain

Mr. Karim Hendili UNESCO Advisor for World Heritage and Culture
to the Ministry of Culture and Information

International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM)

Mr. Mounir Bouchenaki Director-General
Mr. Joseph King Director of Sites Unit
Mr. Zaki Aslan Coordinator of ATHAR Programme

International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)

Mr. Tamas Fejerdy Expert – Former Chairperson of the WH
Committee

World Conservation Union (IUCN)

Mr. Timothy Badman Special Advisor on World Heritage
Mr. Odeh Al Jayyousi Director of IUCN West Asia / Middle East
Regional Office

African World Heritage Fund

Mr. Webber N'doro Director

Nordic World Heritage Foundation (NWHF)

Mrs. Anne-Kristin Endresen Director

The Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation (RLICC)

Mr. Koenraad Van Balen Coordinator

International Experts

Mr. Ridha Fraoua Head of Division at Federal Office of Justice – Federal
Department of Justice and Police (Switzerland)

Mr. Herb Stovel Associate Professor for Heritage Conservation School of
Canadian Studies at Carleton University (Canada)

Representatives from Bahrain

Ministry of Information – Sector of Culture and National Heritage

Shaikha Mai Al Khalifa Assistant Undersecretary for Culture and National Heritage

Ms. Britta Rudolff Counsellor - Cultural Heritage Expert of the
Delegation of Bahrain to the World Heritage
Committee

Mr. Saeed Al Khuzai Consultant - Natural Heritage Expert of the Delegation of
Bahrain to the World Heritage Committee

Shaikh Ebrahim Al Khalifa Coordinator of Urban and Environmental Development in
Cultural Heritage Management

Mr. Yousif Bumtaia Acting Director of Archaeology and Heritage

Mrs. Manar Sirriyeh Technical Advisor

Mrs. Huda Alalawi Director of the Office of the Assistant Undersecretary

Mrs. Enas Ebrahim Al Shaikh Senior Public Relations Specialist

Annex 2: List of the participants in the 2nd consultation meeting on the establishment of the ARC-WH – Bahrain, 18 December 2008

UNESCO

World Heritage Centre (WHC)

Mr. Francesco Bandarin	Director
Ms. Véronique Dauge	Chief of the Arab States Unit
Ms. Mounira Baccar	Programme Specialist – Arab States Unit
Ms. Maria Gropa	Associate Expert – Arab States Unit
Ms. Marianne Raabe	Programme Assistant – Arab States Unit
Mr. Marc Patry	Programme Specialist – Natural Heritage
Mr. Lodovico Folin-Calabi	Programme Specialist – Special Projects Unit

Doha Office

Mr. Benno Boer	Programme Specialist for Ecological Sciences
Mrs. Malda Jabbour	Programme Specialist for Culture

Bahrain

Mr. Karim Hendili	UNESCO Advisor for World Heritage and Culture to the Ministry of Culture and Information
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Mr. Mounir Bouchenaki	Director-General
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International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)

Mr. Tamas Fejerdy Committee	Expert – Former Chairperson of the WH
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