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NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Paris, UNESCO Headquarters

19- 21 November 2013

Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda: Revisions of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly

Revisions of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly

SUMMARY

At the request of the World Heritage Committee, an Agenda item on the revision of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly concerning geographical balance in the composition of the Committee was included in the Agenda of the 19th session of the General Assembly.

This document contains background information and updated statistics regarding the composition of the Committee.

Draft Resolution: 19 GA 4, see Part IV.

I. BACKGROUND

1. At its 13th session (UNESCO, 2001), the General Assembly of States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* adopted Resolution **13 GA 9** to amend its Rules of Procedures for an equitable representation within the World Heritage Committee. This Resolution invited States Parties to voluntarily reduce their mandate from 6 to 4 years and discouraged States Parties from seeking consecutive mandates. It also confirmed the allocation of “a certain number of seats” for States Parties having no property inscribed on the World Heritage List.
2. At its 15th session (UNESCO, 2005) by its Resolution **15 GA 9**, the General Assembly requested the Secretariat, in cooperation with the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee, to initiate a process to discuss possible alternative mechanisms to ensure a balanced geographical and cultural representation within the Committee, as well as a speedier and less complex voting system.
3. At its 16th session (UNESCO, 2007), the General Assembly of States Parties to the *Convention* decided to “intensify the examination of all possible alternatives to the current election system” and to establish an open-ended Working Group in order to make recommendations on this issue. This Working Group informed the World Heritage Committee of its work and delivered its final report to the 17th session of the General Assembly in 2009.
4. Following two years of extensive consultations among States Parties under the leadership of H.E Ambassador Kondo (Japan) Chairperson of the Working Group, a number of recommendations to amend the Rules of Procedure were submitted to the consideration of the General Assembly and adopted (see Resolution 17 GA 3A) as follows:
 - Reiterating the invitation to States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, to voluntarily reduce their term of office from six to four years;
 - a rule of a four-year gap between mandates in the World Heritage Committee;
 - reserved seat(s) for States Parties from one or more Electoral Group(s) that risk(s) not being represented in the composition of the next Committee;
 - a streamlined electoral mechanism with absolute majority in the first round of each ballot and relative majority in the second round.
5. At its 37th session (Phnom Penh, 2013) the World Heritage Committee requested that an Agenda item on the revision of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly concerning geographical balance in the composition of the Committee be included in the Agenda of the 19th session of the General Assembly.

II. FOLLOW UP TO RESOLUTION 17 GA 3A

A. Voluntary reduction of term of office from six to four years

6. Following this recommendation, it should be noted that 100% of the candidatures received for elections to the Committee in 2009 and 2011 were for 4-year mandates (30 candidatures in 2009 and 23 candidatures in 2011).

B. Four-year gap between mandates in the World Heritage Committee

7. This measure aimed at increasing the accessibility of States Parties to membership of the Committee, to give an easier access to the World Heritage Committee for all the States Parties that had never previously been elected.

	May 2008	July 2013
Total number of States Parties	185	190
States Parties elected at least once	77 (42%)	85 (45%)
States Parties which always failed to be elected	37 (20%)	40 (21%)
States Parties which have never been candidates	71 (38%)	65 (34%)

8. It should be noted that the percentage of States Parties having been elected at least once as a Committee member has slightly increased since the last study in May 2008 (from 42% to 45%) while the percentage of States Parties candidates which have always failed to be elected has remained rather stable (20% - 21%).
9. It should also be noted that although the overall number of States Parties to the Convention has increased (from 185 to 190), the percentage of States Parties which have never been candidate for election has slightly decreased (from 38% to 34%).
10. Therefore, this measure encouraged States Parties to run for elections and facilitated access to the Committee.
11. During the debates of the above-mentioned Working Group, the introduction of a reserved seat for a State Party never elected to the Committee was envisaged but not retained. However, considering that the number of States Parties concerned by this proposal was lower than the number of States not having a site on the World Heritage List, the Working Group recommended maintaining the reserved seat for a State Party with no property on the List. It should be noted that currently, these figures are reversed as the number of States Parties without a site on the List has considerably decreased (42 in 2008 to 30 in 2013). The General Assembly may wish to take into account this information in the framework of the revision of its Rules of Procedure.

The recommendations of the UNESCO External Auditor on the evaluation of the Global Strategy and the PACT initiative were endorsed by the General Assembly in Resolution **18 GA 8**. The report of the External Auditor noted particularly "...one observes a strong correlation between the countries represented on the World Heritage Committee and the location of properties nominated. From 1977 to 2005, 314 nominations, 42% of which had benefitted countries with Committee members during their mandate." Therefore the question could be raised concerning the reasoning for the reserved seat for a country without a site; furthermore the number of countries without a site has

decreased over the past years. The open-ended working group established by Resolution **18 GA 8** on the Evaluation of the Global Strategy and PACT Initiative also asked the World Heritage Committee to address any potential conflicts of interest of its members and to strengthen Decision **35 COM.12B** with regard to the interdiction of a State Party to present a nomination during its mandate, confirming a transitional period on a voluntary basis for the States Parties presently members of the Committee. Therefore, the General Assembly may wish to remove this specific provision for a reserved seat for countries without sites in favour of provisions for geographical balance among the regions of the world.

C. Reserved seat(s) for States Parties from one or more Electoral Group(s) that risk(s) not being represented in the composition of the next Committee

12. At the 17th session of the General Assembly (UNESCO, 2009) the mandates of all Committee members part of Electoral Group II terminated. Therefore a reserved seat(s) for States Parties from one or more Electoral Group(s) that risk(s) not being represented in the composition of the next Committee has been put in place. Consequently the Russian Federation was elected on this reserved seat on a 4-year mandate. It should be noted that no electoral group will be facing this situation for the elections in 2013.

D. A streamlined electoral mechanism with absolute majority in the first round of each ballot and relative majority in the second round.

13. This measure was put in place at the 17th session of the General Assembly to achieve “a less-complex and time-consuming voting method” as this reduced the possible number of voting rounds to a maximum of three rounds per ballot instead of 5 with the previous system.

	15 GA (2005)	16 GA (2007)	17 GA (2009)	18 GA (2011)
Reserved seat for a State Party without property on the World Heritage List	2 Rounds (3 candidates)	3 Rounds (5 candidates)	1 Round (1 candidate)	2 Rounds (3 candidates)
Reserved seat(s) for States Parties from one or more Electoral Group(s) that risk(s) not being represented in the composition of the next Committee	N/A	N/A	2 Rounds (3 candidates)	N/A
Open ballot for remaining seats	3 Rounds (25 candidates)	4 Rounds (22 candidates)	2 Rounds (27 candidates)	2 Rounds (21 candidates)

14. As demonstrated in the above table, this new voting method improved efficiency and smooth schedule of the election process.

III. GEOGRAPHICAL REPRESENTATION IN THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

15. During the debates of the above-mentioned Working Group, this issue was extensively discussed and was reported to the Committee at its 33rd session in the final report of the Chairperson of the Working Group as follows:

“This point was the most challenging issue for the Working Group. There seemed to be a consensus on the need to have representatives from each region in the World Heritage Committee but Members diverged on the means to achieve this goal. While several countries advocated securing two or even more seats per Electoral Group in order to have an equitable representation of the different regions and cultures of the world, other Members of the Working Group opposed the introduction of any system that might imply the introduction of a formal quota system in the Committee. The latter were concerned that this may lead to politicisation of the work of the World Heritage Committee that would have undesirable effects on the World Heritage List as well. Instead of a quota system, they emphasized the potential value of the exhortative action taken by the Chairperson of the General Assembly in between the different rounds of the election procedure as a way to remind States Parties of the potential regional gap in the composition of the World Heritage Committee (Paragraph 27 of Document WHC-09/33.COM/14B).”

16. As a result of a sustained and intense debate on this issue during all four meetings of the Working Group, an agreement on the principle of one reserved seat for a non-represented Electoral Group was reached and proposed for adoption by the General Assembly (see Resolution 17GA 3A)
17. As a matter of information, the table below shows the percentage of representation of each Electoral Group in the Committee since the 1st election in 1976.

Electoral Groups	I	II	III	IV	Va	Vb
Number of mandates to the COM (cumulative)	40	9	24	28	23	29
% per group	26%	6%	16%	18%	15%	19%

IV. Draft Resolution

Draft Resolution: 19 GA 4

The General Assembly,

1. Having examined Document WHC-13/19.GA/4,
2. Recalling Resolution of the **13 GA 9** concerning the reserved seat for States Parties which do not have sites on the World Heritage List,
3. Decides to delete Rule 14.1 article c) from its Rules of Procedures.