

3rd African Ministers Roundtable on World Heritage in Africa *on the occasion of the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee*

21 June 2014, Doha, Qatar
1:15 – 3 p.m.
QNCC - Auditorium 1

Summary of Discussions



From left to right: H.E Mr Amin Abdurkadir, Minister of Culture and Tourism of Ethiopia; H.E. Dr Nadia Arop Dudi, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports of the Republic of South Sudan; Mr Sibusiso Xaba, Chairperson of the African World Heritage Fund; H. E. Ms Dolana Msimang, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of South Africa to France, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO; H.E. Ms Bomo Edna Molewa, Minister of Environmental Affairs of South Africa; H.E. Mr Abdoul Aziz Mbaye, Minister of Culture of Senegal; H.E. Sheikha Al Mayassa Bint Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Chairperson of the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee; Mr Ngoako Ramatlhodi, Minister of Mineral Resources of South Africa; UNESCO Director-General Ms Irina Bokova; Ms Alissandra Cummins, representative of the State Party of Barbados and former Chairperson of the UNESCO Executive Board; H.E. Mr Cornélio Caley, Secretary of State from the Ministry of Culture of Angola; H. E. Mr Tshekedi Khama, Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism of Botswana; and Mr Kishore Rao, Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.



On the occasion of the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee (Doha, Qatar), the **Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee, Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa Bint Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, UNESCO Director-General, Ms Irina Bokova** and the **Chairperson of the African World Heritage Fund, Mr Sibusiso Xaba**, participated in a roundtable discussion on 21 June 2014 with five African Ministers from Botswana, Ethiopia, Senegal, South Africa and South Sudan as well as the Secretary of State from the Ministry of Culture of Angola. This side event of the World Heritage Committee session was devoted to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Africa region.

Approximately 150 participants from the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee attended the side event, including ambassadors, national directors of cultural and natural heritage, experts from national delegations, and members of the press.

After a group photo of attending Ministers, **Mr Kishore Rao, Director of the World Heritage Centre**, opened the event. Welcoming remarks were delivered by the **UNESCO Director-General** who recalled the concerns raised by the Ministers at last year's roundtable discussion and noted the progress African countries are making towards the goals set in the [Action Plan for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Africa region](#). She highlighted the diversity of African heritage and also some of the challenges faced, in particular poaching, increasing population, and development challenges. She also stressed the need to increase scientific cooperation and use World Heritage sites as laboratories to find solutions to conservation and development challenges. Lastly, she called for the ministers to support UNESCO's efforts to integrate culture into the post-2015 development agenda.



H.E. Mr Abdoul Aziz Mbaye, Minister of Culture of Senegal, thanked H.E. Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa for Qatar’s recent US\$ 10 million contribution to the Fund for World Heritage in Danger. He expressed his concern over the underrepresentation of Africa in the World Heritage Committee with only Senegal representing the region, and called for adjusting the regional imbalance on the World Heritage List. He praised the capacity-building work of the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) and asked H.E. Sheikha Al Mayassa to support the AWHF. He also called on the UNESCO’s Director-General to support the AWHF and to reinforce the Africa Unit of the World Heritage Centre. He pledged the financial support of Senegal and promised the pledge will be fulfilled very soon. Lastly, he asked for assistance in safeguarding Island of Gorée World Heritage site, which is threatening sea erosion.



The **Minister of Culture and Tourism of Ethiopia, H.E. Mr Amin Abdulkadir**, affirmed the renowned contribution of Africa to universal heritage values, including nine sites from Ethiopia --the State Party with the largest number of World Heritage sites on the African continent. He assured the Director-General and the Chairperson of the Committee that the Ethiopian Government is sparing no effort to care for its heritage but emphasized the need for development and poverty alleviation. He stressed the need for local communities

to benefit from heritage areas and highlighted the US\$ 35 million development programme currently underway at Ethiopian heritage sites. He said “Heritage development and sustainable development are not mutually exclusive,” and added “Heritage can contribute to the social and economic development of our societies.” Lastly, he joined the Minister from Senegal in calling for greater representation of Africa on the World Heritage List and in the World Heritage Committee.

H.E. Mr Tshekedi Khama, Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism of Botswana, stressed the importance of sustaining local economies through heritage and development initiatives. He spoke of Botswana’s efforts to assist communities living around heritage sites through a US\$ 1.5 million community-based natural resource management programme, which helps local communities to develop livelihoods from tourism. He also gave mentioned the substantial benefits by local communities since the inscription of Tsodilo on the World Heritage List in 2001. He announced that as of January 2014, the Government of Botswana banned hunting in natural protected areas to combat the decline in wildlife species. Minister Khama noted the State Party of Botswana’s current nomination of the Okavango Delta to the World Heritage List as a natural property, and highlighted efforts for sustainable management, including disaster risk management, at this and other heritage sites. Lastly, he underlined collaborations between the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism and the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture for joint programmes intended to raise awareness among local communities about the risks of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, etc.





The **Minister of Environmental Affairs of South Africa, H.E. Ms Bomo Edna Molewa's** intervention highlighted the three pillars of sustainable development: conservation, people and economic development, which are particularly important for the future of the African continent. She stressed the crucial need to align World Heritage priorities and development needs, and reminded participants that as signatories to the 1972 Convention, States Parties are obliged to provide an assessment of the state of conservation of

sites, and ensure that recurrent problems that could lead to the inscription on the World Heritage List in Danger are resolved. Acknowledging the substantial conservation challenges currently faced by the Africa region that affect management and protection of properties, she singled out threats from minerals, petroleum and gas resources exploitation, construction of dams and other infrastructure development such as the building of roads. She recalled a recommendation formulated during the African regional celebration of the 40th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention: “Nothing about us without us”, which highlighted the importance of involving local communities in all development and conservation initiatives. She echoed the position of the Minister of Botswana by underlining the importance of ensuring that heritage remains relevant to local communities as well as the critical role that World Heritage sites can play in sustaining community livelihoods. She cited the example of best practices in conservation and management at iSimangaliso Wetland Park, which bring direct benefits to local communities through tourism and sustainable livelihood initiatives. Lastly, Minister Molewa underscored the important role played by the African World Heritage Fund, which was established in 2006, and promised her country’s continued support as host of the Fund. She called on all State Parties to make contributions to the AWHF Endowment Fund.

Although South Sudan is not yet a State Party to the World Heritage Convention, **H.E. Dr. Nadia Arop Dudi, Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports of South Sudan** also participated in the side event and announced her country’s intention to ratify the Convention this month. She asked for the support of African State Parties to share their expertise and advice as South Sudan prepares to implement the Convention while facing great challenges. She noted the four heritage sites located in South Sudan, which were previously on the Tentative List of Sudan, and need to be reviewed. She thanked UNESCO for the support received from the Juba Antenna Office, and asked for additional support from the AWHF. In closing, Minister Dudi affirmed that culture is a great pillar that brings people together, and called on participants to “work hand-in-hand to build our different cultural diversity.”





The last speaker in the roundtable was **H.E. Mr Cornélio Caley, the Secretary of State from the Ministry of Culture of Angola**. He thanked the Director-General for her active encouragement towards African countries, and also thanked Senegal for its leadership in the World Heritage Committee, as the only member of the Committee from the Africa region. He announced that Angola is working on a nomination file for the Ruin of M'banza Kongo, the former royal capital of the Kongo, and called on the solidarity and support of States Parties for their nomination process.

Following the Ministers interventions, a short discussion was engaged in with participants before returning to the plenary session of the World Heritage Committee.

The **Head of the Timbuktu Culture Mission, Mr El Boukhari Ben Essayouti**, was the first to take the floor in order to personally thank UNESCO and others for the support offered to the World Heritage site of Timbuktu during the crisis. “This international solidarity and support has had enormous impacts,” he said. “When we preserve our culture, we also preserve our development,” he added. He emphasized that culture and development are closely linked in Timbuktu. Pointing out that the practice of economic activities such as agriculture cannot be developed, he noted that culture is the main source of revenue since it stimulates tourism and helps fight against poverty. He welcomed the actions undertaken by UNESCO in the field of culture because they involve and enhance local communities, which strengthens their comprehension and appropriation of heritage.





Mr Kagosi Mwamulowe, Acting Executive Director of the National Heritage Conservation Commission of Zambia, echoed the call of the Ministers of Senegal and Ethiopia to fix the imbalance of geographic representation on the World Heritage Committee. “We must develop a strategy to increase the number of African sites on the World Heritage List,” he said. “We need to improve the links between heritage preservation actors and policy makers,” he added. He also suggested that these issues also need to be discussed on the African Union platform.



Dr George Muamba, Executive Secretary of the Greater Virunga Transboundary Collaborative-GVTC Organisation, referred to the transboundary collaboration among Rwanda, the DRC and Uganda which helped to preserve the richness and biodiversity of the Great Lakes Region. He recognized the importance of the 1972 Convention, and suggested consolidating cooperation through UNESCO for the Man and the Biosphere Programme, the RAMSAR Convention and the World Heritage Convention. He ended by noting the need to support heritage protection, which can contribute to peace and stability in the Great Lakes Region.

Mr Diel Mochire Mwenge, a representative of the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee (IPACC) took the floor to praise the Ministers and the Director-General who spoke of the importance of community involvement. He raised three issues concerning the importance for indigenous peoples to protect cultural and natural heritage, the role of indigenous traditional knowledge which is relevant in conservation and inter-generational transmission of culture, and the importance of the need to uphold the rights of indigenous peoples so as to address issues of marginalization and vulnerability.

Following the interventions from participants, the **UNESCO Director-General** responded to some of the issues raised by both the Ministers and the participants. She noted the numerous calls for finding a balance between development and conservation. Recognizing growing economic development on the continent, she encouraged collaboration in finding solutions, and thanked the Ministers for some of the examples they provided regarding the implication of local communities in the sustainable management of heritage, new models of management and partnerships between the government and community. Ms Bokova affirmed that UNESCO has more experience on the continent now and is continuing to encourage more transboundary collaboration. She recognized that Mali was a test for UNESCO—and for the international heritage community—to ensure the protection of a millenary history against the force of destruction that tried to ravage our shared heritage. “This was our reply to extremism,” she asserted, referring to UNESCO’s actions for the preservation of cultural heritage in Mali.



In response to comments about the lack of representation from the Africa region on the World Heritage Committee, the Director-General expressed her regret, but noted that Member States have acknowledged the issue and efforts are underway to see how the election system could be reformed to ensure greater regional balance.

In ending, Ms. Bokova called on all present to help UNESCO send this message to the United Nations to include culture in the post-2015 development agenda. “This is an historic opportunity to valorize heritage for the fight against poverty,” she said. “We cannot eradicate extreme poverty without valorizing the role of culture for social cohesion, justice and other implications,” she said. “We must enlarge our reflection and our allies, which can lead to more finances for heritage.”



Closing remarks were given by **Mr Sibusiso Xaba, Chairperson of the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF)**. Mr Xaba called attention to the numerous capacity-building programmes on nominations and conservation of heritage sites that the AWHF has organized and which are featured in their [Annual Report](#). He noted that some of the results obtained could be witnessed at the current session of the World Heritage Committee (referring to the nomination of the Okavango Delta in Botswana and other proposed nominations from the Africa region), and asserted his belief in heritage’s role in creating a stable and prosperous continent.

Mr Xaba recalled that the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Director-General of UNESCO agreed in 2013 to jointly support fundraising efforts for the AWHF Endowment Fund, and noted that 34 Heads of State or their representatives participated in the side event to raise awareness and support for work of AWHF organized during the African Union Heads of States Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2014. All of them asked the Fund to continue promoting African heritage and identity. Noting that US\$ 3.5 million were pledged to the Fund from Algeria, Chad, Kenya, Namibia and South Africa, he reminded States Parties to the World Heritage Convention that “it’s never too late to express your support!” He also called on all participants to support joint initiatives and to contribute to the AWHF Endowment Fund to ensure that AWHF can carry out its mission. “Working together,” he concluded, “we can face the challenges of implementing the World Heritage Convention on this continent.”

This third African Ministers Roundtable Discussion was organized by the Africa Unit of the World Heritage Centre in partnership with the African World Heritage Fund and with financial support from the Nordic World Heritage Foundation. Information material, a short film and small exhibition showcasing the African World Heritage Fund’s contribution to improving the conservation of World Heritage in the Africa region, as well as the progress made in Mali for the reconstruction of the damaged cultural heritage, were also featured. Interpretation was provided in English, French and Arabic.