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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL
ORGANIZATION

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD
CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Twenty-seventh session
Paris, UNESCO Headquarters, Room XII
30 June - 5 July 2003

Item 15 of the Provisional Agenda: Ways and means to reinforce the implementation
of the World Heritage Convention

SUMMARY

This document provides the Committee with a progress report on the initiatives being developed by UNESCO to explore and examine ways and means of creating necessary conditions for the prevention of intentional destruction of culturally important monuments and sites. The elaboration, by UNESCO, of other international instruments for the protection of cultural heritage are also mentioned as they too could serve as means for the reinforcement of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

A comparative table of state of ratifications to all UNESCO cultural heritage conventions is also provided to the Committee as information document WHC-03/27.COM/INF.15.

Draft Decision 27 COM 15: see paragraph 9.

I. BACKGROUND

1. The World Heritage Committee, at its 26th session (Budapest, June 2002), discussed this agenda item, especially within the context of the preparation of a draft Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage¹. The Committee then asked the Secretariat to provide it, at its next session, with information on the developments concerning initiatives being developed to explore and examine ways and means of creating necessary conditions for the prevention of intentional destruction of culturally important monuments and sites².

2. Furthermore, the Committee requested that it be provided with a comparative table of state of ratifications to all UNESCO cultural heritage conventions at each of its sessions. This table has been prepared as document WHC-03/27.COM/INF.15³.

II. PROGRESS REPORT

• Draft Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage

3. Further to the 26th session of the World Heritage Committee, a group of legal experts met in Brussels in December 2002 (hosted by the Government of Belgium) to prepare a draft Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage. This draft Declaration will be submitted as an information document to the 167th session of the Executive Board (15 - 24 September 2003) and subsequently to the 32nd session of the General Conference (29 September - 18 October 2003) for its possible adoption.

4. An information meeting on the Declaration was held on 18 March 2003 (in conjunction with the 6th extraordinary session of the World Heritage Committee) and to which all Permanent Delegations and Observer Missions to UNESCO were invited. The meeting was divided in three parts, first a brief introduction as to the reasons leading to the elaboration of the draft Declaration; second, a technical exposé on the draft Declaration; and third, time for questions from the floor.

5. As stated above, and in accordance with Resolution 26 of the 31st session of the General Conference (on Acts constituting a crime against the common heritage of humanity), the draft Declaration will be presented by the Director-General to the 32nd session of the General Conference (29 September - 18 October 2003).

• Other UNESCO initiatives

6. In addition to the above-mentioned initiative, and with a view to strengthening the protection of cultural heritage, UNESCO is at present developing new instruments for the protection of heritage in all its diversity.

7. Thus a draft international convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is currently being prepared. Two intergovernmental meetings of experts have already taken place (September 2002 and February 2003) and a third one will take place from 2 to 14 June 2003. The preliminary text of the draft Convention

¹ See Section 11, Report of the 26th session of the World Heritage Committee (Budapest, June 2002)

² See paragraph 4, Decision 26 COM 11

³ Ibid.

will then be presented by the Director-General to the 32nd session of the General Conference (29 September - 18 October 2003)⁴.

8. Furthermore, the Executive Board, at its 166th session (April 2003), and after having examined a preliminary study on the technical and legal aspects relating to the desirability of a standard-setting instrument on cultural diversity⁵, decided to place this item on the agenda of the 32nd session of the General Conference (29 September - 17 October 2003)⁶.

III. DRAFT DECISION

9. In light of the information presented above, the World Heritage Committee may wish to adopt the following decision:

Draft 27 COM 15

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Taking into consideration the comparative table of state of ratifications to all UNESCO cultural heritage conventions presented to this session of the Committee (document WHC-03/27.COM/INF.15),*

2. *Taking note of the different initiatives being developed by UNESCO to reinforce the protection of cultural heritage in all its diversity and to explore and examine ways and means of creating necessary conditions for the prevention of intentional destruction of cultural heritage,*

3. *Aware of the important tasks facing the 32nd session of the General Conference when examining the draft Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage, the draft international convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and when discussing the desirability of a standard-setting instrument on cultural diversity,*

4. *Invites the Director-General to take into consideration, when elaborating these new instruments, the role of the World Heritage Convention both as a recognised international instrument for the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage and as an important tool for the promotion of the world's cultural diversity as well as for the protection of the attributes and associative values of the intangible heritage of cultural and natural properties;*

5. *Calls upon all States Parties to ratify, as soon as possible, those UNESCO conventions for the protection of cultural heritage to which they have not yet become a party in order to maximise the protection of the world's heritage, especially against acts of intentional destruction.*

⁴ See Resolution 30 of the 31st session of the General Conference and Decision 3.5.2 of the 164th session of the Executive Board

⁵ See document 166 EX/28

⁶ See Decision 3.4.3 of the 166th session of the Executive Board