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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-first session

**Naples, Italy
1-6 December 1997**

**Findings and recommendations of the 3rd Global Strategy Meeting, Suva, Fiji
(15 - 19 July 1997)**



3RD GLOBAL STRATEGY MEETING

Identification of World Heritage properties in the Pacific

**UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE
in association with the Fiji Museum**

**Suva, Fiji
15-18 July 1997**

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

These findings and recommendations were agreed upon by participants at the conclusion of the 3rd Global Strategy meeting held in Suva, Fiji from 15 to 18 July 1997. The meeting was attended by representatives from Australia, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, the United States of America and Vanuatu, four international experts on Pacific cultural heritage and the Global Strategy, and representatives from ICOMOS, ICCROM, the South Pacific Commission (SPC) and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP).

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

- I. Participants recognised that the Pacific Islands region is an explicit and unique aquatic continent covering an area of 3 million square kilometres, an ocean in which only two per cent of the area comprises land.
- II. Participants noted that there is an inseparable connection between the outstanding seascapes and landscapes in the Pacific Islands region which are woven together by the rich histories, oral and life traditions of the Pacific Island peoples. These elements comprise the cultural heritage of the region which while diverse, are nevertheless bound through voyaging, kinship, trade and other relationships.
- III. Participants recognised the immense range, richness and uniqueness of natural and cultural heritage in the region. The natural diversity of the region forms an ocean of islands which gives rise to a special relationship between land and sea for Pacific Island peoples and includes coral atolls, high volcanic islands and some continental land masses which often contain unique assemblages of plants and animals.
- IV. This natural diversity is paralleled by an extraordinary richness of cultural heritage expressed in thousands of different languages, and distinct cultural traditions.
- V. Participants also noted that the region contains a series of spectacular and highly powerful spiritually valued natural features and cultural places rather than an extensive range of monuments and human built permanent features. These places are related to the origins of peoples, the land and sea, and other sacred stories. These places are often linked and are interpreted and understood only through cultural traditions.
- VI. Participants however, also recognised the critical threats to the natural and cultural environment in the Pacific Islands region posed by the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources in both the land and the sea.

Recommendation 1

Participants recommended that any decisions on the access to, and use of, the knowledge and traditions associated with these sites must remain with the traditional custodians. This calls for particularly sensitive consultation with traditional custodians in all heritage conservation matters in this region. This requires a process of partnership building.

Participants recognised that the Global Strategy initiative in the Pacific Islands region and the Third Global Strategy meeting held in Suva, Fiji from 15-18 July 1997 is the start of a process of engagement and of building working relationships and capacity in heritage conservation in the region. In this way greater world recognition can be given to the cultural and natural heritage of the Pacific Islands region.

- VII. Participants emphasised that the context for the operation of the *World Heritage Convention* in the region can only be effected through recognition of local customary and other forms of tenure of land and sea, and traditional custodianship of cultural heritage. This region is unique because of the high degree to which land remains in customary ownership. It was recognised that significant time and resources are needed to build meaningful partnerships with these local heritage owners and custodians by the relevant national agencies and that this will require resources not currently available in these countries and territories.

Recommendation 2

In the Pacific Islands region, decisions about World Heritage conservation have to be formulated in partnership with, and with the agreement of, local communities and individual land holders who are the custodians and who have the sites under direct political, spiritual and traditional control.

- VIII. Participants also recognised the impacts, and local uses, of foreign contact and that this poses particular challenges for heritage conservation in the region.

PARTICIPANT COUNTRIES

- X. It is vital for the protection of the cultural heritage in the region for all of the countries and territories and peoples of the region to be encouraged and enabled to participate in future initiatives. Governments should support the participation of territories in the region.

THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

- XI. The unique features of the Pacific described above offer special opportunities for implementing the *World Heritage Convention*, notably:

Transnational serial sites and layered cultural landscapes

- XII. Potential World Heritage sites in the Pacific Islands region are likely to be serial sites and multi-layered cultural landscapes. Preference should be given to these serial nominations linked by themes of relevance to the region as a whole extending over vast distances.
- XIII. These serial sites attest to the history of voyaging, land and sea routes, and of trade, the first landings, activities, settlements and agriculture in the Pacific Islands region. Other series of sites reflect the different waves of migrations. Other serial sites manifest the history of Pacific peoples before and after European contact. As serial sites they form lines crossing the boundaries between countries and are therefore transborder and transnational sites.

Recommendation 3

The participants recommended that resources be provided to foster co-operation between countries and territories of the region to ensure that these serial sites and layered cultural landscapes are adequately conserved.

Places of origin, spiritual routes and other sacred places

- XIV. The participants emphasised that places of origin, spiritual routes and other sacred places are powerfully bound by spiritual and natural connections with the life and destiny of Pacific peoples. Such sacred places are sometimes monumental architecture whilst others are sacred natural landscapes.
- XV. Accordingly, any approaches regarding the identification and designation of such places, in their tangible and intangible aspects, will need to be undertaken with appropriate restraint, wisdom and sensitivity. This will require the direct participation and agreement of the indigenous custodians of the resource/site and cultural heritage in all discussions regarding the same (see *Recommendation 2*).

The World Heritage nomination process

Recommendation 4

The participants recommended that the process for preparing tentative lists, nominating and applying selection criteria for World Heritage conservation must be carefully conducted with constant reference to the specific features, needs, cultural traditions and knowledge, and the dominance of custom based land tenure of the region.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Recommendation 5

Participants recommended that assistance be provided to Pacific Island countries that are considering accession to the *World Heritage Convention* in order for them to fully assess the benefits and commitments involved.

XVI. Whilst recognising the sovereign rights of states and territories in the region new partnerships for World Heritage conservation are required in this region. The very recent establishment of PIMA (the Pacific Islands Museums Association) was congratulated as being a very successful new partnership for heritage conservation in the Pacific Islands region.

Recommendation 6

The participants requested that assistance be provided through the World Heritage Fund or other bilateral and multilateral sources, to build effective networks of regional and international, government and non-governmental agencies working on cultural and natural heritage conservation initiatives (these will include, but may not be limited to SPREP, PIMA, ICOMOS, IUCN, ICCROM, UNESCO Apia, SPC etc).

Recommendation 7

Participants noted the value of collective experience created by the 3rd Global Strategy meeting and recommended a further regional meeting in two years time.

Recommendation 8

In alerting the World Heritage Committee to the fact that there are to date very few Pacific Island signatories to the *World Heritage Convention*, the participants of the 3rd World Heritage Global Strategy meeting respectfully requested that the Committee consider whether it is at all possible for education and awareness raising programs in-country to raise the profile of heritage conservation and particularly the *Convention* in the region be provided as a special allocation from the World Heritage Fund including for non Member States of UNESCO and non States Parties of the *Convention*.

Recommendation 9

Participants requested assistance for educational and awareness raising programs in-country to raise the profile of heritage issues and particularly the *World Heritage Convention*.

XVII. Assistance is also required for activities such as the following at the national and regional levels:

- networking for effective heritage conservation
- training of specialists, building upon existing human resources and initiatives
- advice on the preparation and development of conservation legislation, policy and planning
- identification, evaluation and recording of sites, cultural landscapes and seascapes
- design and preparation of national and international inventories
- consideration of the establishment of tentative lists of potential World Heritage sites
- regional specialised research and workshops (with publication and dissemination of results)
- capacity building for site management

WORDS OF APPRECIATION

XVIII. Participants sincerely thanked the World Heritage Committee, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, UNESCO, ICOMOS, and the local meeting organisers in Fiji; particularly the Fiji Museum, the National Trust for Fiji and the Government of Fiji.