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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE
WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

World Heritage Committee

Seventeenth Session

Cartagena, Colombia
6 - 11 December 1993

Item 16 of the Provisional Agenda: Global study

BACKGROUND

Soon after the inscription of the first sites on the World Heritage List, the Committee began to consider the best ways to establish a well-balanced list which would be a true reflection of the heritage of mankind. This led to the concept of a global study to establish a kind of world inventory of all the types of property which could be proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List. The project would be to design an ideal framework within which the World Heritage List could develop, and which could thus serve as a guideline for the selection work of States Parties.

The previous sessions of the Committee indicate a growing interest in a global inventory as concerns both cultural and natural heritage. In 1982, at the Committee's sixth session, the IUCN representative stated that his organization had drawn up a global inventory of the natural heritage sites, "The World Greatest Natural Areas", with a view to providing the States Parties with an idea of the type of sites which could be proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List. ICOMOS then voiced its intention of undertaking a similar exercise to survey the most important evidence of cultural heritage.

In 1983, at its seventh session, the Committee invited ICOMOS to undertake a preliminary topological study on the basis of all of the cultural property already inscribed on the List and an

examination of the tentative lists already submitted. Henceforth, the two sources which could serve as a point of departure for a global study were clearly defined. In its following sessions, the Committee reaffirmed the importance of the tentative lists as basic instruments, as well as the necessity of dialogue with the States Parties upon reception of these lists. Thereafter, at each of its sessions, the Committee continued to invite States Parties to the Convention to submit tentative lists of their heritage and recalled the necessity of undertaking comparative studies which would allow a methodical approach to the constitution of the World Heritage List. Thus, meetings to study and harmonize tentative lists in a regional framework were held in Paris, Mar del Plata, Bergen, Bamako, New Delhi and the Maghreb.

In 1987, at its eleventh session, the Committee set up a working group to which it gave the mandate, amongst others, to evaluate all the cultural sites already inscribed on the List and on the tentative lists already received, as well as to study the means to ensure strict application of the established criteria.

The working group presented its conclusions to the Committee at its twelfth session. Pertaining specifically to a "global list", they were the following: the "global list" would be a reference list of properties which could be considered of outstanding universal value; it would be elaborated not only on the basis of the analysis of cultural property already inscribed and the tentative lists, but, in order to be truly global, it would include properties not inscribed on the tentative lists, even those situated on the territory of States not yet parties to the Convention. It would be a kind of international tentative list conceived not only to provide guidance to the Committee, but also to serve as an example to States Parties for the selection of properties they might wish to propose for inscription. This inventory would be to the cultural heritage what the World Reference List established by IUCN is to the natural heritage.

At that time, the Committee approved the recommendation of the working group. However, it felt that the establishment of a conceptual framework was a prerequisite to any study and requested that a more detailed proposal be presented to the Bureau at its thirteenth session, in June 1989. During this session, the Secretariat evoked the difficulties in preparing a global study, its basic principles and the criteria for inscription on the World Heritage List, and requested the Bureau to define the parameters of this study. The members of the Bureau felt that a preliminary phase for the analysis of the tentative lists and a regrouping by category of the sites inscribed would enable the selection of themes on which to base the study. Moreover, the Bureau felt that ICOMOS should present a general thematic framework for the work of

this preliminary phase, together with a budget, at the Committee's thirteenth session.

In 1989, at its thirteenth session, the Committee welcomed the proposals of ICOMOS and the Secretariat, and taking into account the evolution of ideas made in the field of art history, requested that this thematic framework be further developed, and stressed the interdependence between thematic studies and global study.

At its fourteenth session in 1990, the Committee expressed satisfaction with the collaboration of Greek and Bulgarian experts and with a study on Canada and the United States, and requested the Secretariat to continue the study of the framework with the experts of different regions.

In 1991, at its fifteenth session, the Committee endorsed the proposal of several delegates for a mixed approach incorporating the temporal, cultural and thematic aspects, and expressed satisfaction with the offers of collaboration from several States Parties. Several delegates stressed that this study should not result in a rigid list of World Heritage values, especially at a time when the very notion of heritage was undergoing great change.

In this respect, it became necessary to reflect first of all on certain questions relating to the concept itself of world heritage and the objectives of the Convention, and especially on the present adequacy of the definition of cultural property set out in the Convention, the criteria for the inscription of these properties and their effective inscription on the List. Moreover, more than ten years having passed since the inscription of the first properties, the interpretation of the objectives of the Convention may have undergone certain changes. What is the ultimate purpose of the World Heritage List? How can one provide a truly global vision of world heritage? How can one avoid important omissions? Work should be carried out in the light of this reflection in order to arrive at some sort of consensus.

From this time onwards, it became generally accepted that the World Heritage List is more than a catalogue of monuments or a simple history of architecture. The notion of masterpiece implied by the criteria is not always applicable to property which might be inscribed at a time when, due to an evolution in mentalities, the popular arts, "traditional" architecture and civil engineering works are gaining increasing recognition. The vision and choice of properties to inscribe, far from being purely aesthetic, are more clearly historical, and even anthropological, in that they attach greater importance to the significance of the properties than to their physical aspect.

In this spirit the World Heritage List must reflect in an all-embracing rather than moderating manner, the cultural diversity, and therefore intellectual, religious, aesthetic and sociological diversity of humanity. Much more than a simple chronicle of artistic episodes, it should present a panorama of the major events of the great diversity of the different cultures of which mankind is composed.

Of course, the international typology obtained as a result of this global study will remain extremely flexible, as its evolution will depend both on future archaeological discoveries and on the evolution of human thought and perception.

PRESENT SITUATION

At its sixteenth session in 1992, the Committee examined a proposed framework presented by the Delegation of the United States of America for the preparation of a global study on cultural property, developed in consultation with the Delegation of Greece.

In presenting this document, the Delegate of the United States particularly stressed the distinction which should be made between the tentative lists (prepared and presented by the States Parties from a strictly national view point) and the global study system (which must include lists prepared by experts on a multidisciplinary basis, in accordance with considerations of universal scope). The Delegate stated that a firm consensus on the need for a global study had existed for a number of years, and that the time had thus come to begin this study.

The Committee took note of this document as well as the proposal for a method to be used for the study involving a grid which would be used to group cultural property according to three dimensions: time, culture and human achievement.

To this effect, the Committee decided to set up a working group which, in consultation with ICOMOS and ICCROM, and in liaison with the World Heritage Centre, would draw up a report to be submitted to the Bureau at its seventeenth session in 1993. This working group, in addition to representatives of ICOMOS and ICCROM, should include experts from France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Tunisia and the United States of America, as well as from other interested States Parties.

In Colombo, in July 1993, ICOMOS set up a working group composed of six experts who studied a methodological work plan for the identification of cultural property using this triple approach: time, culture and human achievement proposed in Santa Fe. The report of this working group will be presented to the Committee at its seventeenth session in Cartagena, and, in 1994, ICOMOS intends to convene a group of about fifteen experts who will establish a work plan and priorities for setting up working groups on these

different categories which should give rise to the establishment of international tentative lists. The work plan and priorities will be based on this preparatory study, following its schemata for the preliminary identification of a certain number of categories of properties which can be regrouped within different "cultural provinces".

The consultations carried out by the Secretariat however showed that the community of experts had not reached a consensus on the philosophical premises, the conceptual framework and the methodology of this approach. Thus, some specialists fear that this procedure might give too much importance to the traditional categories of traditional art history which have developed around the study of the great monuments and great civilisations, precisely at a time when the Convention's bodies and especially the Committee wish to put the List in perspective and are questioning the advisability of extending it in the future to other types of property and other cultures which, at present, are not at all or only slightly represented.

With this approach, it would thus be advisable, as a first step, to consider undertaking several global thematic studies, on a geographical and trans-regional basis rather than an historico-cultural one, and to involve new partners from various fields and specialised organizations, as well as from a wider geographical and cultural origin, especially from non-Western countries.

In parallel, and following an allocation of funds by the Bureau at its seventeenth session in June 1993, ICOMOS instigated two thematic studies, one on the industrial heritage, and the other on 20th century architecture.

The first of these studies was entrusted to the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (TICCIH), an NGO with about sixty national committees, which was contracted to produce a first series of sector-based lists in this domain. In September, a meeting of this Organization was held in Copenhagen at which different specialized working groups were set up (e.g. mines and metallurgy, textiles, communication routes...). These lists, on a comparative basis and in the light of different criteria, should result in a register of properties which could be considered of the greatest importance, and which could serve as points of reference for the Committee's future evaluations. A general report will be submitted to the Committee at the end of 1994, but ICOMOS will present a preliminary exploratory report at the Committee's seventeenth session.

The second study concerns modern and contemporary architecture, from the end of the 19th century to the present. It has been entrusted to the Do.Co.Mo.Mo, an international NGO specializing in the documentation and conservation of modern architecture buildings

and sites. Here again, lists of these monuments and sites will be drawn up and proposed to the Committee in a final report at the end of 1994.

These two studies should result in world-wide representative thematic lists including from twenty to thirty reference sites each.

In consideration of these different projects and the conceptual difficulty of the undertaking, the Committee may wish to request the Secretariat, ICOMOS and ICCROM to organize in 1994 a meeting of experts representative of all of these various approaches in order to define and set in motion a plan based on a common methodological approach and a broader reflection, associating new partners who are representative both of the various disciplines (history, art and architecture history, archaeology, social anthropology, conservation and restoration...), and of the different institutions and regions of the world concerned.

This meeting should lead to a more general agreement on the order of priority of the tasks to be undertaken, and the choice of the first of these studies by geographical regions and themes, as well as on the identification of the experts and the NGOs with specific and thorough competence to be associated, according to the regions, cultures and types of properties concerned.