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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE  
WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Twentieth session  
Merida, Yucatan, Mexico

2-7 December 1996

**Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda: Progress report on the Global Strategy and Thematic and Comparative Studies**

**SUMMARY**

In accordance with the decisions of the World Heritage Committee at its nineteenth session and of the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee at its twentieth session, this item was included on the agenda to provide a progress report on the implementation of the Global Strategy and Thematic and Comparative Studies. The working document contains summary reports on the Global Strategy meetings (Sections I. 1.1.1 and 1.1.2), on a regional thematic study (Section 1.2.1) and reports on the Global Strategy for natural heritage (Sections 1.3.1 and 1.3.2), as well as an introduction to Comparative Studies (Section II). Specific recommendations made by the experts on the Global Strategy for natural heritage concerning changes to the Operational Guidelines can be found in working document WHC-96/CONF.201/18. The reports of the different expert meetings are contained in information documents WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.6, WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.7, WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.8, WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.9, WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.10, as well as WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.11.

In Section I.2, this working document outlines projects concerning the Global Strategy and Thematic Studies proposed for 1997.

**The Committee is asked to examine the attached document and review the specific recommendations in Section 1.3.2. The Committee is asked to take note of the full reports contained in information documents WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.6, WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.7, WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.8, WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.9, WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.10 and WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.11.**

## **I. Global Strategy and Thematic Studies**

### **1. Progress report**

#### **1.1 Global Strategy for Cultural Heritage**

##### **1.1.1 Follow-up of the Harare Meeting**

The proceedings of the First Global Strategy Meeting held in Harare (Zimbabwe) from 11 to 13 October 1995 were published as an illustrated which is distributed in Africa, through the UNESCO Regional Offices and National Commissions. As a result of this meeting, seven of the participating countries have already prepared, or are preparing, tentative lists and a sub-regional harmonization meeting is scheduled for November 1996.

##### **1.1.2 Second Global Strategy Meeting (Addis Ababa, 29 July-1 August 1996)**

Following the decision of the World Heritage Committee during its nineteenth session in Berlin (4-9 December 1995), the Centre and ICOMOS prepared and organized a second sub-regional Global Strategy meeting, which was held in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) from 29 July to 1 August. This meeting was preceded by a meeting of an International Scientific Committee on 6 May.

All the African experts invited to the meeting answered positively (Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Niger, Sudan and Uganda) and the meeting brought together about 30 participants, including representatives of the region from States Parties and States not yet Party to the Convention, and regional authorities responsible for cultural heritage in Ethiopia.

The meeting was organized around four main themes:

- The Convention, the notion of cultural heritage today, and African heritage
- "Archaeological" heritage
- Historical heritage, human settlements and living cultures
- Religious places, places of technical production, cultural itineraries and trade routes

Each theme was preceded by a general report by individual participants on the properties in their country considered as eligible for international recognition. Discussion was also devoted to the practical implementation of the World Heritage Convention, the Guidelines and their criteria, concerning three types of cultural heritage which were underlined during discussions, as requiring specific approaches:

- Archaeological and historical heritage
- Traditional architecture and material traces of living non-monumental cultures, including technical heritage and unbuilt sacred places

- routes, itineraries, vast natural zones where traditional populations live.

At the end of the meeting, the participants concluded that it was unnecessary to modify the cultural criteria in their present form, but that in the application of the Convention more attention should be given to the overall interpretation of the nature-culture continuum in African societies, the spiritual and sacred heritage and its physical supports, as well as the specificities of cultural landscapes and exchange routes in Africa.

The experts confirmed their renewed interest in the Convention which, until now, appeared to them to be unsuited to their needs. In this respect, the experts from Chad and Eritrea announced their intention to urge their national authorities to ratify the Convention.

The experts affirmed their will to devote their attention to the tentative lists, upon return to their respective countries, and to coordinate these lists on a sub-regional basis.

The publication of the proceedings of the meeting in the form of a bilingual scientific publication in collaboration with the African Research Centre of the University of Paris I is under preparation.

**The report of the Addis Ababa meeting figures as Information Document WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.7 and the Committee is requested to take note of the results of this meeting.**

## 1.2 Thematic Studies

### **1.2.1 Regional Thematic Study Meeting: European Cultural Landscapes of Outstanding Universal Value (Vienna, Austria, 21 April 1996)**

Following the Action Plan for Cultural Landscapes as adopted by the seventeenth session of the World Heritage Committee held in Cartagena in December 1993, a series of regional thematic study meetings were organized in 1994 and 1995. In 1996 a regional thematic study meeting on European Cultural Landscapes of Outstanding Universal Value was organized by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, the advisory bodies and the Austrian National Commission for UNESCO in cooperation with Austria Nostra in Vienna (Austria) on 21 April 1996. The experts reaffirmed the three cultural landscape categories (Paragraph 39 of the Operational Guidelines) for the European Region and addressed the identification, assessment and evaluation of European cultural landscapes. They underlined the importance of living cultural landscapes embodying past ways of life having continuing relevance today. The experts highlighted parallel initiatives for collaborative approaches to World Heritage cultural landscape conservation, in particular through the close cooperation with the Council of Europe and its proposed European Landscape Convention.

**The Committee is asked to take note of the results of this regional thematic study contained in information document WHC-96/CONF.201/INF. 9 and may wish to encourage the World Heritage Centre to continue its collaboration with the Council of Europe.**

### 1.3 Global Strategy for Natural Heritage

#### **1.3.1 Report of the Expert Meeting on Evaluation of general principles and criteria for nominations of natural World Heritage sites (Parc national de la Vanoise, France, 22 to 24 March 1996)**

The expert meeting on "Evaluation of general principles and criteria for nominations of natural World Heritage sites" was held from 22 to 24 March 1996 at the Parc National de la Vanoise (France) at the kind invitation of the French Ministry for the Environment. Twenty experts representing natural and cultural heritage disciplines participated in their individual capacity. The full report of the meeting is contained in information document WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.8 in English and French.

The expert group reviewed the natural heritage concepts, the coverage of natural sites on the World Heritage List as well as its balance, manageability and credibility.

The expert group emphasized the unifying concept of World Heritage embracing both cultural and natural heritage as outlined in the text of the Convention and the need for an overarching Global Strategy for both natural and cultural heritage. As a result of the discussions, the experts recommended the changes to the Operational Guidelines, which are contained in working document WHC-96/CONF.201/18.

The Bureau of the World Heritage Committee at its twentieth session did not discuss the recommendations of the experts in detail. It suggested that a Circular Letter to all States Parties of the World Heritage Convention be sent including the report of the expert meeting. Replies to this Circular Letter were not received at the time of the preparation of this document. An oral report will be given at the Committee session.

The Committee may wish to discuss the report of the expert meeting contained in information document WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.8 and replies to the Circular Letter No. 5 sent to all States Parties. The Committee may wish to examine specific recommendations concerning changes to the Operational Guidelines (working document WHC-96/CONF.201/18) under agenda item 17 of the Provisional Agenda.

### **1.3.2 Report of the Expert Meeting on geological and fossil sites held at the 30th International Geological Congress (Beijing, China, 8 to 10 August 1996)**

As instructed by the eighteenth session of the World Heritage Bureau (July 1994), an expert meeting was held at the 30th International Geological Congress (Beijing, China, 8 to 10 August 1996) in order to enhance the preparation of a comparative global study of Earth's evolutionary history. The meeting was organized by the UNESCO Division of Earth Sciences, the World Heritage Centre in cooperation with IUCN and IUGS (International Union of Geological Sciences). The Canadian authorities provided financial support for participants travel to the expert meeting.

The report of this expert group is contained in information document WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.10. The experts recommended, (1) that the World Heritage Committee encourages States Parties to the Convention to prepare inventories of their national geological heritage, and further to consider identifying from these inventories sites for national tentative lists for World Heritage, (2) that IUGS, through the Global Geosite Working Group, makes a first assessment of the values of these sites and compiles a global comparative inventory and database, (3) invited IUCN to cooperate closely with IUGS and other NGOs as appropriate for further evaluation of sites proposed for World Heritage listing and (4) that the World Heritage Committee encourages in-depth thematic studies, taking into account the important study prepared by Mr Wells on fossil sites.

The Committee may wish to encourage IUGS through its Geosite Working Group to proceed with an in-depth thematic studies. Furthermore, the Committee may wish to request IUCN in the evaluation of geological and fossil sites to take fully into account the scientific advice of IUGS. The Committee may wish to recommend to States Parties which have not yet done so, to prepare inventories of national geological heritage and to include geological and fossil on their tentative lists.

## **2. Projects for 1997 and 1998**

### **2.1 Global Strategy for Cultural Heritage**

During its nineteenth session, the Committee approved for 1997 the project to devote the Third Global Strategy meeting to the improvement of the representation on the List of the cultural heritage in the Caribbean region.

In order to fully benefit from the organization in 1998 at Fort-de-France by the French Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research, of an important international meeting devoted

to cultural heritage of the region, by being associated with this initiative, it is proposed to the Committee to postpone until 1998 the meeting for the Caribbean region, and to organize in 1997 a meeting for the Pacific region instead.

In fact, a very limited number of States of the Pacific region are Party to the Convention, in spite of the rich archaeological and traditional heritage of its cultures. It is therefore proposed to organize this meeting in association with ICOMOS and ICCROM, taking advantage of the organization in this region of the PREMO course on the Conservation of Cultural Heritage in the Pacific and the meeting of the members of the Bureau of the Pacific Islands Museums Association, during the second half of 1997.

Such an activity would entail a noticeable reduction of organizational costs of the meeting and greatly strengthen cooperation with the advisory bodies of the Convention.

**The Committee is requested to approve a Global Strategy meeting for the Pacific Region in 1997, and the principle of a meeting for the Caribbean region in 1998. These two meetings figure in Chapter II (Actions IIB, 1.3 and 1.4) of the Draft Workplan of the Centre for 1997 and 1998 (Document WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.17).**

## 2.2 Global Strategy for natural Heritage

The "Report of the Expert Meeting on Evaluation of general principles and criteria for nominations of natural World Heritage sites (Parc national de la Vanoise, France, 22 to 24 March 1996)" was submitted to the twentieth session of the Bureau in June 1996. After considerable discussion, the Bureau adopted the following text:

"In connection with item 9 of the draft agenda, the Bureau suggests to the Committee that, in view of the Vanoise conclusions on strengthening the links between cultural and natural values, and in the spirit of the Global Strategy adopted at the eighteenth session of the Committee in Phuket, it consider holding a regionally balanced workshop of experts from both cultural and natural fields to review the specific question of revising the evaluation criteria in the Operational Guidelines."

**Decision required:** The Committee may wish to examine the above recommendation made by the Bureau.

## 2.3 Thematic Studies

### i) **Expert Meeting on Cultural Landscapes of the Andes**

Following regional thematic study meetings on specific aspects of cultural landscapes in the Asia Pacific Region and Europe, an expert meeting is planned on the cultural landscapes of the Andes to guide States Parties in the region in the identification, selection and presentation of cultural landscapes in the Andean Region. The study meeting will be organized by the World Heritage Centre in collaboration with the Peruvian Authorities.

**Decision required:** The Committee may wish to approve the preparation of the above regional thematic study meeting.

## II. **Comparative Studies on Cultural Heritage**

The idea to compare the relative importance from the scientific, historical and cultural viewpoints, among others, of cultural properties in order to identify the most outstanding examples for inscription on the List, is at the heart of the Convention and its fundamental notion of “outstanding universal value”, as it appears in its preamble. If the properties eligible for inscription on the List must have an “outstanding universal value”, it is appropriate to select them, in comparison to other properties which, whilst being of highest interest and meriting recognition and protection, cannot be considered as having a unique and irreplaceable place in the heritage of humanity.

It is for this reason that the idea of comparative studies appears on several occasions in the Guidelines and is an integral part of the inscription procedure at the outset of the establishment of the tentative list through to the proposal for inscription.

Paragraphs 1 and 6(i) of the Guidelines affirm the principle of choice which must operate between the properties, the paragraphs 7 and 8 introduce the notion of comparison when establishing the tentative lists, the paragraphs 12 and 59 distinctly stipulate that a comparative evaluation of the proposed property must figure in the nomination dossier, whilst paragraph 61(c) invites ICOMOS to make comparative evaluations of properties of a similar type during the evaluation process.

These principles having been acknowledged, the question of how a comparative evaluation can and should be carried out was raised. It is eventually not too difficult to imagine that comparisons based on the state of conservation, the relative historical importance, the wealth, the representative character and again other criteria can be established, for the goals of the Convention, between cultural properties that could be qualified as being relatively simple and easy to identify - inasmuch

as a certain general level is observed. But, what to do with far more complex properties which can only be perceived and appreciated in their multiple aspects and cultural, social, economic, technical and historical dimensions, amongst others, as for example complex human settlements, although these may generally be grouped under the useful but limiting term of "historical towns".

There was discussion on this question during the nineteenth session of the World Heritage Bureau in July 1995, which was taken up again during the nineteenth extraordinary session of the Bureau held in Berlin last December. Different points of view were expressed as to the complexity of the subject and its epistemological and methodological presuppositions. ICOMOS presented a progress report to the twentieth session of the Bureau in June 1996, and proposed to submit a more methodological document to the Committee during its twentieth session. It is this document which the Committee is requested to examine, Document WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.11, and which will be presented by the representative of this advisory body to the Convention.

**The ICOMOS document on comparative studies figures as Information Document WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.11 and the Committee is requested to take note of the results of this study.**