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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE
WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Bureau of the World Heritage Committee
Sixteenth session

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris 6-10 July 1992
Room XVI

**Item 8 of Provisional Agenda: Revision of the Operational
Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage
Convention**

A. Natural Heritage Criteria

1. It is recalled that the Bureau, at its twelfth session in June 1988, while examining the nomination of the Lesbos Petrified Forest submitted by Greece, recognized that IUCN needed specialist advice to evaluate properties nominated under natural heritage criteria (i) (the earth's evolutionary history) and (ii) (on-going geological processes).
2. The Secretariat contacted UNESCO's International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP) and the International Union for Geological Sciences (IUGS) to study this matter in depth. A consultant was engaged to prepare a preliminary global list of geological and fossil sites.
3. During 11-13 February 1991, the Secretariat convened a meeting of a Task Force comprising experts representing several disciplines of the geological sciences and a representative of IUCN. The meeting aimed at improving the regional balance of the draft list of geological and fossil sites and reviewing the application of natural heritage criteria to geological and fossil sites. The experts reviewed the application of natural heritage criteria (i) and (ii), described under paragraph 36 (a) of the Operational Guidelines, to each site in the draft list. They found criterion (i) to be imprecise and that criterion (ii)

reflected geological, biological and ecological phenomena. Therefore, the Task Force redefined criterion (i) to make it more precise and separated geological aspects of criterion (ii) to define two new criteria. The Task Force also proposed guidelines for assessing the scientific merit of geological and/or fossil sites.

4. In accordance with the recommendations made by the Task Force, the Secretariat submitted to the Bureau, at its last session held during 17-21 June 1991 at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, a revision of natural heritage criteria to include the following:

- a) the revised version of criterion (i) as proposed by the Task Force and to make it more precise
- b) two new criteria, proposed by the Task Force and reflecting only geological phenomena and processes
- c) revisions of current criteria (ii), (iii) and (iv), described under the paragraph 36 (a) of the Operational Guidelines, to exclude references to geological phenomena and processes, and to interactions between man and nature which were to be incorporated in a new cultural heritage criterion on cultural landscapes
- d) the guidelines proposed by the Task Force for assessing the scientific merit of geological and/or fossil sites.

5. The Bureau, at its last session, discussed the above proposals and was of the view that the revisions over-emphasized geological phenomena since it was the focus of three of the six criteria proposed. Hence, the Bureau recommended that a further revision of the four natural heritage criteria be undertaken so that individual criteria may separately reflect geological, biological, ecological and aesthetic phenomena. Subsequently, the Committee, at its last session held during 9-13 December 1991, in Carthage, Tunisia, requested the Secretariat to co-operate with IUGS, IUCN and other experts to revise natural heritage criteria as recommended by the Bureau and modify conditions of integrity to submit draft proposals for the consideration of the Bureau in mid-1992.

6. Revisions to natural heritage criteria was one of the subjects discussed by participants at a workshop on the World Heritage Convention held during 18-19 February 1992, as part of the Fourth World Parks Congress convened in Venezuela, Caracas. The experts who participated, reviewed past experience in the application of natural heritage criteria in identifying, nominating and selecting World Heritage sites. They concluded that the criteria are not sufficiently precise and that the reference to man's interaction with nature (criterion ii) and exceptional

combinations of natural and cultural elements (criterion iii) are inconsistent with the legal definition of natural heritage in Article 2 of the Convention. Furthermore they were also of the view that the notion of biological diversity is not explicitly reflected in the definitions of existing criteria and is particularly overshadowed by emphasis on threatened species in criterion (iv). The experts additionally suggested that in the future, the Operational Guidelines, apart from including revised criteria and conditions of integrity, should also incorporate explanatory paragraphs regarding the application of criteria in evaluating nominated sites.

7. In the light of the recommendations of the Bureau and the Committee, and the suggestions of the participants of the workshop, the following revisions to natural heritage criteria and conditions of integrity (paragraph 36 (a), (i)-(iv)) and paragraph 36 (b) (i)-(vi), respectively of the Operational Guidelines) are proposed (revised text is shown in bold letters):

Sites nominated should therefore:

- (a) (i) be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, such as volcanic eruption, erosion, sedimentation, etc., or significant geomorphic or physiographic features, for example volcanoes, caves and glacial features; or
- (ii) be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities; or
- (iii) contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance; or
- (iv) contain the most important and significant natural habitats for the conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of animals or plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;

and

- (b) also fulfil the following conditions of integrity
- (i) The sites described in 36 (a) (i) should contain all or most of the key interrelated and interdependent elements in their natural relationships; for example an 'ice age' area would be expected to include the snow field, the glacier itself and samples of cutting patterns, deposition and colonization (striations, moraines, pioneer stages of plant succession etc.); in the case of other sites, such as volcanoes, the magmatic series would be expected to be complete and all or most of the varieties of effusive rocks and types of eruptions represented.
 - (ii) The sites described in 36 (a) (ii) should have sufficient size and contain the necessary elements to demonstrate the key aspects of processes that are essential for the long-term conservation of ecosystems and communities. For example, an area of tropical rainforest would be expected to include essential features, such as variation in elevation above sea-level, changes in topography and soil types, river systems and naturally regenerating patches; similarly a coral reef would be expected to extend over a sufficiently large area where processes influencing nutrient inputs into the reef, e.g stream flow, ocean currents and siltation, could be regulated in order to ensure the long-term survival of the reef community.
 - (iii) The sites described in 36 (a) (iii) should contain areas of outstanding aesthetic value and include other areas whose conservation is essential for the long-term maintenance of the beauty of the site. For example a site, whose outstanding scenic value is a waterfall, would be expected to include all or most of the waterfall's catchment and adequate extents of downstream habitats whose conservation is linked to the maintenance of the aesthetic characteristics of the site.
 - (iv) The sites described in paragraph 36 (a) (iv) should contain habitats for maintaining the highest possible levels of plant and animal diversity characteristic of the biogeographic provinces and ecosystems under consideration; For example, a tropical savannah could provide habitats for a unique and diverse assemblage of herbivores and grasses; an island ecosystem due to its isolation from the nearest mainland since the time of its origin could provide habitats for plants and animals which are not found in the mainland and/or

in other parts of the world. If the unique value of a site is based on the presence of threatened species as described in 36 (a) (iv), then the site should be large enough to contain the most critical habitats (e.g. feeding, breeding, resting etc.) essential for the survival of viable populations of those species. In case of migratory species, seasonal breeding and nesting sites, and migratory routes, wherever they are located, should be adequately protected. International conventions, e.g. the Ramsar Convention for the protection of habitats of migratory species of waterfowl, and other multi- and bi-lateral agreements could provide this assurance.

- (v) The sites described in paragraph 36 (a) should have adequate long-term legislative, regulatory or institutional protection. They may coincide with or constitute parts of existing or proposed protected areas, such as national parks.
- (vi) All sites described in paragraph 36 (a) should have management plans. When a site does not have a management plan at the time when it is nominated for the consideration of the World Heritage Committee, the State Party concerned would be expected to indicate when such a plan would become available and how it proposes to mobilize the resources required for the elaboration of the plan. The State Party would also be expected to provide a description of any other document(s) (e.g. operational plans) which may guide the management of the site until such time when a management plan is finalized.

8. The Bureau may wish to note that in order to maintain conformity with the legal definition of natural heritage in Article 2 of the Convention, all references to man's interaction with nature have been omitted from the revisions proposed above. The Secretariat however, wishes to inform the Bureau, that the participants at the World Heritage workshop held during the Fourth World Parks Congress in Caracas, Venezuela, recommended that the conservation of cultural and rural landscapes be included among the criteria for cultural heritage. The workshop participants were also of the view that (i) the cultural landscape criterion and conditions for authenticity proposed by the Secretariat at the fifteenth session of the Committee, held in Carthage, Tunisia, during 9-13 December 1991, should be used as a working model for further refinement and adoption by the Committee and that (ii) ICOMOS should be primarily responsible for evaluating cultural landscapes but a working

group involving ICOMOS, IUCN and other relevant technical agencies, such as IFLA, should be established to develop a procedure for evaluation.

9. Apart from the revisions to natural heritage criteria and the conditions of integrity proposed in paragraph 7, the Secretariat also proposes to include the following explanatory paragraphs in the Operational Guidelines:

- (i) The evaluation of whether or not individual sites nominated by State Parties satisfy the natural heritage criteria is carried out by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and will normally include:

Data assembly: Compilation of a standardized data sheet on the site using access to global data bases. Information on sites that are comparable to the nominated site is also retrieved from the data bases in order to enable a comparative evaluation of the nominated site

External review: The nomination is sent to experts knowledgeable about the site

Field Inspection: In most cases, missions are sent to evaluate the site to discuss the nomination with national and local authorities

Panel Review: A draft evaluation prepared on the basis of results obtained from the above three steps is reviewed by a panel of experts at IUCN headquarters.

The evaluation report which is submitted to the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee, normally in mid-year, is an outcome of the four steps mentioned above. (see paragraphs 55 of the Operational Guidelines (March 1992) for type of recommendations that the Bureau could make on nominations and the procedure which leads, by the end of the year, to decisions of the Committee on each nominated site).

- (ii) In principle, a site could be inscribed on the World Heritage List as long as it satisfies one of the four criteria described in paragraph 36 (a) (i)-(iv) and the relevant conditions of integrity described in paragraph 36 (b) (i)-(vi). However, most inscribed sites have met two or more criteria. Nomination dossiers, IUCN evaluations and the final recommendations of the Committee on each inscribed site is available for consultation

by States Parties which may wish to use such information as guides for identifying and elaborating nomination of sites within their own territories.

10. The Bureau is called upon to consider the revisions to natural heritage criteria and the conditions of integrity and the proposals for new explanatory paragraphs, and make recommendations for their further refinement with a view to submitting final drafts for review and adoption by the Committee.

B. Proposed amendments to the guidelines

1. At its fifteenth session in Carthage, December 1992, the World Heritage Committee, on the occasion of the inclusion of the old City of Dubrovnik in the World Heritage List, noted an incompatibility between the text of the Guidelines and the intent of the Convention concerning cases of dire emergency. Consequently, in accordance with the request of the Committee, the Secretariat is proposing to include in the Guidelines the following passages referring to the said cases of dire emergency:

Chapter II para. 58
Add new sentence to (v)

In case of dire emergency, the Committee may include the property on the List before such an estimate has been submitted.

Chapter II C. para. 64
Add new sentence

In case of dire emergency, where a property has been included on the List of World Heritage in Danger before an estimate of the cost of operations necessary for the conservation of the property has been submitted (Art. 58 (v)), a programme of corrective measures shall be adopted as soon as possible.

Chapter III A.
Add new para 74 (a)

In the special case of a property which is included on the List of World Heritage in Danger in accordance with paras. 58 (v) and 64, the Chairman may grant emergency assistance on the recommendation of the Secretariat.

2. Many of the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List do not display any particular signs, despite the much-repeated wish expressed by the Committee, that these properties be identified by a commemorative plaque. At times, when there is a plaque, UNESCO is not always mentioned, although the Convention was adopted by the General Conference and is implemented by UNESCO.

The Director General wishes that this situation be improved and that the Committee examine this question. The revisions proposed below are aimed at streamlining the placing of World Heritage plaques. It is also proposed that after the Committee's approval of these modifications, the Secretariat address a circular letter to all States Parties to the Convention.

Revision of paragraph 108 of the guidelines:

Add a first sentence

"When a property is inscribed on the World Heritage List, the State Party shall, as far as possible, place a plaque to commemorate the inscription."

Revision of paragraph 109, second line:

"The name of UNESCO and the World Heritage symbol should appear on the plaque."

The Bureau is called upon to examine the two proposed revisions.