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

SUMMARY

The following revisions to the Operational Guidelines were proposed as of the date of the preparation of this document:

A. 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)" contained in information document WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.8 includes a number of recommendations concerning changes to the "Operational Guidelines". A summary report of the Expert Meeting can be found in working document WHC-96/CONF.201/10 of agenda item 9 "Progress report on the global strategy, and thematic and comparative studies".

B. The revision of the nomination form which is foreseen under agenda item 7.1. would imply the revision of section I.G., paragraph 64 of the Operational Guidelines.

C. Section C presents comments concerning the preparation of the "Glossary of World Heritage Terms" as requested by the World Heritage Committee at its twentieth session.

Decision required: The Committee is requested to examine section A of the attached document and review the specific recommendations for changes to the Operational Guidelines (boxes) as well as the related general recommendations (bold). The Committee is asked to examine section B and the proposed revision of section I.G (replacement of paragraph 64). The Committee furthermore, may wish to take note of the "Glossary of World Heritage Terms" contained in information document WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.21 and comments in section C.

A. **Recommendations made by 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)**

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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 following changes to the Operational Guidelines (in boxes):

4. Add to Paragraph 6 (i) of the Operational Guidelines the following (changes in bold):

(i) The Convention provides for the protection of those cultural and natural properties (1) deemed to be of outstanding universal value. It is not intended to provide for the protection of all properties of great interest, importance or value. **Inscription on the World Heritage List is reserved for only a selection of the most outstanding properties from the international point of view. In accordance with Article 12 of the Convention, States Parties should not assume that a site of national and/or regional importance will automatically be included in the World Heritage List. The outstanding universal value of cultural and natural properties is defined by Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention. These definitions are interpreted by the Committee by using two sets of criteria: one set for cultural property and another set for natural property. The criteria and the conditions of authenticity or integrity adopted by the Committee for this purpose are set out in paragraphs 24 and 44 below.**

5. The experts, furthermore, recommended:

For all purposes of standard setting, credibility, manageability and commensurability with available

resources, inscription in the World Heritage List should be kept to a strict minimum. A review of the properties already in the World Heritage List should be carried out with a view to re-assessing the World Heritage criteria in force. States Parties should be consulted about any suggested changes which may result from such an exercise. Priority should be given to properties not yet represented in the World Heritage List.

6. The expert group recommended to amend Paragraph 7 of the Operational Guidelines as follows (changes in **bold**, deletions ~~crossed-out~~):

The Committee requests each State Party to submit to it a tentative list of properties which it intends to nominate for inscription to the World Heritage List during the following five to ten years. This tentative list will constitute the "inventory" (provided for in Article 11 of the Convention) of the cultural and natural properties situated within the territory of each State Party and which it considers suitable for inclusion in the World Heritage List. The purpose of these tentative lists is to enable the Committee to evaluate within the widest possible context the "outstanding universal value" of each property nominated to the List. The Committee hopes that States Parties that have not yet submitted a tentative list will do so as early as possible. States Parties are reminded of the Committee's ~~earlier~~ decision not to consider ~~cultural~~ nominations unless the nomination is contained in such a list of properties.

7. The expert group recommended to amend Paragraph 44 (iii) of the Operational Guidelines as follows (changes in **bold**):

(iii) contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance (**the Committee considers that this criterion should justify inclusion in the List only in exceptional circumstances or in conjunction with other natural or cultural criteria**); or

8. Add to Paragraph 61 (c) of the Operational Guidelines the following (changes in **bold**):

(c) **A comparative evaluation of similar properties is an essential part of the process of evaluation. ICOMOS and IUCN are therefore requested to make such comparative evaluations of properties belonging to the same type of property;**

9. Furthermore, the experts made the following recommendations:

To review the World Heritage List on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Convention, in order to take into account the new and revised criteria and to give an accurate reflection of the diversity of the heritage of humankind. The outcome of such a review would also help to address shortcomings and imbalances of the World Heritage List.

The expert group recognized that, while some previous decisions may now be seen not to comply with the rigour in evaluation called for by the provisions of the Operational Guidelines, such decisions should not be taken as a precedent for a less strict application of the criteria in the evaluation at present or in the future. The critical issue is maintaining the credibility of, and respect for, the World Heritage List.

10. The experts proposed to examine the possibility of one single set of criteria:

The expert group recommended that the Committee consider developing one set of criteria, incorporating existing natural and cultural heritage criteria and promoting a unified identity for all World Heritage sites as the outstanding heritage of humankind.

11. While reviewing the notion of integrity,

the experts recommended that the Committee consider the preparation of a study concerning the possibility of applying conditions of integrity to both natural and cultural heritage, and thus of applying one common approach for the identification and evaluation of World Heritage.

12. The experts also considered

that there are numerous inconsistencies in the Operational Guidelines and welcomed the decision by the nineteenth session of the World Heritage Committee to prepare a Glossary of World Heritage Terms extracting definitions and explanatory notes from the Operational Guidelines. A number of revisions suggested by the experts are indicated in the relevant chapters of this report and may be taken into consideration.

13. The expert group recommended to include the following definition in the Glossary:

A natural area is one where bio-physical processes and landform features are still relatively intact and where a primary management goal of the area is to ensure that natural values are protected. The term "natural" is a relative one. It is recognized that no area is totally pristine and that all natural areas are in a dynamic state. Human activities in natural areas often occur and when sustainable may complement the natural values of the area.

Decision required: The Committee may wish to consider the above recommendations in the light of the discussions under agenda item 9 (Global Strategy, Thematic Studies and Comparative Studies).

B. Revision of section I.G. of the Operational Guidelines: Format and content of nominations (replacement of paragraph 64 of the Operational Guidelines)

1. Agenda item 7.1. of the Provisional Agenda of the twentieth session of the World Heritage Committee includes the revision of the form for the nomination of properties for inclusion on the World Heritage List. The proposed form (see Annex I of working document WHC-96/CONF.201/6B) consists of a table of contents and eleven pages of explanatory notes. In case the Committee adopts a revised nomination form and decides on its introduction, it will be necessary to revise the corresponding section of the Operational Guidelines accordingly.

2. It is proposed, therefore, to replace paragraph 64 of the Operational Guidelines by the following text:

64. The same form approved by the Committee is used for the submission of nominations of cultural and natural properties. Although it is recognized that all properties have specific characteristics, States Parties are encouraged to provide information and documentation on the following items:

1. Identification of the Property

- a. Country (and State Party if different).
- b. State, Province or Region
- c. Name of Property
- d. Exact location on map and indication of geographical coordinates to the nearest second
- e. Maps and/or plans showing boundary of area proposed for inscription and of any buffer zone
- f. Area of site proposed for inscription (ha.) and proposed buffer zone (ha.) if any.

2. Justification for Inscription

- a. Statement of significance
- b. Authenticity/Integrity
- c. Criteria under which inscription is proposed (and justification for inscription under these criteria)

3. Description

- a. Description of Property
- b. History and Development
- c. Form and date of most recent records of site
- d. Present state of conservation
- e. Policies and programmes for the presentation of and promotion of the property (where appropriate)

4. Management

- a. Ownership
- b. Legal status
- c. Protective measures and means of implementing them
- d. Agency/agencies with management authority
- e. Level at which management is exercised (e.g., on site, regionally) and name and address of responsible person for contact purposes
- f. Agreed plans related to property (e.g., regional, local plan, conservation plan, tourism development plan)
- g. Sources and levels of finance
- h. Sources of expertise and training in conservation and management techniques
- i. Visitor facilities and statistics
- j. Site management plan and statement of objectives (copy to be annexed)
- k. Staffing levels (professional, technical, maintenance)

5. Factors Affecting the Site

- a. Development Pressures (e.g., encroachment, adaptation, agriculture)
- b. Environmental Pressures (e.g., pollution, climate change)
- c. Natural disasters and preparedness (earthquakes, floods, fires, etc.)
- d. Visitor/tourism pressures
- e. Number of inhabitants within site, buffer zone
- f. Other

6. Monitoring/Inspection

- a. Key indicators for measuring state of conservation
- b. Administrative arrangements for monitoring property
- c. Results of previous reporting exercises

7. Documentation

- a. Photographs, slides and, where available, film/video
- b. Copies of site management plans and extracts of other plans relevant to the site
- c. Bibliography
- d. Address where inventory, records and archives are held

8. Signature on behalf of the State Party

The Committee has adopted at its twentieth session substantive Explanatory Notes to the above nomination form. These notes relate to each of the above headings and will be made available as an annex to the nomination form to the States Parties in order to provide guidance to those nominating properties for inclusion on the World Heritage List.

Decision required: The Committee is requested to adopt the above revisions to the Operational Guidelines.

C. Glossary of World Heritage Terms

1. A Glossary of World Heritage Terms was prepared in accordance with the request of the World Heritage Committee at its nineteenth session in December 1995. The Committee requested that the Glossary be a separate document, independent from but referring to the Operational Guidelines. Just over 100 terms were extracted from the Operational Guidelines and the full document "Glossary of World Heritage Terms" is contained in information document WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.21.

2. During the preparation of the Glossary of World Heritage Terms it has become clear that the extraction of terms and their definitions from the Operational Guidelines is not going to make the Guidelines all that much shorter (less than 10% of the paragraphs could be extracted) and will not significantly improve the clarity of the Operational Guidelines. Furthermore, the Operational Guidelines do not clearly explain each step in the World Heritage conservation process. A first outline of a "Manual on the World Heritage Convention" has been prepared to better explain the World Heritage conservation process and is available

for Committee members upon request. The Committee will recall that the preparation of a Manual was proposed as a part of the Training Strategy adopted at its nineteenth session.

Decision required: The Committee may wish to consider a thorough review of the Operational Guidelines.