



UNESCO-AFRICA-CHINA FORUM ON WORLD HERITAGE CAPACITY BUILDING AND COOPERATION

World Heritage and Sustainable Development: sharing experiences from Africa and China

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CONCEPT NOTE



I. Context and issues

Sub-Saharan Africa contains a remarkable variety of natural and cultural heritage that contributes to our understanding of the evolution of human kind. With a population of 1.06 billion, 95 properties (52 cultural, 38 natural, 5 mixed sites) inscribed¹ on the World Heritage List to date, the Africa region remains under-represented on the World Heritage List (less than 9% of all sites). In addition, African sites represent a third of the sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

The World Heritage sites in Africa face many challenges related to erratic development, armed conflicts and violent extremism, uncontrolled movements of populations, poaching, inadequate management and climate change, among others. Numerous initiatives and activities providing both financial and technical assistance have been carried out over the years to address issues related to safeguarding these sites. These efforts include capacity-building initiatives, such as 'Africa 2009'² and 'Africa Nature'³ programmes, the establishment of the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF)⁴, all of which are aimed at increasing the number of African sites on the World Heritage List and ensuring their sustainable management and conservation. These initiatives have produced significant results for the Africa region, but they need to be strengthened.

With a population of 1.1 billion⁵, the People's Republic of China has 53 properties on the World Heritage List (36 cultural, 13 natural and 4 mixed). Since 1985 when it ratified the World Heritage Convention, China has gained considerable experience in its implementation. During this same period, China has witnessed sustained economic development and expanded its bilateral and multilateral cooperation with African countries. At the same time, its cultural and natural heritage is threatened by rapid urbanisation, unprecedented expansion of the tourism sector and other pressures associated with economic growth. These challenges to the safeguarding of World Heritage sites are similar in scale and nature to the ones faced in the Africa region.

It is within this context that UNESCO is collaborating with States Parties from Africa and China to organize the UNESCO-Africa-China Forum on *World Heritage and Sustainable Development: sharing experiences from Africa and China* at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

II. Justification and framework of the Forum

The Forum agenda is based on mutual priorities of Africa and China as established under two guiding compacts: the United Nations' Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development Goals⁶ and the Africa Union's Agenda 2063 "*The Africa We Want*"⁷. Both compacts pledge to shared peace and prosperity from global to levels, including the safeguarding of natural and cultural heritage. The Forum also represents a step in implementing African and Chinese governments' commitments to capacity building as agreed at the 2018 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC)⁸.

¹ Figures by 2017 www.unesco.org/new/en/africa-department/priority-africa/.../demographic-growth/

² <http://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/267/>

³ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/africa-nature/>

⁴ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/awhf>

⁵ Statistics as of 16 May 2019 <http://data.stats.gov.cn/english/>

⁶ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/fr/development-agenda/>

⁷ <https://au.int/en/agenda2063>

⁸ <https://www.focac.org/fra/>

Africa is also one of UNESCO's two Global Priorities – the other being Gender Equality. Priority Africa's action for the period 2014-2021 focuses on two major points: Building peace by supporting inclusive, pacific and resilient societies; and reinforcing institutional capacities for sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The Forum will further respond to the outcomes of the Second Cycle of Periodic Reporting on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in Africa, which identified the following main issues:

1. Inadequate and outdated legal frameworks.
2. Limited participation of local communities, indigenous peoples, landowners and the private sector in the implementation of the *Convention*.
3. Low level of updating national inventories for cultural and natural heritage, which are the basis for development of national Tentative Lists;
4. Overreliance on international funding for the conservation and protection of World Heritage in the region.

In response to these issues, the African States Parties to the *Convention* made the following recommendations to the World Heritage Committee:

1. Involve communities and ensure benefits from World Heritage, resulting in tangible economic and social profits. Research programmes on World Heritage properties should involve local communities and indigenous peoples - as subjects, researchers and final beneficiaries of the results of such research;
2. Recognize, formalize and document traditional management systems. The documentation of properties in the region needs to advance beyond basic inventories, and be founded on various levels of research based on gaps identified from previous efforts;
3. Address World Heritage and sustainable development needs in the face of development pressures in the region, at policy and operational levels. Environmental impact studies carried out for development projects and physical resource extraction must strongly consider the impacts on heritage properties;
4. Provide assistance to States Parties with World Heritage in conflict and post-conflict areas in order to establish and implement necessary mechanisms for heritage conservation, protection and management.

Together, the preceding points affirm the five strategic objectives of the World Heritage Convention: (i) strengthening the credibility of the World Heritage List; (ii) ensuring the effective conservation of World Heritage properties; (iii) promoting the development of capacity-building measures; (iv) increasing public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through communication; and (v) enhancing the role of communities in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

One of the responses to the 2012-2017 Periodic Reporting Action Plan was the organization by UNESCO World Heritage Centre in collaboration with the United Republic of Tanzania and the People's Republic of China of the 2016 International Conference, "African World Heritage as a Driver of Sustainable Development", in Arusha, Tanzania. A major outcome of the conference was the Ngorongoro Declaration⁹, which acknowledges that the Convention provides a unique platform for addressing the intricate relationship between cultural and natural heritage. It further appeals to various stakeholders to promote heritage as a driver for sustainable development thereby contributing to improving livelihoods and eradicating poverty in Africa. The Declaration explicitly refers to the 2014 Social Responsibility Declaration by Chinese Enterprises in Africa, which invites them in Africa to respect

⁹ <http://www.unesco.org/culture/pdf/Ngorongoro-Declaration-fr.pdf>

culture and customs and protect the local environment and natural resources. The flagship UNESCO publication entitled *World Heritage for Sustainable Development in Africa*, presents a selection of the papers presented at the conference.¹⁰

A high-level Sino-Africa experts' preparatory meeting was organized in November 2018 at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris to establish a baseline for further collaborative efforts between African and Chinese World Heritage professionals. In the long run, it is expected that this will build the capacities of State Parties in: (i) promoting sustainable development at World Heritage sites in Africa and China; (ii) improving representation of African sites on the World Heritage List; (iii) implementing joint pilot projects; (iv) promoting staff exchange; and (v) joint research programmes. The first collaborative activity is the planned two-day Forum on *World Heritage and Sustainable Development: sharing experiences from Africa and China*. It is expected that the proceedings of the Forum will subsequently be published.

III. Target audience

The Forum will bring together various stakeholders: policy and decision makers from natural, cultural and development sectors, academic and World Heritage site managers. More specifically, the following categories of participants will be expected from Africa and China: heritage and World Heritage experts, senior government officials from various sectors, representatives of the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee, UNESCO Category 2 Centres, the African Union, the African Development Bank, etc.

IV. Forum objectives

The main objective of the Forum is to establish a broad-based and sustainable platform suitable for engagement between the various stakeholders, from Africa and China, whose actions affect World Heritage properties. More specifically, the Forum will:

- highlight the challenges to, and opportunities for, sustainable development at World Heritage properties in Africa and China;
- strengthen South-South cooperation between Africa and China in Safeguarding World Heritage through the application of the *Operational Guidelines* of the World Heritage Convention and the existing mechanism established between the African Union and Forum On China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC);
- step up help in nominations dossiers;
- provide support on upstream advice to improve planning as to ensure that development projects do not impact on World heritage sites; and
- improve policy dialogue between the natural and cultural heritage and development sectors

V. Forum Themes

The Forum will include several technical sessions that will examine specific themes as outlined below:

Theme 1: Tools and Mechanisms for World Heritage Protection

- 1.1: Technology applications for safeguarding heritage
- 1.2: Monitoring World Heritage sites in Africa and China
- 1.3: Legal frameworks for protecting World Heritage

¹⁰ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1794>

Theme 2: World Heritage and Community

2.1: World Heritage and socio-economic development

2.2: Community ownership, participation and benefits from World Heritage

Theme 3: Joint efforts for heritage in Africa and China

3.1: Public-Private Partnerships for heritage management and conservation

3.2: Opportunities for Africa-China cooperation in World Heritage (policy, academic, civil society)

3.3: Resource mobilization for heritage protection in Africa

VI. Forum Participants and Structure

The Forum will be held from the **3 and 4 June 2019 at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.**

Between 100-150 participants are expected, of whom about **80 participants** (60 African and 20 Chinese participants) **will be financially supported by the Chinese Fund.** Other participants will be self-funded. Expected VIPs include Ministers of: Culture, Nature Conservation, Environment, Finance and Urban Infrastructure from Africa and China, as well as senior officials from African Union, FOCAC, etc. Keynote speakers will include experts from China and Africa, and representatives of the Advisory Bodies. Director-General, Assistant Director-General for Culture, Assistant Director-General for Priority Africa and External Relations are expected to be part of the Forum. Other invited guests include representatives from Category II Centres (WHI-TRAP, HIST, AWHF) and African Development Bank.

There will be a scientific committee comprising experts from Africa, China and the Advisory Bodies to review the abstract and paper submissions. **Over 40 paper presentations** from both African and Chinese experts will be examined focusing on the strategic objectives (the 5C – Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-building, Communication, Communities) of the World Heritage Convention.

The Forum plenary sessions will include: high-level panel discussions involving decision makers and major influencers around World Heritage and development in Africa and China. It will also include technical sessions of paper presentations addressing the Forum themes.

VII. Outcomes

The following **outcomes** are expected from the Forum:

- UNESCO Africa-China joint declaration on heritage protection;
- Implementation of about 10 projects (culture and nature) as study cases for any impact assessments, emergencies, nominations and Tentative Lists projects;
- Exchange field visits and training activities between Africa-China;
- Publication of papers in scientific journals in China and Africa, such as in the special edition of the International Journal of Geoheritage and Parks and the Journal of African Cultural Heritage Studies (JACHS).