

Non-paper on Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct
The Convention concerning the Protection of the World
Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972)

The Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) (hereinafter: the Convention) establishes an international community who work together to recognise and protect the world's universally significant and outstanding examples of cultural diversity and natural wealth. The States Parties to the Convention have a shared commitment to preserving our legacy for future generations. The Convention is also one of the most successful of the UNESCO programmes and plays a vital role in promoting peace through mutual understanding and dialogue and celebrating cultural diversity. As such, the Convention is an important instrument contributing to international peace and the advancement of humanity.

Purpose and scope

This Code of Conduct is a means to safeguard the international solidarity, cooperation and concern for universally significant natural and cultural properties, the shared commitment to preserve our legacy and to uphold the integrity of the Convention and the outstanding universal values of the World Heritage properties.

The World Heritage Committee, the World Heritage Centre (hereinafter: the Secretariat), the Advisory Bodies and the States Parties to the Convention have a shared obligation to uphold the credibility, integrity and high professional standards of the Convention and its implementation. As such, the Code of Conduct applies to all the above-mentioned stakeholders, although certain provisions are specifically linked to certain roles. The Code expresses a commitment to impartial decision making by qualified experts in the fields of natural and cultural heritage based on objective and scientific considerations.

The provisions of the World Heritage Convention, its Operational Guidelines and Rules of Procedure govern the work of the World Heritage Committee, States Parties, Advisory Bodies and the Secretariat. The Code of Conduct complements these documents and provides an ethical guideline and external statement of principles and commitments that the Committee considers important to emphasise in the implementation of the Convention. Importantly, the Code of Conduct does not impact the terms of the World Heritage Convention, its Operational Guidelines or Rules of Procedure. In addition, the Chair of the World Heritage Committee and the Secretariat have existing requirements under the Rules of Procedure but should also act in accordance with the principles of the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct is enacted when agreed and adopted by the World Heritage Committee. New States Members of the World Heritage Committee commit to the Code of Conduct when elected at the General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention.

Code of Conduct

The Members of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, called the World Heritage Committee and hereinafter referred to as the "Committee",

Being mindful, that the Committee is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention,

Recognizing, that its work should always be governed by the provisions of the World Heritage Convention, its Operational Guidelines and Rules of Procedure,

Taking responsibility for its decisions,

Pursuing the highest standards of integrity and conduct,

Commit to abide and follow the Code of Conduct during their tenure on the Committee:

I. Core principles

All parties will be guided by the core principles of integrity, objectivity and impartiality.

- i. 'Integrity' is upholding the highest standards of moral principles, ethics and fairness in the implementation of the Convention.
- ii. 'Objectivity' is basing recommendations and decisions on scientific facts and rigorous analysis of the documentation presented to the Committee.
- iii. 'Impartiality' is acting in accordance with the Convention, its Operational Guidelines and Rules of Procedure to benefit the credibility of the World Heritage List and not taking side in the service of political or lobbying persuasions

II. Code provisions

The Committee shall:

1. Recognise that properties inscribed on the World Heritage List are of equal value since they have outstanding universal value and, as such, their cultural or natural significance is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity.
2. Mindful that the World Heritage Committee is an expert committee, choose as their representatives persons highly qualified in the field of cultural or natural heritage (*Convention*, Article 9.3; *Rules of Procedure*, Rule 5.2).
3. Voluntarily limit their term of office to four years instead of six years in order to give other States Parties an opportunity to serve on the Committee (*Operational Guidelines*, Paragraph 21).

4. Remain impartial and base their decisions on objective and scientific considerations (*Operational Guidelines*, Paragraph 23).
5. Endeavour to appreciate different competencies and opinions, encourage mutual respect, promote humble and respectful dialogue, and in case of disagreement, seek to reach agreement by consensus through cooperation and decision making based on objective and scientific considerations.
6. Refrain from presenting nominations during their tenure on the Committee in order to ensure impartial and objective decision making, and to avoid conflict of interest.
7. Not accept invitations to visit sites proposed for inscription to the World Heritage List, neither to sites on the World Heritage List currently in the process of Reactive Monitoring (*Operational Guidelines*, Paragraph 169) in order to ensure impartial and objective decision making and the equal treatment of all World Heritage properties.
8. Contribute with truthful, credible and timely information for any case on their territory to be considered by the Committee in line with the provisions of the Operational Guidelines, and refrain from lobbying for any decision that may threaten the Outstanding Universal Value or that is in violation of the Operational Guidelines and Rules of Procedure.
9. Strictly observe that any new draft decisions, proposals or amendments should be submitted at least 24 hours before the discussion of the agenda item concerned (*Rules of Procedure*, Rule 23.3).
10. In the interest of recognising global cultural diversity and equitable representation, encourage interventions from observers including local communities' and indigenous peoples' representatives in items concerning such groups or interests before decisions are made by the Committee (*Rules of Procedure*, Rules 6, 7, 22.4).
11. In its decision making concerning new nominations, avoid making a decision that is moving more than one step from the draft decision as recommended in the Advisory Body technical evaluation. This should only be done where there is clear technical and objective evidence in support of such a decision. For example, this may include decisions that move from a recommendation 'not to inscribe' to a deferral, or a recommendation for a referral to inscription. To uphold the integrity and credibility of the nomination process and the World Heritage List, decisions that move from a recommendation 'not to inscribe' or 'defer' to refer/inscribe must be avoided.
12. Recognise Outstanding Universal Value only when deciding to inscribe a property on the World Heritage List (*Operational Guidelines*, Paragraph 154), noting that a property does not have Outstanding Universal Value if it is not inscribed on the World Heritage List.
13. Promote and adhere to the goal of the Global Strategy for a more credible, balanced and representative World Heritage List.
14. Ensure the full and timely payment of their assessed contribution to the World Heritage Fund.

The Committee strongly encourages the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies as well as the States Parties to the Convention to observe the Code of Conduct and abide by the following provisions:

The Advisory Bodies shall:

15. Act in a manner consistent with this Code of Conduct, particularly in their capacity to advise the Committee in its deliberations. This includes transparent, equal and open processes, publishing of principles and criteria for selection of experts to missions, evaluations and panels, strengthened efforts to enhance dialogue and provision of early advice.

The Secretariat to the Convention shall:

16. Act in a manner consistent with the Code of Conduct. This includes transparent, equal and open processes and strengthened efforts to enhance dialogue and provision early advice.

The States Parties to the Convention shall:

17. Act in a manner consistent with the Code of Conduct to uphold the integrity and credibility of the World Heritage Convention for the benefit of all States Parties.
18. Support the Committee in meeting its responsibility to make impartial decisions based on objective and scientific considerations (*Operational Guidelines*, Paragraph 23) through open and equal dialogue and information sharing with the Committee and the Secretariat.
19. Respond to all requests for information in a timely manner, facilitate missions requested by the Committee, provide credible and reliable information and ensure consultation with relevant stakeholders including local communities and indigenous peoples.
20. Refrain from influencing the Committee's deliberations and decision making through lobbying before and during the World Heritage Committee sessions (*Rules of Procedure*, Rules 22.5, 22.6 and 22.7). In particular, the States Parties shall observe the requirement concerning conduct during voting stipulating that "*After the Chairman has announced the beginning of voting, no one shall interrupt the voting*" (*Rules of Procedure*, Rule 36).
21. Voluntarily be restrictive with new nominations to ensure a more representative and balanced World Heritage List where the State Party is already well represented on the World Heritage List.