

See below Sweden's written contribution which has been sent in advance of the 2nd meeting of the open-ended working group of States Parties established with the mandate to develop a Code of Conduct, or a Statement of Ethical Principles or equivalent text (in conformity with Resolution 22 GA 10), following the encouragement of the Secretariat in the invitation to the meeting. In the contribution, Sweden is reiterating its previously stated positions as shared during the 1st open-ended working group meeting.

Second meeting of the open-ended working group of States Parties established with the mandate to develop a Code of Conduct, or a Statement of Ethical Principles or equivalent text (in conformity with Resolution 22 GA 10)

30 March 2021

Sweden's submission in advance of the 2nd working group meeting

General remarks

Sweden believes in a World Heritage system in which decisions throughout the World Heritage process are transparent, inclusive, well informed and based on the advice of the Advisory Bodies. Furthermore, Sweden believes in a balanced and representative World Heritage List in line with the Global Strategy. Conservation as a principal goal of the World Heritage Convention should be prioritized over new nominations, especially considering the increasing financial costs of evaluations and state-of-conservation assessments.

We note like many others that the credibility of the World Heritage Convention is at stake given the frequent deviation of decisions away from the recommendations of the advisory bodies. Expert-based decision-making constitutes an integral part of World Heritage decisions at every level.

The Open-Ended Working Group concerned with developing a Code of Conduct is an important step in ensuring credibility and ethics in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

Building on past achievements for a constructive working group outcome

The draft document (Non-paper on Code of Conduct) developed by the Ad-Hoc Working Group constitutes a solid basis for the Open-Ended Working Group on developing a Code of Conduct for sound decision-making concerning the World Heritage Convention. We consider this a useful starting point for the work of the Open-Ended Working Group for three principal reasons.

Firstly, building on the work of the "non-paper" implies efficient use of resources that have already been invested into this matter, making sure that the results are utilized and recycled.

Secondly, the Proposed Draft Code of Conduct as presented in the non-paper is a solid piece of document. It is well-structured and organized around the principal actors concerned: the World Heritage Committee, the Advisory Bodies, the Secretariat and the States Parties. Furthermore, it provides a clear description of the purpose and scope of a Code of Conduct. It also attempts well in defining core principles such as integrity, objectivity and impartiality.

Thirdly, and finally, the Proposed Draft Code of Conduct makes clear cross-references to the key documents concerned: the World Heritage Convention, the Operational Guidelines for implementing the World Heritage Convention and the Rules of Procedure. The Code of Conduct is thus to a large extent an exercise of making more visible principles that are already enshrined in these documents.

With this in mind, the task of the Open-Ended Working Group becomes an opportunity for addressing the values, ethics and moral responsibilities linked to the Convention in a much larger setting where each State Party can help shape and agree on the final document. This in itself is an important step in achieving inclusive and transparent World Heritage decision making.

Defending the universality of World Heritage

Sweden would like to emphasize the universality of World Heritage as stipulated in Article 6 of the Convention. Therefore, we consider that States Parties should refrain from presenting nominations during their serving on the Committee to ensure impartial and objective decisions. Furthermore, the Committee must in all its decisions promote and adhere to the Global Strategy in order to fulfil the goal of a credible, balanced and representative World Heritage List.

Prioritizing conservation over nominations

It is important to remind ourselves that conservation is the principal goal of the World Heritage Convention and this should be prioritized over new nominations. In order to retain a credible World Heritage List it is crucial that properties already on the List are properly cared for to the highest standard. This is reinforced by the need to fulfil sustainable development goals and to address climate change concerns affecting the properties.

Scientific concerns and objective decision-making

Expert-based decision-making constitutes an integral part of World Heritage decisions and must do so at every level, from the decisions of the Committee to the local level. Firstly, this implies that the advice of the Advisory Bodies should be followed and respected. Secondly, the expert-led nature of the World Heritage Committee must be secured in line with Article 9.3 of the Convention and Rule 5.2 in Rules of Procedure. Thirdly, at State Party level scientific-based decisions must be addressed in areas such as state-of-conservation reporting and in the use of Heritage Impact Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments.

Final remarks

Finally, Sweden appreciates the work of the Secretariat in collecting and compiling documentation from past contributions to developing a Code of Conduct. This is imperative in ensuring historical continuity and in preserving the “institutional memory” of the World Heritage Convention.