

Russian Federation's contribution to the work of the Open-ended working group
(transmitted by email on 26 and 27 April 2021)

General consideration about the Statement of Ethical Principles -Code of conduct

Mr Chairperson,

Distinguished delegates,

We would like to thank all the members of the ad-hoc working group and the Secretariat for their efforts and the presentation of the non-paper of June 2019, which was the substantial result of their work. Our experts have studied this document thoroughly and we would like to make some remarks.

First of all let me underline, that my country as the state party of the World Heritage Convention, member of the World Heritage Committee and the host of its session in 2022 fully respects the highest standards of integrity and transparency of the working methods of the Committee.

We consider that the strongest side of the Convention is the wide range of instruments for its implementation, which are already in place and work proper and efficiently. In terms of it we recognize a crucial role of Committee as the decision-making conventional body which has a clear mandate stemming from the Convention as well as from Operational guidelines, its rules of procedure.

However we believe that the Convention, the Operational guidelines are clear about the necessity of fulfilling the international obligations by the States Parties, these documents don't need to be repeated or modified by means of any non-binding document of a different nature such a code of ethics. Besides, we are not sure that a code of conduct is a proper form for the States Parties to reaffirm their international obligations. It is more appropriate for the professional communities.

We're convinced that in our future work we must be conscious not to undermine the role of state parties as principal actors of this intergovernmental instrument. We would like to suggest that the text, which we are to draw up should incorporate already existing UNESCO experience and present a set of nonbinding ethical principles for the implementation of 1972 Convention not creating additional obligations for member states.

We can fully understand the preoccupations, which lead us to the creation of such kind of document. However, we would like to draw your attention to the fact that the situation now is very different that it was before the 2019. Because this year we are going through rather significant changes in the nomination process, that will be reflected in the new version of the Operational guidelines. We consider that the application of this new regulation could help significantly to resolve some issues we were facing before. And we should give all the stakeholders some time to adjust to these new provisions and to see how it will work.

Taking into account the need to respect already existing practice among UNESCO standard-setting instruments we believe that in parallel with possible changes to the Operational guidelines a strong message to all stakeholders of the Convention could be very useful and timely. It should be taken on behalf of all States Members as the main actors of the implementation of the Convention, rather form the Committee. That's why we are inclined to consider a statement on ethical principles comprising consensual approaches and based on the non-paper of 2019. From our side we have prepared our vision of it and have the honour to share it as a draft statement with the distinguished colleagues from the Working Group.

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

We, State Parties of the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention, recalling the consequent need to work together to recognize and protect the world's universally significant and outstanding examples of cultural diversity and natural wealth;

Recalling 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.

Emphasizing the collective responsibility of all stakeholders – States Parties, World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies – to uphold the integrity and the credibility of the World Heritage List, strongly encourage all stakeholders to conduct themselves according to the highest ethical standards of professionalism, equity and transparency;

Declare that while implementing the Convention 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.
- iii. 'Impartiality' is acting in accordance with the Convention, its Operational Guidelines and Rules of Procedure of the governing bodies to benefit the credibility of the World Heritage List and not taking side in the service of political persuasions.

Being mindful, that the World Heritage Committee is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, further recall, that its work should always be governed by the provisions of the World Heritage Convention, its Operational Guidelines and Rules of Procedure.

Remind that the States members of the Committee shall choose as their representatives persons qualified in the field of the cultural or natural heritage.

Recognize that to assure the highest standards of conduct the Committee should 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.

Welcome the intention of Committee Members to limit voluntarily their term of office to four years instead of six years in order to give other State Parties an opportunity to serve on the Committee.

Encourage Committee Members to refrain voluntarily from presenting nominations during their tenure on the Committee in order to ensure impartial and objective decision making and to avoid conflict of interest.

We, State Parties to the Convention, will support the Committee in meeting its responsibility to make impartial decisions based on objective and scientific considerations through open and equal dialogue and information sharing with the Committee and the Secretariat. Therefore, we will 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.

To enable efficient and resilient implementation of the Convention we will ensure the full and timely payment of the assessed contribution to the World Heritage Fund.