



Analysis of the Global Strategy for a  
Representative, Balanced and Credible  
World Heritage List (1994-2020)



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## 1. Introduction

This report is an analysis of the Global Strategy for a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List in light of Decision 43 COM 8 of the World Heritage Committee and Resolution 22 GA 9 of the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention which decided, “[t]akes note of Decision 43 COM 8 adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 43rd session (Baku, 2019), which recommended that consideration be given to using the opportunity of the 50th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention in 2022 to undertake a reflection on the Global Strategy”.

The findings of this report are based on an analysis undertaken in February 2021 of past decisions, relevant documents (i.e. thematic studies, gap analysis, international experts meetings, World Heritage papers), reports, audits and databases on the World Heritage List and Tentative Lists available up to February 2021. The findings are presented according to the impact on the improvement of geographical coverage and credibility (ensuring representativity and balance of properties, a rigorous application of the criteria for inscription, management and protection), and conclude as requested by the commission of this study with proposed definitions for further consideration and discussion, and recommendations.

## 2. Background of the Global Strategy

The Global Strategy was adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 18th session (1994).<sup>1</sup> It provides a broad framework for an analysis and action programme designed to increase the representativity, balance and credibility of the World Heritage List. The Global Strategy relies on regional and thematic reviews and analysis of categories of heritage of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). It furthermore encourages more UNESCO Member States to become States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, to develop Tentative Lists and nominations of sites for inscription on the World Heritage List. This should be seen as a continuous process (WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.8). Initially, the Global Strategy focused on cultural heritage, and was subsequently enlarged in 1996 to encompass natural heritage (The Expert Meeting on “Evaluation of general principles and criteria for nominations of natural World Heritage sites” held in Parc national de la Vanoise, France, 22-24 March 1996 – hereafter the Vanoise Report, WHC.96/CONF.201/INF.8).

During the “Reflection meeting on reforming the World Heritage Nomination Process” held in Tunis, 23-25 January 2019 (hereafter Tunis Meeting), and at the open-ended meeting organized by the ad-hoc Working Group (April 2019) it was noted that, while the objectives of the Global Strategy make an apparent consensus, they are not accompanied by clear strategies, outcomes nor indicators to monitor its results in an objective manner, and are often the subject of divergent interpretations in the absence of defined notions of reference in the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (WHC/19/43.COM/8).

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<sup>1</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/global94.htm>

### 3. Impact of the Global Strategy on the improvement of geographical coverage

#### 3.1 World Heritage Convention Ratifications (1994-2020)

55 States Parties (28.4% of the current total) have ratified the World Heritage Convention since 1994. Only two UNESCO Member States have not ratified the Convention yet, namely Nauru (Asia and the Pacific - Small Island Developing State/SIDS) and Tuvalu (Asia and the Pacific - SIDS), and one UN Member State Liechtenstein (Europe and North America). This means that, in general terms, the number of States Parties ratifying the Convention has almost reached its cap, which represents a positive impact of the implementation of the Global Strategy. However, from the 55 States Parties mentioned above, 22 (40%) do not have a property on the World Heritage List to date. Altogether, the remaining 33 States Parties have 90 properties inscribed on the World Heritage List which represents 8% of the total of the 1121 properties inscribed on the List. Even though, the largest number of States Parties ratifying the Convention in this period are from Asia and the Pacific and Africa, the nine new ratifications from Europe and North America correspond to 44.5% of the properties located in this group of new States Parties. When it comes to the category of inscriptions, cultural properties represent 76.6% of the total properties located in this group of new States Parties. Table 1 shows that the increased number of States Parties from under-represented regions since 1994 has not increased the proportional representativity of these regions in the World Heritage List by 2020 in terms of the number of properties inscribed. It has also not supported significantly the improvement in the balance between natural and cultural properties on the List, referred to as an objective of the Global Strategy (Operational Guidelines, par. 57).

Table 1. Number of States Parties ratifying the World Heritage Convention since 1994 (February 2021)

Region	Number of State Parties	%	Number of properties inscribed	%
Africa	18	32.7	18	20
Asia and the Pacific	18	32.7	22	24.5
Arab States	3	5.5	6	6.5
Europe and North America	9	16.4	40	44.5
Latin America and the Caribbean	7	12.7	4	4.5
Total	55	100	90	100

Table 2. Number of properties located in States Parties ratifying the World Heritage Convention since 1994 according to region and type (February 2021)

Region	Cultural	Natural	Mixed	Total
Africa	8	7	3	18
Asia and the Pacific	17	4	1	22
Arab States	6	0	0	6

Region	Cultural	Natural	Mixed	Total
Europe and North America	36	4	0	40
Latin America and the Caribbean	2	2	0	4
Total	69	17	4	90
%	76.6	18.9	4.5	100

An analysis of the Tentative Lists has shown that 61.5% of States Parties have 10 or less sites on their Tentative List while 5% of States Parties have more than 30 sites on their Tentative List. The two States Parties with the largest number of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List (Italy and China with 55 inscriptions each), are also in the group of 9 States Parties with the largest number of sites on their Tentative List (more than 30 sites; see Table 3).

Table 3. Top 9 States Parties with the largest number of sites on their Tentative List in descending order (February 2021).

Order	State Party	Number of sites on Tentative List	Total number of sites on Tentative Lists	Number of World Heritage properties	Total number of properties on World Heritage List	Region
1	Turkey	83		18		Europe and North America
2	China	60		55		Asia and the Pacific
3	Iran	57		24		Asia and the Pacific
4	India	42		38		Asia and the Pacific
5	Italy	41		55		Europe and North America
6	France	38		45		Europe and North America
7	Egypt	34		7		Arab States
8	Uzbekistan	32		5		Asia and the Pacific
9	Spain	31		48		Europe and North America
	Total	418	1753	295	1121	
	%	23.8	100	26.3	100	

These 9 States Parties have 26.3% of the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List, and their respective Tentative Lists combined represent 23.8% of the total sites on all Tentative Lists (1753<sup>2</sup>). This means that the States Parties with around 1/4 of the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List, correspond to States Parties holding 1/4 of the sites tentatively proposed for the List. This constitutes a potential continuity in terms of the current representativity.

Four of the nine States Parties are from Europe and North America, four from Asia and the Pacific, one from the Arab States, and no State Party belongs to Africa or Latin America and the Caribbean in this group. This means that the larger Tentative Lists belong to the same regions where most properties on the World Heritage List are located: Europe and North America and Asia and the Pacific. This represents a potential continuity in regional imbalance.

The majority of States Parties with Tentative Lists (119 - 61.5%) have 10 or less sites in their respective Tentative Lists, with Africa leading with 41 States Parties under that range (see Table 4).

Table 4. Number of sites on States Parties’ Tentative Lists according to region (February 2021)

Number of sites	Number of States Parties	%	Africa	Asia and the Pacific	Arab States	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean
0	15	8	4	5	0	3	3
1 to 10	119	61.5	41	26	8	24	21
11 to 20	42	22	7	9	7	16	3
21 to 30	6	3.5	0	0	1	1	4
More than 30	9	5	0	3	2	4	0

Cultural sites represent 66% of the total of sites on Tentative Lists, which signifies a potential small decrease compared to the 77.5% (869/1121) of cultural properties currently inscribed on the World Heritage List (see Tables 5 and 6).

Cultural sites from Europe and North America continue heading the number of total sites, representing 25% of the total sites on Tentative Lists (see Table 5), which is similar to the percentage of cultural properties from Europe and North America inscribed on the World Heritage List - 25.8% (see Table 6). This denotes a potential continuity in the current trend.

However, in terms of type, there is a potential relative increase in nominations for natural and mixed sites with 22.5% and 11.5% respectively on the Tentative Lists. Considering that mixed sites are under-represented types of properties on the World Heritage List (3.5% of the inscribed properties), the recent reforms proposed for their evaluation (WHC/19/COM.43/9B) are timely and relevant, especially with regards to Upstream Process to support and advise States Parties in the development of

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<sup>2</sup> This number includes all the sites on States Parties Tentative Lists. Some sites might be duplicated due to potential transboundary or transnational nominations.

nominations for this type of sites. Decision 38 COM 9B already encouraged States Parties *“to fully consider the potential and constraints of nominating mixed sites at the earliest stages, and to seek early and proactive advice from the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre for such nominations, in compliance with Paragraph 122 of the Operational Guidelines, and urges States Parties to take full advantage of the upstream process to avoid significant problems during the nomination process”*.

Table 5. Number of sites on Tentative Lists according to type and region (February 2021)

Region	Cultural	Natural	Mixed	Total	%
Africa	153	94	49	296	17
Asia and the Pacific	289	115	50	456	26
Arab States	140	33	8	183	10.5
Europe and North America	439	115	55	601	34.5
Latin America and the Caribbean	140	42	35	211	12
Total	1161	395	197	1753	100
%	66	22.5	11.5	100	%

Table 6. Number of properties on the World Heritage List according to type and region (February 2021)

Region	Cultural	Natural	Mixed	Total	%
Africa	53	38	5	96	8.6
Asia and the Pacific	189	67	12	268	23.9
Arab States	78	5	3	86	7.7
Europe and North America	453	65	11	529	47.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	96	38	8	142	12.7
Total	869	213	39	1121	100
%	77.5	19	3.5	100	%

### 3.2 Composition of the World Heritage List

Since the Global Strategy was launched, the number of natural properties has increased from 90 to 213, corresponding to an increase of 136% while the increase of cultural properties is from 304 to 869, corresponding to an increase of 187%. Mixed properties have increased from 16 to 39, namely 143%. This shows that the increase of cultural properties continues to be more significant than that of natural and mixed properties, increasing the imbalance of types in the List.



There are several measures to try and address the imbalance, like the earlier mentioned correct use of Tentative List. The Cairns Decision (2000) set the limit of one new nomination per State Party (with exceptions for States Parties without properties on the World Heritage List) and an annual limit of 30 new nominations for review by the World Heritage Committee, exclusive of nominations deferred and referred by previous sessions of the Committee and changes to the boundaries of properties already inscribed. In 2004, the annual limit was set to 45 new nominations the Committee will review, inclusive of nominations deferred and referred, extensions, transboundary and serial nominations and nominations submitted on an emergency basis. It was also decided that a State Party could nominate 2 sites, provided one of them was natural (Decision 28 COM 13.1). In 2005, a decision was taken that a transboundary/transnational serial nomination can be registered exclusively within the ceiling of the chosen bearing State Party (Decision 29 COM 18A). From 2007, for a period of 4 years, it was possible to have two nominations per State Party without one of them being natural (Decision 31 COM 10). This was changed again in 2011 when one of the two nominations had to be a natural site or a cultural landscape (Decision 35 COM 8B.61). In 2016, for a trial period of 4 years, the annual limit was changed to 35 with one complete nomination per State Party (Decision 40 COM 11). This was reinforced by Decision 43 COM 11A, which further stated that the impact of this decision will be evaluated at the Committee's 46th session (2022).<sup>3</sup> A schematic overview of the changes can be found in Table 8.

Table 8. Changes to the Operational Guidelines in relation to nominations (February 2021)

World Heritage Committee Session	Annual limit of nominations	In- or exclusive nominations previously deferred/referred, extensions, transboundary and serial (emergency)	Number of nominations per State Party	Order of priorities	Other
24 COM VI.2.3.3 (2000)	30	Exclusive	1 (with the exception of States Parties with no properties on the List)	Yes, with 3 points	
28 COM 13.1 (2004)	45	Inclusive	2 (1 has to be natural)	Yes, with 4 points*	
7 EXT.COM 4B.1 (2004)		Confirmation that the 2 nominations are inclusive of nominations deferred, referred, extensions, transboundary and serial			

<sup>3</sup> The Decision reads “Decides that the impact of the proposed amendments will be evaluated at the 46th session of the Committee in 2022.” However, due to the coronavirus pandemic there was no session in 2020, thus in 2022 it will be the 45th session whilst the 46th session is in 2023.

World Heritage Committee Session	Annual limit of nominations	In- or exclusive nominations previously deferred/referred, extensions, transboundary and serial (emergency)	Number of nominations per State Party	Order of priorities	Other
29 COM 18A (2005)					The transboundary transnational serial nomination can be registered exclusively within the ceiling of the (chosen) bearing State Party
31 COM 10 (2007)			2	Yes, with 10 points	
35 COM 8B.61 (2011)			2 (1 has to be natural or a cultural landscape)		
40 COM 11 (2016)	35 (until 2018)		1	Yes, with 12 points	
43 COM 11A (2019)	35 (as from 2018)		1	Yes, with 12 points**	

\* The fourth point was a separate paragraph in Decision 24 COM VI.2.3.3

\*\* These 12 points differ from those in Decision 40 COM 11

Already in 1999 the General Assembly invited States Parties *“with a substantial representation of properties on the World Heritage List to, on a voluntary basis, space voluntarily their future nominations; and/or propose only properties in the under-represented categories; and/or link their nominations with those of another State Party with under-represented heritage; or decide to suspend the presentation of new nominations”* (Resolution CONF 206 30-48). Restricting the number of nominations per State Party by inviting States Parties which are well represented on the World Heritage List to voluntarily space their nominations could prevent further imbalance of the List. Whilst at the same time it is important to encourage and support States Parties with under-represented categories of sites, and which are not yet or hardly represented on the List, to put forward nominations in order to address the representativity, balance and credibility of this List. The impact of Decision 40 COM 11 requires further analysis in order for it to be fully understood.

The Tunis Meeting in 2019 reflected upon Decision 42 COM 12A *“to examine different possibilities for reforming the nomination and evaluation process and to propose recommendations for consideration by the World Heritage Committee in view of increasing the balance and credibility of the World Heritage List”*. A potentially important development in regard to developing quality nominations is Recommendation 6.B.1 from this meeting, namely the Preliminary Assessment and the two-phase nomination process (WHC/19/43.COM/INF.8). Decision 43 COM 12 reads that the World Heritage Committee is *“[c]onvinced that the most appropriate means for restoring and enhancing the credibility and balance of the World Heritage List is the development of high quality nominations for sites which have a strong potential to succeed, through enhanced dialogue between the States Parties and the Advisory Bodies from a very early stage, decides to endorse the principle of a two-phase nomination*

*process, with the “Preliminary Assessment” (PA) as a first phase of the nomination process, and with the current mechanism - as described in paragraph 128 of the Operational Guidelines - as a second phase”. The Preliminary Assessment could have a potential for shifting resources from nominations to conservation which will have a further positive impact on the credibility of the List (WHC/19/43.COM/12).*

## 4. Impact on Credibility: ensuring representativity and balance of properties

### 4.1 Upstream Process

In 2010 there was an expert meeting on “Upstream Processes to Nominations: Creative approaches in the nomination process” held in Phuket, Thailand, 27-29 April. Decision 34 COM 12.III encouraged the World Heritage Centre to follow up on the approaches and recommendations of the Phuket expert meeting on upstream processes. This process is aimed at recognizing the potential of a site to justify OUV prior to the preparation of the nomination file, as a voluntary capacity building exercise, tailored directly to the needs of States Parties. As stated in the Operational Guidelines (par. 71), *“States Parties are encouraged to seek as early as possible upstream advice from the Advisory Bodies during the development of their Tentative Lists as appropriate.”*

According to document WHC-13/37.COM/9, the added value of the upstream process is *“now widely recognized and its principles are increasingly applied throughout the World Heritage system”*. This is underlined by the increasing numbers of requests for upstream assistance: in 2018, 16 Upstream Process requests were received and in 2019 the number was 25. The Upstream Process could have a positive impact as it focuses on the quality of nominations, not on the quantity.

### 4.2 Tentative Lists

The Vanoise Report stated that *“national tentative lists and regional harmonization of these lists may be a tool to better manage the List, rather than through excessively rigorous evaluation procedures”* (WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.8). This was further underlined by the so-called Cairns Decision (2000) which said that *“it should be used in the future as a planning tool with a view to reducing any imbalances in the World Heritage List.”*

Tentative Lists can be used as a preliminary measurement of future trends of the World Heritage List and directions that the potential nominations are taking, clarifying impacts of the Global Strategy as they should be *“an inventory of those properties situated on its territory which each State Party considers suitable for nomination to the World Heritage List”* (Operational Guidelines, par. 62).

Out of the 194 States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, 15 (8%) do not have a Tentative List: 5 from Asia and the Pacific; 4 from Africa; 3 from Latin America and the Caribbean; and 3 from Europe and North America. From these 15 States Parties, 6 States Parties (40%) are SIDS. 7 of these 15 States Parties (46.6%) have no property inscribed on the World Heritage List and are marked with an (\*) in the list below. From these, Somalia ratified the World Heritage Convention only in 2020. Other 7 States Parties have ratified the World Heritage Convention since the Global Strategy was adopted.

Table 7. States Parties without Tentative Lists (February 2021)

Region	Africa	Asia and the Pacific	Arab States	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean
	Equatorial Guinea*	Brunei Darussalam*	-	Holy See	Antigua and Barbuda (SIDS)
	Sao Tome and Principe (SIDS)*	Cook Islands (SIDS)*	-	Luxembourg	Belize
	Somalia*	Kiribati (SIDS)	-	San Marino	Saint Lucia (SIDS)
	Timor Leste*	Niue (SIDS)*	-	-	-
	-	Singapore	-	-	-

The process of establishing Tentative Lists has been effective in terms of quantity: 92% of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention have a Tentative List, even though some need to be updated in accordance with paragraph 65 of the Operational Guidelines. It has to be noted though that quantity does not say anything about quality.

The harmonization of Tentative Lists is another aspect of improving the representativity, balance and credibility of the World Heritage List. As stated in paragraph 73 of the Operational Guidelines, “*States Parties are encouraged to harmonize their Tentative Lists at regional and thematic levels*”. This should assist them, together with the Advisory Bodies, to review gaps and identify common themes. Cooperation between States Parties in the preparation of nominations is also an element of the harmonization process.

Prior to the Global Strategy, since 1984, several harmonization meetings and workshops have been held, both at regional and subregional levels. Recently, harmonization efforts have been undertaken in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, 2008; North Africa, 2010; East African countries, 2012; Africa, 2014; Mesoamerican sub-region, 2014; and Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, 2019.

The function of the Tentative Lists as a tool to better manage the World Heritage List has been emphasized many times over, like indicated in Decision 28 COM 13.1, which reads that “*Tentative Lists are an effective and indispensable tool in the identification of potential World Heritage properties at national and (sub)regional level, and thereby contributing to the representativity of the List.*” The Tunis Meeting underlined this as well but also highlighted that they are not used to their full potential by States Parties and indicated that improved guidance would be beneficial (WHC/19/43.COM/12). In 2020, a *Guidance on Developing and Revising World Heritage Tentative Lists* was published.

### 4.3 Gap analysis

The World Heritage Committee at its 24th session in Cairns (2000) decided to proceed with an analysis of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and sites on the Tentative Lists on a regional, chronological, geographical and thematic basis. The gap analysis would provide the World Heritage Committee with a clear overview of the composition of the World Heritage List and Tentative Lists by

2002-2003, and identify likely trends in the short-medium term with a view to identify under-represented categories of heritage of potential Outstanding Universal Value (WHC-02/CONF.201/6).

ICOMOS presented its findings in 2004 in the publication *The World Heritage List: Filling the gaps - an action plan for the future*. ICOMOS based its study on 14 categories or themes, related to geo-cultural regions of the world. In Decision 28 COM 13.1 the Committee recognized the need “*to increase the technical and administrative capacity of the World Heritage systems, to encourage growth of under-represented categories and geographical coverage*”.

ICOMOS noted that “*balance should not be seen to refer to a balance between countries, or types of properties, but rather to how well a particular type of heritage of outstanding universal value is represented on the list*” and that “*cultural regions that need to be seen as the main framework for the analysis of the World Heritage List do not necessarily correspond to political boundaries. It is therefore not possible to aim for a ‘balance’ at State Party or country level, nor even in relation to larger political entities*” (ICOMOS, 2004, p.14 and 19).

In the same year, IUCN published a strategy paper *The World Heritage List: Future priorities for a credible and complete list of natural and mixed sites* which identified 20 key areas with potential for World Heritage inscription. Since then, at least 12 properties have been inscribed located within those key areas. IUCN stated that “*as noted at the outset, it is a core principle that all natural and mixed sites inscribed on the World Heritage List must be of OUV. Therefore, there is a clear implication that there must be a finite number of existing and potential sites for inclusion on the World Heritage List. Though further analytical work will be required to determine this with confidence, IUCN considers that a number in the range of 300 natural and mixed World Heritage sites should be sufficient to complete this part of the World Heritage List. This might be done over say a 10-year time period. However subsequent additions to the list may be needed in the light of new information and scientific knowledge*” (IUCN, 2004, p.13).

The number stated by IUCN in 2004 of around 300 natural and mixed sites has not been reached in 2020 where there are 213 natural properties and 39 mixed properties inscribed giving a total of 252. On Tentative Lists, 395 sites are being proposed as potential natural sites, while 197 as mixed sites, bringing the total to 592 potential new nominations for natural and mixed sites.

Given the fact that these gap analyses are 17 years old, consideration could be given to revisit these studies and evaluate their impact on the current composition of both World Heritage List and Tentative Lists, especially in relation to cultural heritage as this is a dynamic concept.

#### 4.4 Thematic studies

Another tool to contribute towards the Global Strategy are thematic studies as one of the key objectives has been to expand the understanding of heritage and include new categories to the World Heritage List. The Vanoise Report considered a series of thematic studies on natural heritage crucial (WHC-96/CONF.202/INF.9). Both ICOMOS and IUCN have developed thematic, regional, and other studies. States Parties are encouraged to consult these thematic studies when preparing Tentative Lists and nominations (Operational Guidelines, par. 147 and 72). In 1998 the report to the Committee spoke of the fact that well-focused thematic studies “*have become important guides for the implementation of the Convention in different regions*” (WHC-98/CONF.203/12).

ICOMOS Thematic studies addressed specific exploration on a category of heritage globally or in a certain region. 23 thematic studies for cultural sites not represented or under-represented<sup>4</sup> have been published, including rock art, fossil hominid sites, bridges, canals, railways, workers settlements, archaeoastronomy. Noticeable is a study on the Silk Roads which facilitated recognition of the overall framework under which the first inscription occurred in 2014, a transnational serial property shared by China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. This site is part of the Tentative List of several States Parties which foresee to nominate other segments in the near future.

From these studies, only two refer to cultural landscapes (*Paysages culturels viticoles* (available in French only) and *Cultural landscapes of the Pacific Islands*), which later reflected in the number of vineyard landscapes populating the World Heritage List (Jurisdiction de Saint Emilion, France, 1999; Tokaj Wine Region Historic Cultural Landscape, Hungary, 2002 - inscribed before the study; Vineyard Landscape of Piedmont: Langhe-Roero and Monferrato, Italy, 2014; Champagne Hillsides, Houses and Cellars, France, 2015; Les Climats, terroirs of Burgundy, France, 2015; Le Colline del Prosecco di Conegliano e Valdobbiadene, Italy, 2019 - among those inscribed after the study) and the inscriptions of cultural landscapes of Chief Roi Mata's Domain, Vanuatu, 2008 and Kuk Early Agricultural Site, Papua New Guinea, 2008.

IUCN has published 20 thematic studies and World Heritage related documents which address the identification of ecosystems under-represented on the World Heritage List, such as fossil sites, wetland and marine protected areas, forest protected areas and mountain protected areas, caves and karst among others. IUCN published a resource manual for practitioners on Natural World Heritage nominations in 2008, as well as an analysis on serial properties, the conservation of World Heritage properties via the List of World Heritage in Danger, and the application of criterion (vii) on natural beauty. A study on the standards for OUV of Natural World Heritage was published in 2008.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4.5 Transboundary and Transnational Nominations

One of those under-represented categories on the World Heritage List are transboundary and transnational nominations. The intergovernmental process of initiating such nominations is most likely a contributing factor for this. On Tentative Lists, for transboundary/transnational sites, Europe and North America lead the number of sites proposed as such with 60.8% of the total of potential transboundary/transnational nominations (see Table 9). The number of transboundary/transnational proposals represents only 2.6% of the Tentative Lists.

On the World Heritage List, transboundary/transnational properties are also in their majority located in Europe and North America with 55.3% of transboundary properties inscribed on the List located in States Parties in this region. In terms of balance in types, 52.6% of the transboundary/transnational properties are cultural properties.

From the thematic studies, initiatives to nominate sites belonging to these categories have increased, including transnational projects for the nomination of serial and transboundary sites such as the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and other regions of Europe (Europe and North America) or itineraries/cultural routes (Heritage Routes) like Qapaq Ñan (Latin America and the

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.icomos.org/en/component/content/article?id=198>

<sup>5</sup> <https://portals.iusn.org/library/taxonomy/term/36720>

Caribbean), the Heritage of Mercury, Almadén and Idrija (Slovenia and Spain) or nominations of segments under the common framework of the Silk Roads (Asia and the Pacific) or Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Europe and possibly in the future Arab States).<sup>6</sup>

Table 9. Number of sites on Tentative Lists: transboundary/transnational<sup>7</sup> (February 2021)

Number of Transboundary sites	Africa	Asia and the Pacific	Arab States	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean
46	9	8	1	28	0
%	19.6	17.4	2.8	60.8	0

Table 10. Number of properties on the World Heritage List: transboundary/transnational, according to regions (February 2021)

Number of transboundary/transnational properties	Africa	Asia and the Pacific	Arab States	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean
38	8	4	0	21	5
100%	21%	10.5%	0%	55.3%	13.2%

Table 11. Number of properties on the World Heritage List: transboundary/transnational, according to type (February 2021)

Number of transboundary/transnational properties	Cultural	Natural	Mixed
38	20	15	3
100%	52.6%	39.5%	7.9%

In order to ensure well prepared and effectively managed transboundary/transnational properties, in 2007, the General Assembly requested the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre “to develop additional technical and policy guidance for Serial and Transboundary nominations and in particular for their identification and management” (Resolution 16 GA 9). In 2008, a workshop on Natural Serial Properties was held in Vilm, Germany 26-30 November, and later in 2010, an International Expert

<sup>6</sup> Another potential transnational project is the Slave Route (Africa). However, so far only single and separate nominations have been submitted.

<sup>7</sup> Proposed transboundary sites on Tentative Lists might be repeated because it is not always acknowledged that the site is being proposed by more than one State Party.

Meeting on World Heritage and Serial properties and Nominations was held in Ittingen, Switzerland, 25-27 February, following Decisions 32 COM 10B and 33 COM 10A. Since then, several regional meetings have focused on specific potential transboundary and transnational serial properties.

#### 4.6 Mixed sites and Linking Nature and Culture

Linking natural and cultural heritage has been in the nature of the World Heritage Convention since its inception, as a unique instrument bringing together concerns for cultural and natural heritage protection. Balancing the proportion between natural properties and cultural properties and increasing the numbers of mixed properties have also been at the core of the Global Strategy. International experts meetings like Natural and Cultural Heritage Experts Meeting (Amsterdam, 1998) or the Experts meeting on Authenticity and Integrity in an African Context (Zimbabwe, 2000) have addressed the issues arising when trying to apply this division between cultural and natural heritage for certain communities and territories. Discussions on mixed sites and cultural landscapes have continuously been carried out in this context.

A reflection on processes for mixed nominations was initiated in 2013 by the World Heritage Committee through Decision 37 COM 8B.19 in relation to the deferral of the nomination of Pimachiowin Aki, Canada. The World Heritage Centre undertook a study where it was found that 78 nomination dossiers for mixed sites were submitted for evaluation by the Advisory Bodies and consideration by the Committee from 1978-2013. Of those nominations, 29 sites were inscribed as mixed properties, 11 as natural properties, 18 inscribed as cultural properties and 4 were not inscribed. The remaining nomination dossiers were referred, deferred or withdrawn (WHC-14/38.COM/9B). IUCN and ICOMOS started an exploration on methods for jointly evaluating mixed sites and cultural landscapes, and in 2019 certain reforms to the process of evaluation for this type of sites were proposed (Decision 43 COM 9B).

Following this reflection process, the IUCN-ICOMOS Connecting Practice Project emerged in 2013, followed by the Nature-Culture Journey and CultureNature Journey (since 2016/ICOMOS and IUCN), People, Nature, Culture Workshops (ICCROM-IUCN World Heritage Leadership) (since 2016) and the UNESCO Chair on Nature-Culture Linkages in Heritage Conservation, University of Tsukuba (2016-2019) with the aim to exchange and learn methods from both sectors and adopt landscape approaches for the interpretation and management of heritage places. Further partnerships and intersectoral cooperation are part of the work of UNESCO with Linking Cultural and Biological Diversity.

#### 4.7 Cultural landscapes

Integrated in 1992, cultural landscapes were expected to support the implementation of the Global Strategy in under-represented regions. Currently, the number of properties inscribed as cultural landscapes represent 10% of the properties on the List. On the Tentative Lists, proposals of cultural landscapes represent 8% of the total.

74 States Parties (38.1%) have at least one property inscribed as a cultural landscape (see Table 12). Even though, the Asia and the Pacific region made use of these new categories, it was still Europe and North America which had more cultural landscapes inscribed over time. 52.6% of the properties inscribed as cultural landscapes are located in the Europe and North America region, and 21.9% are located in Asia and the Pacific. Other regions (Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and Arab States) which are less represented on the World Heritage List, represent 25.5% of cultural landscapes inscribed. This would seem to show that the recognition of cultural landscapes as a new way to



interpret heritage and as an inclusive category could not fully address the lack of representativity and especially, regional balance. However, if we look at numbers from a different perspective, the result may change. For instance, looking at the percentage of cultural landscapes against cultural and mixed properties inscribed in each region (Africa 25.8%, Europe and North America 12.5%, Asia and the Pacific 12.4%, Latin America and the Caribbean 9.6%, Arab States 4.9%), it appears that it is mainly the Africa region that benefitted from the introduction of the cultural landscape category. This outcome is an issue that deserves further study.

Table 12. Number of properties on the World Heritage List: cultural landscapes, according to regions (February 2021)

Number of cultural landscapes <sup>8</sup>	Africa	Asia and the Pacific	Arab States	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean
137	15	25	4	60	10
%	13.2	21.9	3.5	52.6	8.8
Number of States Parties with cultural landscapes	Africa	Asia and the Pacific	Arab States	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean
74	11	25	4	24	10
%	14.9	33.8	5.4	32.4	13.5

On the Tentative Lists, Europe and North America lead the number of cultural landscapes proposed with 42% of the 137 sites proposed as cultural landscapes (see Table 13), followed by Africa with 22% and Asia and the Pacific with 18%. Latin America and the Caribbean and Arab States have 9% each. Therefore, the trend of cultural landscapes nominations appears to follow a similar trend as the current composition of the World Heritage List, yet with a small decrease from Europe and North America and an increase from Africa on the Tentative Lists.

Table 13. Number of sites on Tentative Lists: cultural landscapes<sup>9</sup> (February 2021)

Number of cultural landscapes	Africa	Asia and the Pacific	Arab States	Europe and North America	Latin America and the Caribbean
137	30	25	12	57	12
%	22	18	9	42	9

<sup>8</sup> Source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/>

<sup>9</sup> The number of cultural landscapes proposed on the Tentative Lists has been determined based on the use of the tag ‘cultural landscapes’ or the explicit mention of the term cultural landscape to describe the site.

## 4.8 Other categories on the World Heritage List and Tentative Lists

In terms of other categories, the most represented categories of heritage remain cultural properties described as historical buildings, monuments, palaces, castles and tombs or mausoleums, which together represent 38% of the properties in the World Heritage List (see Table 14). On the Tentative Lists, this number is reduced to 26.4%, yet 463 sites are proposed under these categories. Cultural properties under the categories of historic cities or historic urban areas and archaeological sites represent 15.3% and 14.1% respectively on the List. On Tentative Lists, these represent 10.8% and 7.3% reducing the proportion of sites nominated under these categories. However, the numbers are 190 and 128 respectively, while there are 172 and 158 properties under these categories already inscribed on the List. Industrial heritage and 20th Century heritage are represented on the List with 4.5% and 2.7% respectively and constitute only 2.1% and 1.3% respectively of the total of sites on the Tentative Lists.

This denotes a small reduction in the trend of nominations of over-represented categories on the World Heritage List, from 67.4% on the List to 44.5% on the Tentative Lists. However, this relative reduction refers to the increase in the proportion of natural and mixed sites (see Tables 5 and 6), and not necessarily in the increase of proposals from other categories such as vernacular, industrial or 20th Century heritage (see Table 14). Nevertheless, the under-represented categories have achieved a certain representation.

Table 14. Number of sites on the Tentative List<sup>10</sup> and the World Heritage List: other categories<sup>11</sup> (February 2021)

Categories / typologies	Number of sites Tentative List	%	Number of properties World Heritage List	%
Itineraries (Heritage routes)	11	0.6	46	4.1
Canals and water management systems	11	0.6	16	1.4
Historic areas, cities, towns	190	10.8	172	15.3
Archaeological sites	128	7.3	158	14.1
Vernacular heritage	35	2	53	4.7
Rock Art	13	0.8	21	1.9
Fossil (including natural and cultural properties)	28	1.6	41	3.7
Fortifications	36	2.1	34	3
Industrial, including mining sites	36	2.1	51	4.5

<sup>10</sup> The percentage refers to the total number of sites on the Tentative Lists. Some sites represent more than one category. Categories have been identified based on the use of relevant keywords in the title and/or description of the site: Itineraries/routes for Itineraries; Canals/Water management for canals and water management systems; historic city/historic town/historic district/historic urban area/historic settlement for historic areas, cities, towns; archaeological sites/archaeological remains/ruins for Archaeological sites; traditional architecture/vernacular architecture/traditional settlement for Vernacular heritage; Rock art for rock art; fossil/pre-historic/paleontology for Fossil; forts/fortifications/walls for Fortifications; mining/industrial for Industrial including mining sites; modern architecture/1900s/modern movement/20th century for 20th Century heritage.

<sup>11</sup> The percentage refers to the total number of properties on the World Heritage List. Some properties represent more than one category.

Categories / typologies	Number of sites Tentative List	%	Number of properties World Heritage List	%
20th Century heritage	23	1.3	30	2.7
Monuments, palaces, castles, single historic buildings, ensembles and tombs	463	26.4	425	38

World Heritage Thematic Programmes were adopted at the 25th session of the World Heritage Committee (Helsinki, 2001) to address the need of further reflection, exploration and research on certain themes, under-represented categories and current issues with a view to achieve the Global Strategy.

#### 4.9 Local communities and Indigenous peoples' representation

The launch of the Global Strategy constituted an important step towards the recognition of the heritage of Indigenous peoples. Even if not directly an impact of the Global Strategy, this recognition reinforces links between Strategic Objectives 1 and 5 stated in the Operational Guidelines (par. 26: 5Cs (Budapest Declaration 2002)) and the Global Strategy. In line with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) and UNESCO policy, the Operational Guidelines (par. 12, 64 and 211d) recognize the role of local communities and Indigenous peoples in identifying, managing, protecting and presenting World Heritage (Decision 43 COM 11A). It is in this spirit that the International Indigenous Peoples Forum for World Heritage was launched at the 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee in 2018. Projects like COMPACT (Engaging Local Communities in the Stewardship of World Heritage) provide methodologies for the involvement of local communities and Indigenous peoples in the conservation of World Heritage properties.

A notable case of the integration of Indigenous peoples as an active stakeholder in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention has been the nomination of Pimachiowin Aki, Canada, where 5 Anishinaabe First Nations<sup>12</sup> partnered with the Provincial governments of Ontario and Manitoba, and the national agency, Parks Canada, to nominate their traditional territories together with provincial protected areas as a World Heritage cultural landscape and a mixed site. The nomination project, led by the Indigenous First Nations, took over 10 years and led to the questioning of the Advisory Bodies evaluation methods for mixed sites. Inscribed in 2018, the Pimachiowin Aki nomination process paved the way for new Indigenous-led nominations such as Budj Bim, Australia, inscribed in 2019.

#### 4.10 Capacity building

In 2011, the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session at UNESCO Headquarters adopted the World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy. The strategy aims *"to provide a framework for the development of effective actions and programmes to strengthen or develop capacities of practitioners, institutions, communities and networks for the conservation and management of World Heritage"* (WHC-11/35.COM/9B). The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, in close cooperation with States Parties and Category 2 Centres and other capacity building partners, have undertaken a number of activities to implement it. This includes programs aimed at strengthening regional and national

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<sup>12</sup> In 2016, one of the First Nations stepped back and the nomination was withdrawn and resubmitted in 2017 with four First Nations territories included.

institutions responsible for heritage protection, training initiatives targeting professionals and youth and the development of new guidance materials.

Some capacity building programmes and initiatives developed over the years are addressed to States Parties national focal points, World Heritage site managers and regional experts, but also to raise awareness in civil society and especially youth involvement. Some examples of these are Africa 2009, World Heritage Youth Fora, the World Heritage Volunteers 2018 and 2019 campaigns, World Heritage Leadership Programme, World Heritage Site Managers Fora, establishment of the ICCROM Sharjah Office and TABE'A Programme in the Arab States.

Responding to requests of the World Heritage Committee (Action Plan 2006/WHC-06/30.COM/10), guidance materials have been developed by the Advisory Bodies and UNESCO. There is one on *Preparing World Heritage Nominations* (second edition 2011) in order to help States Parties to achieve good quality World Heritage nominations. The resource manuals *Managing Disaster Risks for World Heritage* (2011), *Managing Natural World Heritage* (2012) and *Managing Cultural World Heritage* (2013) were published. In 2020 the *Guidance for developing and revising Tentative Lists* was published. At the moment, manuals are being updated by the World Heritage Leadership Programme and expected to be published by 2022.<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.11 Periodic Reporting Mechanism

In 1998 Periodic Reporting was introduced as a reporting mechanism. The Operational Guidelines (par. 202) stipulate that “*Periodic Reporting is important for more effective long-term conservation of the properties inscribed, as well as to strengthen the credibility of the implementation of the Convention*”. It helps to identify trends and tendencies, as well as the efforts that are being made to improve protection, conservation and management of World Heritage properties. The information for the Periodic Reporting is provided by all States Parties through the Periodic Reporting questionnaires, and the analysis is given for an entire region as well as for different sub-regions. So far there have been two full cycles: 2000-2006 and 2008-2015. The third cycle is currently in progress (2018-2024). There is a Reflection Period between the cycles.

The Periodic Reporting exercise stimulates regional cooperation and exchange of information as the following example in the Arab States demonstrates: one of the outcomes of their Second Cycle of Periodic Reporting exercise was the unanimously agreed priority to work on nominations for natural properties in the Arab Region as this was identified as a gap, endorsed by Decision 34 COM 10A.

As a general observation, it can be noted that there has been progress between cycles one and two, for example on legal frameworks and management systems. Nevertheless, the strengthening of legal frameworks is still considered a priority. Similarly, with enforcing management systems whereby more properties have management systems, but the enforcing of them remains crucial. Other points identified are the need to work on financial and human resources, training and capacity building activities, the involvement of local communities and key stakeholders and updating inventories/Tentative Lists. Other points of attention are transboundary / transnational nominations, buffer zones, impact of climate change, disaster and risk preparedness and World Heritage in (post)-conflict areas.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/resourcemanuals/>

A result of the Periodic Reporting exercise are the Regional Reports and Action Plans for World Heritage which are tools for setting regional priorities for implementing the World Heritage Convention by means of concrete goals and a set timing.

4.12 Category 2 Centres under the auspices of UNESCO related to World Heritage

The first UNESCO Category 2 Centre (C2C) related to World Heritage was the Nordic World Heritage Foundation (2003-2014). Twelve UNESCO C2C related to World Heritage have been established by February 2021, from which 11 are active. Some are general in nature, others are dedicated to one topic like for example Rock Art, an under-represented category. Decision 35 COM 6 recalls the key role that C2C can play in the implementation of the World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy and the Global Strategy.

Table 15. C2C under the auspices of UNESCO related to World Heritage<sup>14</sup> (February 2021)

Africa	APA	Arab States	Europe and NA	LAC
AWHF	WHITR-AP	ARC-WH	Nordic World Heritage Foundation (2003-2014)	RWHI
	HIST*		ICRA (pending)	Lucio Costa
	WNHMT (WII)		IRC EC	
	CHEADSEA (pending)			
	ICP (pending)			

\* While HIST is administratively affiliated to the Natural Sciences Sector of UNESCO, it undertakes activities related to World Heritage

So far, seven coordination meetings have taken place. The C2Cs are supporting UNESCO in several regional activities such as the regional Periodic Reporting exercises, capacity building activities on preparing nominations, heritage impact assessments, preparatory assistance for nominations, management plans, and regional experts meetings and focal points coordination meetings. C2Cs are actors in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention at regional level, as well as supporting geographical coverage and regional balance, and generating more knowledge on particular topics. Some C2Cs specifically addressed the Global Strategy in their regions, such as ARC-WH and AWHF.

An example of another kind of cooperation is the one between UNESCO, AWHF and the African educational institutions. Meetings in 2018 were held in order to bring heritage professionals, experts

<sup>14</sup> WHITRAP: World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITR-AP) ; AWHF: African World Heritage Fund; RWHI: Regional World Heritage Institute in Zacatecas; ARCWH: Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage; Lucio Costa: Regional Heritage Management Training Centre “Lucio Costa”; ICRA: International Centre for Rock Art and the World Heritage Convention; IRC EC: International Research Centre on the Economics of Culture and World Heritage Studies; HIST: International Centre on Space Technologies for Natural and Cultural Heritage; WII: Centre on World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region; CHEADSEA: Regional Centre for Human Evolution, Adaptations and Disposals in South East Asia; ICIP: International Centre for the Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Sites.

and researchers together to explore the role universities can play in the management and conservation of World Heritage in Africa.

Some UNESCO Chairs, established within Universities in the framework of the UNESCO University Twinning and Networking (UNITWIN) Programme, focus on topics related to World Heritage. In 2010 the First annual meeting of World Heritage related C2C and relevant UNESCO Chairs and Higher Education and Research Institutions took place in order to facilitate their activities and to strengthen their regional relevance as requested by Resolution 17 GA 9. In 2015 and 2017, coordination meetings of C2C and UNESCO Chairs on Culture took place to develop further cooperation with the different Culture Conventions and programmes of UNESCO.

#### 4.13 International Cooperation

Since 1994, several initiatives for international cooperation addressing the objectives of the Global Strategy were developed, both in the private and public sector.<sup>15</sup> There are 17 private partners mentioned on the World Heritage website, like the Franz Weber Foundation (FFW), which is working closely with the World Heritage Centre to support the conservation and safeguard of natural World Heritage properties. Another example is Tokyo Broadcasting System (TBS) working towards the promotion of the Convention and raising awareness on the conservation of World Heritage. Twenty-six partners in the public sector are mentioned on the World Heritage website. There are, for example, the Funds (in Trust), like the ones from Australia, China, Flanders, Japan, the Netherlands and Spain. Several countries have Cooperation Agreements, like France and China or a Framework Agreement (Republic of Korea). Each with their own focus but all with the aim of strengthening the World Heritage Convention. The Ministry of Climate and Environment of Norway supports the ICCROM-IUCN World Heritage Leadership Programme to build capacities of site managers and national focal points to the World Heritage Convention, Saudi Arabia and the Principality of Monaco support the World Heritage Marine Programme, and the Sultanate of Oman supports the capacity-building of nomination projects and promotion of World Heritage sites in five Eastern African countries.

There is also twinning of sites, which means that World Heritage properties themselves work together. One such example is the Twinning Programme of Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (2009) between the Ifugao Rice Terraces in the Philippines and Cinque Terre in Italy. Both cultural landscapes, the two World Heritage properties “*agreed to promote and expand an effective and mutually beneficial cooperation for the sites' conservation and sustainable development*”.<sup>16</sup>

## 5. Impact on Credibility: a rigorous application of the criteria for inscription

The Vanoise Report recommended that “*for all purposes of standard setting, credibility, manageability and commensurability with available resources, inscription on the World Heritage List should be kept to a strict minimum*”. However, the Final report of the Audit of the Global Strategy and the PACT initiative stated clearly that there was an increasing focus on the World Heritage List to the detriment of the monitoring and conservation of already inscribed properties (WHC-11/35.COM/INF.9A). IUCN

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<sup>15</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/partners/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/568>

stated in 2005 that *“the credibility of the World Heritage List is intrinsically linked to a proper understanding, and the strict and rigorous application, of the OUV concept”* (IUCN “Kazan” Statement - WHC-05/29.COM/INF.9B).

## 5.1 The Operational Guidelines and the Outstanding Universal Value

The Operational Guidelines is a living document; revisions are being made to its content to reflect new concepts, knowledge and experience (according to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre website revisions were made in 1983, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1997, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2019). For example, the criteria for inscription on the World Heritage List, as defined by the Committee, have been revised several times in the Operational Guidelines.

In 2005, the Special Expert Meeting “World Heritage Convention: The Concept of Outstanding Universal Value” held in Kazan, Russian Federation, 6-9 April, agreed with the definition as set out in paragraph 49 of the Operational Guidelines (WHC-05/29.COM/9): *“Outstanding universal value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole”*.

## 5.2 Advisory Bodies Recommendations

As noted by the Tunis Meeting and according to Document WHC/19/22.GA/10 *“over the last decade [that] the credibility of the World Heritage system was at risk, notably concerning inscriptions on the World Heritage List (i.e. a trend in practices of systematically deviating from experts’ advice and overlooking provisions of the Operational Guidelines)”*. This, unfortunately, is not a new issue. In 2011 the Audit noted that the professionalism of the Advisory Bodies is the scientific guarantee of the value of the List, but that the decisions of the Committee diverge more and more frequently from the scientific advice of the Advisory Bodies. The Expert Meeting in Phuket (2010) noted that *“a decision to refer a nomination, in the situation where the nominations may need more time and work and would require additional on-site evaluation, may be a ‘poisoned gift’ which can needlessly limit the options available to a State Party to refine its nomination, including with the assistance of the Advisory Bodies”* (WHC-10/34.COM/12A). Furthermore, the Comparative Mapping Study of Forms and Models for use of Advisory Services by International Instruments and Programmes produced by the UNESCO Internal Oversight Services (IOS) Recommendation 3 suggests the *“World Heritage Committee to identify the root cause(s) for Committee decisions deviating from Advisory Bodies advice, procured at a significant cost to the World Heritage Fund, and take action to address them”* (WHC/17/41.COM/INF.14.II).

In 2016, 86% (12 out of 14) of the Advisory Bodies recommendations for referral, deferral and non-inscription of nominations were not followed by the Committee. In 2017, this was 87% (14 out of 16) (39C/REP/19), in 2018 it was 87% (14 out of 16) and in 2019 it was 73% (8 out of 11) (40C/REP/19).

When a nomination goes from a recommendation for non-inscription to being inscribed this is a serious question of credibility as a non-inscription recommendation means that the evaluation process by the Advisory Body(ies) did not determine a potential for OUV for the concerned site, even if the nomination would be reworked. Though in 2018 and 2019 three sites that were not recommended for inscription were inscribed, namely the Al-Ahsa Oasis, an Evolving Cultural Landscape (Saudi Arabia, 2018), the Naumburg Cathedral (Germany, 2018) and the Historic Centre of Sheki with the Khan’s Palace (Azerbaijan, 2019).

### 5.3 The World Heritage Committee

In 2009, 110 States Parties had never been on the Committee (59.14% of States Parties), in 2019 this was 50.26% (97 States Parties of the 193) (see Table 16). Thus over the last ten years more States Parties have had a mandate on the Committee. However, the number of States Parties with more than 1 mandate have also increased and there are now States Parties with 5 mandates.

Table 16. Composition of the World Heritage Committee in relation to mandates<sup>17</sup> (February 2021)

Mandates	1993	%	2009	%	2019	%
0	86	63.2	110	59.1	97	50.3
1	35	25.8	42	22.6	47	24.3
2	12	8.8	19	10.2	25	13
3	3	2.2	8	4.3	10	5.2
4	0	0	7	3.8	11	5.7
5	0	0	0	0	3	1.5
TOTAL	136	100	186	100	193	100

For 2021, so far 11 States Parties have handed in their candidatures. Of these 11, two States Parties have never been on the Committee, one State Party has had one mandate, four States Parties have had two mandates, one State Party three, and another one has had five mandates.

The Audit (2011) observed a strong correlation between the States Parties represented on the World Heritage Committee and the location of the nominated properties and concluded that these practices seriously damage the credibility of the List and the Convention. From 1977 to 2005, 314 inscriptions, that is 42% of inscriptions of this period, had benefited countries Members of the Committee during their term of office. This percentage has gone down in later years according to the statistics of the World Heritage Centre’s website. The Audit recommended to *“revise the Rules of Procedure of the Committee and to prohibit a State Party from submitting a nomination file during its term of office (or at least to postpone its examination by the Committee while the State Party is part of the Committee)”* (Recommendation 12). Since 2016, according to Decision 40 COM 11, the Operational Guidelines (par. 61c) read: [as from 28 February 2018 the following order of priorities will be applied in case of the overall limit of 35 nominations is exceeded] *“xi) nominations of States Parties, former Members of the Committee, who accepted on a voluntary basis not to have a nomination reviewed by the Committee during their mandate. This priority will be applied for 4 years after the end of their mandate on the Committee”*.

<sup>17</sup> For the analysis documents available to the General Assembly have been used, namely WHC-93/CONF.003/5, WHC-09/17.GA/INF.3B.2 and WHC/19/22.GA/INF.58. Information concerning the States Parties running during the 2021 GA: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/23GA> (February 2021)



## 6. Impact on Credibility: Management and Protection

The Vanoise Report was concerned with the ‘manageability’ of the List and stated that *“the critical issue is to fill the gaps in the World Heritage List while not losing the manageability and credibility of the World Heritage List through an unreasonable number of inscriptions. The meeting also expressed its concern that while considerable resources were being spent on the nomination process, there was an even more urgent need to focus on the problems of management and care of existing properties especially those listed as in danger. Failure to do so would undermine the credibility of the Convention”*. This sentiment was underlined in the *World Heritage, Challenges for the Millennium* (2007) which notes that *“the real issue is not the number of sites, but rather the capacity to ensure the effective conservation of those inscribed”*. Furthermore, the Audit (2011) recommended to *“refocus World Heritage nominations on the most outstanding sites and for the others envisage new tools for recognition and conservation at the regional level or by themes under the auspices of UNESCO or in concert with regional organizations”*.

### 6.1 Management systems

Currently, a management system is compulsory which was not the case at the start of the Convention. An outcome of the Second Cycle of Periodic Reporting for the Africa region was that *“traditional knowledge and management systems need to be documented and formalised, and fully harmonised with existing management mechanisms already approved for World Heritage properties”* (WHC-11/35.COM/10A). The necessity of enforcing management systems has already been highlighted under heading 4.10 in this report.

In 2011, the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) was adopted by UNESCO responding to issues reported in World Heritage cities and especially referring to the development of new projects. The background of this document was the Vienna Memorandum (2005) which refers to discussions on the historic city of Vienna entering into the List of World Heritage in Danger due to the development plans within the World Heritage property, impacting on its OUV. This has also led to the integration of Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA) for developments within or around World Heritage cultural and mixed properties and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) for natural and mixed properties (Operational Guidelines, par. 118bis). Advisory Bodies have developed guidance for impact assessments on cultural (ICOMOS) and natural properties (IUCN) separately. Currently, a new guidance for Impact Assessments on World Heritage properties is expected to be published in 2021 by the three Advisory Bodies (ICCROM, ICOMOS, IUCN) in cooperation with the World Heritage Centre.

### 6.2 State of Conservation Reports

In 2014, a statistical analysis (1979-2013) was published on the State of Conservation of World Heritage properties by the World Heritage Centre. Due to the fast increase in State of Conservation (SoC) reports over the years, this report numbers are already outdated: 2742 SoC reports on 469 properties located in 130 States Parties by 2013 - 3796 SoC reports on 574 properties located in 147 States Parties by 2021. The main factor affecting properties stated in 2014 was management and institutional. By 2021, 2554 SoC reports on 447 World Heritage properties refer to these factors. Buildings and development is the second group of factors most affecting World Heritage properties with 1397 reports on 268 properties located in 113 States Parties. Social and cultural changes are a third group of threats present in 1054 reports on 214 properties located in 95 States Parties. This denotes similar trends in the last 8

years, showing that protection and management, fundamental pillar of OUV, are not strictly adhered to.

In 1994, 78 properties were examined which represented 19% of the total number of properties on the World Heritage List. While in 2019, the number of properties examined is of 166 (213% increase), which represents 14.8% of the List due to a cap established on the number of properties that can be examined in one World Heritage Committee session. A notable peak occurred in 2009 with 178 properties examined, and it coincides with the year when the first cultural property was deleted from the World Heritage List, the Dresden Elbe Valley, Germany. Prior to this, in 2007, the first property to be delisted from the World Heritage List was the natural property the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary, Oman. Both properties were removed from the World Heritage List due to developments incompatible (infrastructure and resource extraction) with the maintenance of the OUV of these properties and their adequate conservation.

## 7. Possible Definitions

As requested, the draft definitions below follow on from the study and could serve as a basis for further discussions. The basis for the definitions is the key value of the 1972 Convention, the OUV. Thus credibility, balance and representativity should always be interpreted in light of the OUV. Credibility is furthermore linked to the balance and representativity of the World Heritage List.

### 7.1 Credibility

Credibility of the World Heritage List is the rigorous application of the criteria, rules and procedures established by the World Heritage Committee for inscription, protection and management of properties with **OUV** for future generations.

### 7.2 Balance

Balance of the World Heritage List does not mean an equal amount in numbers but equal attention to inscription, management, protection and conservation as well as between the various types, categories, themes, regions, periods of Earth life-geology, bio-geographic provinces, history of life or geocultural groupings with **OUV** on the List.

### 7.3 Representativity

Representativity of the World Heritage List means that the various types, categories, themes, regions, periods of Earth life-geology, bio-geographic provinces, history of life or geocultural groupings with **OUV** are represented on the List. This does not mean that the World Heritage List is representative of all the heritage in the world but only those with **OUV**. Similarly, it does not mean that all regions have the same amount of World Heritage properties as **OUV** is leading.

It also relates to the number of States Parties that have signed up to the Convention in order to contribute to the system and achieve attention for World Heritage worldwide collectively.

## 8. Conclusions and Recommendations

This analysis of the Global Strategy for a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List has brought forward points that might contribute towards the reflection of the Global Strategy towards the 50th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention in 2022. These points are:

1. The Global Strategy's focus on the World Heritage List has had an impact on the number of World Heritage properties but not necessarily on under-represented categories or on improving the conservation or promoting international cooperation which are key elements of the World Heritage Convention. Already in 1996 the question was raised how to fill the gaps on the World Heritage List while not losing the manageability and credibility of the World Heritage List through an "*unreasonable number of inscriptions*" (WHC-96/CONF.201/INF.8). This highlights the importance of the current rule of 1 nomination per State Party with a ceiling 35 of nominations per year. At the same time, it is also crucial to look for other measures to address the balance, credibility, and representativity of the List as for example the proposed Preliminary Assessment and the quality of the Tentative Lists.
2. Currently the Tentative Lists include more sites than those inscribed on the World Heritage List. Highest representativity is continuously held by the Europe and North America region and the imbalance between cultural and natural properties has increased on the List and is maintained on the Tentative Lists. However, it should not be about quantity but quality, namely the potential OUV. As mentioned before in this report, OUV is not necessarily equally distributed in geographical terms, and therefore, OUV is not about numerical balance. Thus, it is recommended to encourage nominations from under-represented categories with OUV potential.
3. In terms of regional representation, 86% of States Parties and all regions are represented on the List. In terms of representativity of categories, categories that were under-represented in 1994 are now present on the World Heritage List and the Tentative Lists of States Parties. However, the imbalance between categories' representation persists. An in-depth updated gap analysis by IUCN and ICOMOS would clarify the remaining thematic and bio/geological-geographical gaps on the World Heritage List and Tentative Lists, compared to the gap analysis of 2004 in clear connection to OUV. It is recommended to do this based on agreed definitions of credibility, balance and representativity. The Upstream Process has the potential to support and advise States Parties in the development of nominations for under-represented categories like mixed properties because even though these have more than doubled in number since 1994, mixed properties are still very much under-represented on the World Heritage List.
4. Nowadays cultural landscapes represent about the 10% of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. However, the category of cultural landscapes could not fully address the lack of representativity and especially, regional balance. Therefore, the trend of cultural landscapes nominations appears to follow a similar trend that the current composition of the World Heritage List, yet with a small decrease from Europe and North America and an increase from Africa on the Tentative Lists. The understanding of this outcome requires further analysis and study.
5. The number of transboundary/transnational proposals represents only 2.6% of the Tentative Lists, though more than half of these in Europe and North America. The fact that multiple States Parties have to work together is most likely an additional factor with these nominations and more interaction and knowledge regarding the process could be beneficial in this regard.

It is recommended to exchange experiences of existing transboundary/transnational properties. Technical and policy guidance based on lessons learned could help to improve this process.

6. As indicated by the outcomes of the Periodic Reporting exercise, the protection and management regimes need to be strengthened in a number of cases, as well as before submitting nominations. A global study on legal protection and management systems could be useful for developing international cooperation and capacity building in States Parties, especially in cases where the legal and management systems are weak or inexistent. The Regional Action Plans and interregional cooperation could also contribute towards the actual harmonization of Tentative Lists.
7. Indicators for the impact of the Global Strategy, for example the content of Tentative Lists, categories of nominations put forward, which States Parties are nominating sites, would support the World Heritage Committee in monitoring the progress and deviations of this Strategy.

All the above-mentioned points could feed into the process started with the Tunis Meeting.

Table 17 - Summary Table (February 2021)

	1994	2020	Increase
States Parties ratification	139	194	139.5%
States Parties with Tentative List	10	179	1790%
Number of properties on the World Heritage List	410	1121	273.4%
Cultural properties inscribed	304	869	285.8%
Natural properties inscribed	90	213	236.6%
Mixed properties inscribed	16	39	243.8%
Number of properties in Africa	40	96	240%
Number of properties in Arab States	45	86	191%
Number of properties in Asia and the Pacific	81	268	331%
Number of properties in Europe and North America	191	529	277%
Number of properties in Latin America and the Caribbean	53	142	268%

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