

Report
**Seventh 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)**

27 September 2021
9.00 a.m. – 2.00 p.m. (Paris time, UTC+2)
Online meeting

**Chairperson: His Excellency Ghazi GHERAIRI, Ambassador,
Permanent Delegate of Tunisia to UNESCO**

Opening of the meeting by the Chairperson

The **Chairperson** welcomed all participants to the meeting of the Open-ended working group of States Parties (hereinafter referred to as the Working Group) and announced that the Vice-Chairperson, H.E. Mr. Christian TER STEPANIAN, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Armenia, and the Rapporteur, Mr. Ole Søre ERIKSEN (Norway) could not attend the meeting due to unexpected circumstances. As the work of the Working Group was coming to its end, he seized the occasion to thank Austria, Azerbaijan who had recently contributed, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia for their financial support for the organization of the meetings of the Working Group.

The **Chairperson** briefly recapped the 6th meeting of the Working Group, held on 20 September 2021, in which the group finalized the pending point iii. of Section I "Core Principles" concerning *impartiality* and drafted the introductory part of the text. He recalled that the report of the 6th meeting and the "clean" text integrating amendments/proposals made during the meeting had been made available on the webpage dedicated to the work of the Working Group. He then gave the floor to the **Director of the World Heritage Centre (DIR/WHC)** to present the outcomes of the last meeting of the Working Group on behalf of the Rapporteur.

DIR/WHC recalled that the Working Group finalized point iii. of Section I "Core Principles" regarding *impartiality* and reached consensus. In order for this point to be consistent with the introductory part, she indicated that the Chairperson suggests moving up the list the *Standards of Conduct for International Civil Service* in order to illustrate the hierarchy of the documents mentioned. She presented the introductory part as agreed by the Working Group, which has been integrated to the rest of the text. She drew attention to a few editorial modifications, namely in the French version, in which "nations of the world" was changed to "peoples of the world" to align with the wording of the Convention. The *Standards of Conduct for International Civil Service* had also been moved up the list to illustrate the hierarchy of the texts. For consistency purposes with the rest of the text, a mention to the Rules of Procedures of the General Assembly of States Parties was also added.

The **Chairperson** recalled that the purpose of the present meeting was to finish the drafting of the text. He proposed to resume the drafting of the remaining paragraphs, started at the 5th meeting in June last, i.e. starting with the new paragraph 5 and so on until the end of the text, before finally examining proposals to add a point iv. to Section I "Core Principles" and agreeing on the title of the text. Regarding paragraph 5, he recalled that two key priorities were discussed, i.e. on one hand to ensure an ethical conduct and avoid potential conflict of interest; and on the

other hand to ensure a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List in line with the Global Strategy.

The **Working Group** examined and proposed several amendments to paragraph 5. Among the many issues discussed, the question of the relevance to refer specifically to paragraph 61(c) of the Operational Guidelines was raised in view of the reform of the Nomination process. It was agreed to make a general reference to the Operational Guidelines to avoid modifications of the [text] in the case of future revisions by the Committee of relevant texts. The Working Group revised the wording of the paragraph to reconcile both key priorities above mentioned.

Several Delegations raised concerns about potentially discouraging States Parties from running for election to the Committee, including those with less properties on the World Heritage List. They asked if the newly introduced Preliminary Assessment would significantly postpone the examination of nominations from former Committee members that had refrained from submitting nominations during their mandate. They also raised concerns over a potential backlog should the application of these priorities be applied by all Committee members.

The **Secretariat** reiterated its comment made during the 5th meeting of the Working Group and confirmed that the World Heritage Committee may revise the Operational Guidelines if required. It clarified that the outcome of a Preliminary Assessment is relevant up to 5 years, a span of time longer than a 4-year mandate for a Committee member. It further indicated that there have been several instances in the past of Committee members refraining from submitting nominations on a voluntarily basis without generating problems, and these did not create any backlog. It also clarified that paragraph 61(c) takes into account the Global Strategy and set priorities for States Parties with less properties on the World Heritage List.

The Delegation of **Poland** proposed the insertion of a new paragraph 6 reflecting the need to ensure objective procedures on an equal foot at every stage of the mandate of Committee members, with an aim at clarifying existing texts of the Convention. While considering this new paragraph, **several Delegations** commented that the question of objective procedures of the Committee could be better addressed by the Committee in the framework of the revision of its Rules of Procedure or of the Operational Guidelines.

The **Working Group** continued its work with the examination of the following paragraphs. It amended paragraph 7 (ex-6) in order to avoid preventing visits of experts from official Committee members delegations to sites out of their own initiative, and to ensure the equal treatment of all sites, given that some States Parties may not afford for such visits. Paragraphs 8 (ex-7) and 9 (ex-8) were adopted as per the amendments proposed. The Working Group adopted amendments to paragraph 10 (ex-9) proposed by the Delegations of the **Russian Federation** and of **Saudi Arabia** and decided to further examine the amendment proposed by the Delegation of **China** at a next meeting. The Working Group also started discussing paragraph 11 (ex-10) to which the Delegation of the **Russian Federation** wished to reconsider its amendment in light of the last meetings.

The **Chairperson** indicated that the Report to be presented to the General Assembly could bring forward to its attention issues raised during the present meeting, notably regarding the clarification of the Rules of Procedure of the World Heritage Committee and ensuring objective procedures, the operationalization of the priorities set in paragraph 61(c) and avoiding a potential backlog, and the opportunity of establishing mechanisms of conformity to take into account future reforms of existing texts of the Convention.

Closing of the meeting

The **Chairperson** thanked all Delegates for their constructive exchanges. In order for the Working Group to resume and finish the drafting of the rest text, he confirmed that an additional meeting will be held, whose date would be communicated in due course. He indicated that a “clean” text integrating amendments/proposals made during the meeting would be available before the next meeting.

As the Director of the World Heritage Centre announced she would retire before the next meeting, **the Chairperson and all members of the Working Group** warmly extended their thanks for her personal involvement and instrumental contribution to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

The meeting ended at 2.05 pm.