



**Open-ended working Group  
in relation to Resolution 23 GA 11  
concerning Climate Change and World Heritage**

**22 March 2022  
4.00 pm-6.00 pm  
(online meeting)**

**REPORT**

The meeting was attended by 67 States Parties to the Convention, with a total of 97 active participants, as well as 170 webcast connections.

**Opening of the meeting by the Director of the World Heritage Centre**

The **Director of World Heritage (DIR/WH)**, **Mr. Lazare Eloundou Assomo**, welcomed the participants and shared with them some elements of reflection on the issue of the impact of Climate Change on culture and heritage, and on UNESCO's action to this effect.

He recalled that this first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group in relation to Resolution **23 GA 11** represented an important step in the common will of the States Parties and the Secretariat to see the World Heritage Convention equipped with the most up-to-date and effective Policy Document on climate action for World Heritage, thus contributing to ensure the full integration of culture and heritage into the international climate agenda.

He stressed that the collective actions for the protection of natural and cultural heritage impacted by Climate Change should be strengthened, in particular in the most vulnerable countries and regions, such as Small Island Developing States and on the African continent, as Africa remains one of UNESCO's top priorities. In this regard, UNESCO, drawing on its specific mandate, notably in the field of culture, is taking action to respond to this urgent challenge, alongside with its Member States, the Advisory Bodies, all stakeholders of the Convention as well as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

He also pointed out that culture is more than just an asset - it is a fundamental resource for responding to the global crisis caused by Climate Change and the resulting loss of biodiversity. Culture contributes greatly to the well-being of people and helps to shape a liveable future, also basing its climate action on local and indigenous knowledge.

He stressed the importance of the outcomes of this Working Group for the updated Document to provide the expected high-level guidance to strengthen the protection and conservation of heritage of Outstanding Universal Value, including an action-oriented policy framework for the development of targeted objectives.

### **Election of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson(s) and Rapporteur of the Open-Ended Working Group of States Parties**

In its capacity as Chairperson of the Group V(a), Senegal nominated **H.E. Ms. Yvette SYLLA, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Madagascar to UNESCO**, for the post of Chairperson of the Working Group. Mrs SYLLA was elected unanimously.

The **Chairperson** underlined the great honour of being elected as the Chairperson of this important Working Group in charge of elaborating the final version of the Policy Document on climate action for World Heritage and proceeded with the election of the other members of the Bureau.

In their respective capacities as Chairpersons of Electoral Groups (III) and (IV), Paraguay and the Republic of Korea nominated **Colombia** and **Australia** respectively as Vice-Chairpersons of the Working Group; which was unanimously approved.

In the absence of a nomination for the position of Rapporteur, the **Chairperson** suggested to give the States Parties more time for the necessary consultations and to get back to this item at the opening of the next Working Group meeting.

### **Background information, by the Deputy Director of the World Heritage Centre**

**The Deputy Director of the World Heritage Centre (DDIR/WHC), Ms. Jyoti Hosagrahar**, presented background information on the reflection and process that led to the creation of the Working Group, including the successive revisions of the Policy Document and the contributions of Committee members following the extended 44th session in July 2021.

She recalled that the draft updated *Policy Document* was **endorsed** by the World Heritage Committee at its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/online, 2021) (Decision **44 COM 7C**) and that the Committee requested that the World Heritage Centre, in consultation with the Advisory Bodies, revise it by incorporating views expressed and amendments submitted during the 44th session, and to consult World Heritage Committee members, before its presentation for review and adoption by the 23rd session of the General Assembly in November 2021. The Committee further requested the World Heritage Centre to convene a Panel of experts in the field of climate science and heritage, to meet by March 2022, and called on States Parties to contribute financially to this end.

At its 23rd session (UNESCO, 2021), and after having examined the relevant documents, the General Assembly **took note** of the *Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage*, as endorsed by the Committee, and decided (Resolution **23 GA 11**) to establish an Open-ended Working Group of States Parties, assisted by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, to develop the final version of the Policy Document, taking into account Decision **44 COM 7C**, as well as proposals for its effective implementation; and to present its outcomes to the 24th session of the General Assembly in 2023.

The General Assembly also set out the terms of reference for the Panel of experts to review revisions to the Policy Document and unresolved policy issues.

She added that the Panel of experts was also charged to report to the Open-ended Working Group.

A copy of this presentation is available on the following webpage:  
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/1166/>

## **Questions and answers**

After recalling that this was an inception meeting with the sole purpose of electing a Bureau and establishing a timetable for the next meetings of the Open-ended Working Group, the **Chairperson** invited participants to keep substantive questions and discussions for the next meetings of the Open-ended Working Group.

## **Timetable for the Open-ended Working Group of States Parties**

The **Chairperson** proposed to proceed with the adoption of the planning of the future meetings of the Open-ended Working Group, highlighting that the final text would be for consideration by the General Assembly as its 24th session in November 2023.

Taking into account the planning of other statutory meetings of UNESCO's Governing Bodies and other Conventions, the **Chairperson** suggested that the Open-ended Working Group meet according to the following schedule, which would allow holding six meetings, two in 2022 and four in 2023. The schedule for the Open-ended Working Group was adopted as follows:

- September 2022
- November 2022
- January 2023
- March 2023
- June 2023
- Septembre 2023

The **Chairperson** stressed that the exact dates and times of these meetings would be specified by the Secretariat as soon as possible.

The **Chairperson** also recalled that the Panel of experts requested by the World Heritage Committee would meet online from 30 March to 1 April 2022 (see the following web page: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/activites/1167/>), and would report on its work at the next meeting of the Open-ended Working Group in September 2022.

## **Closing the meeting**

The **Chairperson** reiterated her thanks to the V(a) Electoral Group for nominating her for the position of Chairperson of the Group and warmly thanked all the representatives of the States Parties for their confidence and participation in this kick-off meeting, before closing the meeting at 5.10 p.m.