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World Heritage Convention

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## CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

### BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

#### SUMMARY

The present document has been prepared in view of the forthcoming meetings of both the *Open-ended Working Group in relation to Resolution 23 GA 11 concerning climate change and World Heritage* established by the General Assembly of States Parties at its 23rd session (UNESCO, 2021) and of the *Panel of experts in relation to Decision 44 COM 7C concerning Climate Change and World Heritage* established by the World Heritage Committee at its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/online, 2021).

It presents the historical development of the 2007 Policy Document as well as the process followed for its updating since 2017, including the review of the various draft updated texts by both the World Heritage Committee and the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention.

Lastly, it presents the next steps, as decided by the governing bodies of the World Heritage Convention.

## I. BACKGROUND

1. Climate change has become one of the most significant threats to World Heritage properties, potentially impacting their Outstanding Universal Value, including their integrity and authenticity, and their potential for economic and social development at the local level.
2. The issue of the impacts of climate change on World Heritage was brought to the attention of the World Heritage Committee in 2005 by a group of concerned organizations and individuals. Subsequently, UNESCO has been at the forefront of exploring and managing the impacts of climate change on World Heritage. In 2006, under the guidance of the World Heritage Committee, and along with the World Heritage Committee's Advisory Bodies (ICCROM, ICOMOS, IUCN) and a broad working group of experts, UNESCO prepared a report on '[Predicting and Managing the effects of climate change on World Heritage](#)', as well as a '[Strategy to Assist States Parties to the Convention to Implement Appropriate Management Responses](#)'. This was followed by a compilation of [case studies on climate change and World Heritage](#). This process led to the adoption in 2007 by the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention of a [Policy Document on the impacts of climate change on World Heritage properties](#) (hereafter called "Policy Document").
3. Since the adoption of the Policy Document in 2007, an important number of reports on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties affected by climate change have been presented to the World Heritage Committee. At the same time, a number of major global reports and agreements informed the actions at the national commitments to action including the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Paris Agreement) among others.
4. Aware that knowledge related to adaptation and mitigation to climate change has drastically increased over the past 10 years, the World Heritage Committee requested at its 40th session (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016), the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to periodically review and update the Policy Document, to make available the most current knowledge and technology on the subject to guide the decisions and actions of the World Heritage community (Decision [40 COM 7](#), para. 16).
5. In 2017, the World Heritage Committee reiterated the importance of States Parties undertaking the most ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement by "*holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and by pursuing efforts to limit the global average temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, recognizing that this would significantly reduce the risks and impacts of climate change*" (Decision [41 COM 7](#), para. 22).
6. An international expert workshop, funded by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation and organized in cooperation with IUCN, ICOMOS, ICCROM and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, took place in October 2017 in the Baltic Sea island of Vilm, Germany, to discuss the challenges posed by climate change to the conservation and management of World Heritage properties. The meeting brought together international experts on heritage and climate change to discuss the revision of the 2007 "Policy Document" and to make recommendations to guide the updating process (see <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1736/>), which were brought to the attention of the Committee at its 42nd session in 2018 (see Document [WHC/18/42.COM/7](#), para. 51).

## II. INITIATING AN UPDATE OF THE POLICY DOCUMENT

7. A project was initiated by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre to update the Policy Document for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 44th session (initially

in 2020) and ensure its widespread communication and dissemination to all stakeholders concerned. This project received the generous support of the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust.

8. Under the overall supervision of the World Heritage Centre, and in close consultation with the three Advisory Bodies (including through the valuable inputs of the ICOMOS Climate Change and Heritage Working Group), this project has been carried out by a team of two senior internationally recognized experts: Mr. Rohit Jigyasu (India), addressing its cultural aspects, and Mr. Oscar Guevara (Colombia), addressing the natural aspects, both of them bringing also their solid expertise in the fields of heritage conservation and management, disaster risk management, capacity-building and climate science and policy, *inter alia*.

### **III. WIDE ONLINE CONSULTATION**

9. A wide online consultation involving all stakeholders of the World Heritage Convention on the updating of the “Policy Document” was launched at the end of December 2019 until end of January 2020. This questionnaire was widely circulated to World Heritage stakeholders, including States Parties, site managers, local communities, indigenous peoples, academics, NGOs, civil society, Advisory Bodies and the Secretariat (see <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2074/>). The full questionnaire is accessible at <https://whc.unesco.org/document/180635>.
10. The aim of this consultation was to gather feedback and comments from key World Heritage stakeholders of the Convention on this crucial matter. They were invited to share their views, expectations and best practice examples, and were also requested to flag the importance of several aspects for their possible inclusion into the updated Policy Document, such as, among others:
  - Scientific and technical information needed to assess the impacts of climate change on World Heritage properties and associated communities;
  - Potential role of World Heritage properties for climate mitigation and adaptation;
  - Synergies of the Convention with other international conventions / programmes;
  - Legal aspects for States Parties to the Convention in addressing climate change for World Heritage properties;
  - Awareness, capacity building, etc.
11. A total of 366 responses were collected through this successful exercise. This high response rate demonstrates the interest of the international community as a whole for action on climate.
12. The contributions mostly highlighted a number of key challenges faced in properly implementing the 2007 Policy Document, as well as some gaps in this Document, which should be addressed in its updated version. The results of the survey also provided suggestions and key considerations to ensure an improvement in the implementation of the updated Policy Document, including suggestions on the role of the Convention in addressing climate change threats to World Heritage properties, and on the role of the existing processes of the Convention (Nomination, Reactive Monitoring, Periodic Reporting), of Management Plans/Systems or national legislation, to better assess, manage and/or report climate-related activities (see summary of all responses at <https://whc.unesco.org/document/181913>).
13. In addition to the rich outcomes of the online consultation, a first draft updated Policy Document (referred to as ‘Zero draft’) was prepared by the experts also taking into account policies and strategies already adopted at the international level, within the overarching framework of the UN 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, such as

the regular reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Paris Agreement (2015), the [Policy Document for the integration of a sustainable development perspective into the processes of the World Heritage Convention \(2015\)](#), the [New UNESCO Strategy for Action on Climate Change \(2017\)](#), the [UNESCO Declaration of Ethical Principles in relation to Climate Change \(2017\)](#), as well as the outcomes of recent meetings held on this issue, such as the recommendations of the 2017 Vilnius meeting.

14. This 'Zero draft' was shared on April 2020 (Circular Letter CL/WHC-20/08) with all States Parties to the Convention for information.

#### **IV. THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP OF EXPERTS**

15. As indicated to the World Heritage Committee at its 43rd session (Baku, 2019) (Document [WHC/19/43.COM/7](#)), a Technical Advisory Group of experts in the fields of natural and cultural heritage, climate change, with a sound understanding of the processes of the Convention, was established with the main objectives to review the draft updated Policy Document and provide inputs to this World Heritage Centre/Advisory Bodies-driven process. The Chairpersons of all six UNESCO Electoral Groups were consulted and invited to nominate two regional representatives and up to two observers to be part of this Technical Advisory Group. Therefore, experts from Australia, Bahrain, Czechia, Italy, Mexico, Morocco, Republic of Moldova, Senegal, The Netherlands and Zimbabwe took part in the discussions, with observers from Brazil, France, Greece, Hungary and Mexico. In addition to this diverse representation of States Parties, this geographically and gender-balanced group also included representatives of the three Advisory Bodies and the Secretariat (Culture and Natural Sciences Sectors).
16. In implementing this project addressing the current climate crisis, and in line with UNESCO Director-General's full support to implement environmental sustainability at UNESCO in accordance with the "Strategy for Sustainability Management in the UN System 2020-2030", it was decided to lead by example and send a positive signal to the world in holding all the meetings of this Technical Advisory Group online, making them sustainable and carbon neutral.
17. The Technical Advisory Group defined a clear roadmap for the presentation of the updated Policy Document to the Committee and met 4 times online between April and September 2020. Each meeting was well prepared with draft updated Policy Document prepared by the two experts revised on the basis of inputs from the previous sessions as well as written inputs from the experts. The meetings were intensive and detailed with some of the meetings taking place over two or three days, reviewing and discussing in detail the drafts, section by section, to address the potential different viewpoints or approaches and to provide further guidance (both during the meetings and in writing, as needed) until a consensual text could be achieved.
18. During its meetings, the Technical Advisory Group addressed the crucial issues of the purpose and the scope of the updated Policy Document, its structure, as well as the means to ensure its proper implementation by all stakeholders of the Convention, and particularly focused its attention on the following necessities/needs:
  - Ensure that the updated Policy Document is fully anchored in the World Heritage system, and within the remit of the World Heritage Convention,
  - Ensure clear links with the UN Agenda 2030, the SDGs, the Paris Agreement and with all other relevant World Heritage policies,
  - Ground the updated Policy Document in contemporary climate policy and in the best available climate science while at the same time recognizing the importance of Indigenous Peoples and knowledges for the management and conservation of World Heritage properties;

- Integrate the concept of the “theory of change”,
  - Take into account the different meanings of “Loss and Damage” as interpreted within the World Heritage context and the Paris Agreement context,
  - Highlight the importance of education and capacity-building,
  - Have an action-oriented updated Policy Document, which clearly identifies the actors and their roles and responsibilities (Committee-level, national-level, site-level),
  - Find the balance between having a too general approach and one which would be too prescriptive and inappropriately demanding on site-managers,
  - Make sure that the updated Policy Document provides sufficient guidance to encourage and facilitate its implementation at all levels.
19. Recognizing that while World Heritage properties bear the consequences and impacts of climate change, they also offer lessons and a wide diversity of solutions to combat its risks. As a means to reinforce the fact that climate action is now needed more than ever before, it was thus overwhelmingly suggested to take the opportunity of this updating process to change the title of the 2007 Policy Document and move away from “*impacts of climate change on World Heritage properties*” to a more positive title calling for “*climate action for World Heritage*”.
  20. The Technical Advisory Group members were of the view that, once the updated Policy Document is adopted, the relevant implications in procedural terms should be identified, so as to ensure that its principles are translated into actual practice in the implementation of the various processes of the World Heritage Convention. These should result in proposals for specific changes to the [Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention](#), which the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies could propose accordingly.
  21. In addition, the process for the elaboration of the updated Policy Document, and particularly the comments received from the members of the Technical Advisory Group and results of the online consultation, strongly suggested that a number of education and capacity-building initiatives would be needed to enable the application of the updated Policy Document by those concerned.
  22. The Technical Advisory Group was also of the view that, subject to available resources, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies could prepare a Guidance Document to facilitate effective implementation of, and support for, the actions, goals and targets of the updated Policy Document. The Guidance Document could also elaborate indicators and benchmarking tools for measuring and reporting progress towards achieving the World Heritage Climate Action Goals.
  23. In addition, an internationally collaborative approach was advocated, engaging communities and stakeholders to develop and implement additional tools and methodologies that support transformative change and achievement of the World Heritage Climate Action Goals.
  24. Following the last meeting of the Technical Advisory Group, the draft updated Policy Document was revised to take into account the last comments. made and was reviewed by the three Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre.
  25. The 2007 Policy Document having been endorsed by the World Heritage Committee before being adopted by the General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention the same year, the same procedure was followed for its updated version. The updated Policy Document was hence presented to the World Heritage Committee at its extended 44th session in July 2021 (Annex 1 of Document [WHC/21/44.COM/7C](#)) and subsequently presented to the 23rd session of the General Assembly in November 2021.

26. Prior to the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee, an information meeting on the updating of the Policy Document took place online on 18 June 2021, in order to present the draft updated Policy Document to all States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, as well as the process followed for its updating (presentation available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/events/1602/>).

## **V. REVIEW OF THE DRAFT UPDATED POLICY DOCUMENT ON CLIMATE ACTION FOR WORLD HERITAGE BY THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE**

27. The updated Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage was endorsed by the World Heritage Committee at its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/online, 2021) (see Decision [44 COM 7C](#), here included as Annex 1), which requested that the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, in consultation with the Advisory Bodies, revise it by incorporating views expressed and amendments submitted during the extended 44th session, and to consult World Heritage Committee members, especially concerning the following points:
- the fundamental principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), which is one of the basic pillars of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),
  - the alignment of climate change mitigation actions with the CBDR-RC and the Nationally Determined Contributions accepted under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, except on an entirely voluntary basis,
  - the need for support and capacity-building assistance, as well as the encouragement of technology transfer and financing from developed to developing countries.
28. The World Heritage Committee also requested that the updated draft Policy Document be transmitted for review and adoption at the 23rd session of the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, in November 2021.
29. The World Heritage Committee further requested the World Heritage Centre to convene a **Panel of experts** on Climate change and World Heritage, with experts drawn from the *ad-hoc* Working Group, the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and other qualified 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.

## **VI. COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE**

30. Following the Committee Decision, by a Circular Letter, States Parties members of the World Heritage Committee were invited to provide inputs and concrete proposals on the three specific points raised in Decision **44 COM 7C** to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.
31. After a reminder and by the deadline of 15 September 2021, eight States Parties members of the World Heritage Committee provided comments on the above. In addition, they also provided comments of a general nature as well as more specific ones, notably on the purpose and scope of the Policy Document, its implementation, its revision, including on good practice examples, management and monitoring of World Heritage properties, *inter alia*. Concrete inputs in the form of amendments to the draft Policy Document were also submitted. All comments and inputs received were consolidated and reflected in Document [WHC/21/23.GA/INF.11](#). The following presents a summary of the comments received on the various topics:

### **Principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC)**

32. While States Parties generally agreed that the principle of CBDR-RC is a basic pillar of the international environmental regime, some recalled that it was a principle in the UNFCCC, but not part of the [Paris Agreement](#), and were of the view that any reference to CBDR-RC in the Policy Document should be strictly limited to mitigation actions (Nationally Determined Contributions - NDCs) in the context of the Paris Agreement and should not be referenced more broadly in relation to the UNFCCC, nor should it be connected to other matters, such as adaptation or finance.
33. On the other hand, it was indicated that since all States Parties to the World Heritage Convention are equally responsible for the management and conservation of the World Heritage properties located on their territories, and since the provisions set out in the Operational Guidelines apply equally to all parties, no specific reference to CBDR-RC should be included in the Policy Document.
34. Concrete proposals to integrate the principle of CBDR-RC were proposed as part of the Guiding Principles to *adopt a precautionary approach aimed at minimising the risks associated with climate change* and to *promote global partnership, inclusion and solidarity*, in Section I.C of the Policy Document.

### **Alignment of climate change mitigation actions with the CBDR-RC and the Nationally Determined Contributions accepted under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, except on an entirely voluntary basis,**

35. A State Party recalled the importance to stress that the drafting of the updated Policy Document had been done in full recognition of the principles of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, and their centrality as the privileged forum to discuss climate-related international issues.
36. There were however diverging views regarding the recognition of the Paris Agreement as an independent legal agreement. In some contributions, the current references to the Paris Agreement as an independent agreement in the Policy Document were found satisfactory and not to be modified, while others suggested language clarifications regarding the Paris Agreement, such as “adopted under the UNFCCC” or “the UNFCCC Paris Agreement”.
37. Regarding the alignment of climate change mitigation actions with the CBDR-RC and the NDCs, some contributing Committee members were of the view that any reference to CBDR-RC in the Policy Document should be strictly limited to mitigation actions (NDCs) in the context of the Paris Agreement.
38. Concrete proposals in this regard were formulated, notably as part of the World Heritage Climate Action Goal 3 (climate mitigation) in Section II.B of the Policy Document.

### **Need for support and capacity-building assistance, as well as encouragement of technology transfer and financing from developed to developing countries.**

39. This aspect had drawn a number of comments and inputs from contributing Committee members, highlighting the need for such support and capacity-building assistance, encouragement of technology transfer and financing from developed to developing countries and that this aspect could be further strengthened in the Policy Document.
40. However, while some contributors recalled that “under the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement”, this provision is an obligation of developed countries in relation to developing ones, some others did not wish that the CBDR-RC be brought up in this context.
41. Some contributions were also in favour to take into account the developed countries’ leading role in the provision and mobilization of financial resources in support of

developing countries, and to emphasize more specifically Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) as vulnerable regions, under the Finance section of the Enabling conditions for the implementation of the Policy Document (Section III.A).

42. Other concrete proposals were suggested as part of the Guiding Principles *to promote global partnership, inclusion and solidarity* (Section I.C) and under the World Heritage Climate Action Goal 4 (Knowledge sharing, capacity building and awareness) in Section II.B. In addition, a direct quote from Article 11 of the Paris Agreement on capacity building was suggested as an addition to Section II.D.4 dedicated to Knowledge Sharing, Capacity Building and Awareness.

#### **Other comments**

43. Regarding the purpose and scope of the Policy Document, it was recalled that it must maintain its explicit focus on safeguarding Outstanding Universal Value and on the role World Heritage can play, not only in managing the impacts of climate change on World Heritage but also in mitigating climate change. It was also recalled that the Policy Document should not encroach on the mandate of other conventions. In this sense, it was suggested that any text in the Policy Document that could be perceived as setting a benchmark for States Parties' emissions reduction efforts should be removed (for example, the World Heritage Climate Action Goal 2 (on climate mitigation) in Section II.B, is deemed to exceed UNESCO's mandate, by asking States Parties "to develop national robust climate adaptation framework" and should therefore be adjusted to only cover cultural and heritage sites). It was also suggested that the role of protected natural areas in adaptation, mitigation and resilience to the effects of climate change and the promotion of all the ecosystem services they provide be highlighted. A contribution also stressed the fact that the Policy Document should provide a *voluntary* outcome-oriented policy framework, and an amendment is proposed to that effect in Section I.B, under Purpose and Scope.
44. The need for World Heritage properties to be examples of good environmental practices, notably through the use of new environmentally friendly and low-emission technologies, was frequently referred to in the contributions. It was also recommended to add "Good Practices", either as a new Annex V or as a separate section in current Annexes II, III and IV.
45. Regarding greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, a contributor drew attention to the reference made to the various sources of GHG emissions (such as deforestation in Paragraph 3), asking that this part be deleted or that all sources of GHG emissions be added. In addition, it was suggested that the aim for "zero emissions" be replaced by "low GHG emissions".
46. Contributions offered diverging views on the matter of local knowledge and traditional practice: some were of the opinion that "local knowledge and wisdom and traditional practice represent different knowledge system that are key source of information to inform mitigation and adaptation options needed to prepare communities for future climate risks", while some others wished to delete the mention of the traditional knowledge and Indigenous science as climate technology with relevance to contemporary climate action, under Section II.A (Enabling conditions – Technological innovations).
47. Diverging views were also expressed with regard to the question of the inscription of a property on the List of World Heritage in Danger due to climate change-related impacts. On the one hand, a request was placed to ensure that the "significant legal and interpretive questions raised by climate change with respect to the Convention" be resolved and "clearly articulated in the Operational Guidelines", and that "any decisions associated with these issues should be deferred until clarity and certainty can be provided to all States Parties". Additions were proposed in this sense under Section II.C

(Legal framework). On the other hand, it was recalled that the “legal provisions of the Operational Guidelines were clear and should be taken into account with regard to the inclusion of sites on the Danger List for climatic causes”.

48. A number of contributions stressed the issue of the implementation of the Policy Document after its adoption, asking for specific indicators for each World Heritage Climate Action Goal in addressing climate change, and suggesting that this Policy Document become part of the national policies to address and adapt to climate changes to ensure its implementation with regard to heritage and cultural sites. The updating of World Heritage site management plans to present a general approach to climate change was suggested as a way to facilitate the regular monitoring of the implementation of the Policy Document.
49. Lastly, the revision of the Policy Document was also mentioned in the contributions provided, highlighting the need to plan for a periodic review and update of the Policy Document, based on the understanding that World Heritage properties are affected by social, political, economic dynamics, as well as by the impacts of climate change.

## **VII. REVIEW OF THE DRAFT UPDATED POLICY DOCUMENT ON CLIMATE ACTION FOR WORLD HERITAGE BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF STATES PARTIES AT ITS 23RD SESSION (UNESCO, 2021)**

50. After having examined Documents [WHC/21/23.GA/11](#) and [WHC/21/23.GA/INF.11](#) and by Resolution **23 GA 11** (see Annex 2 of the present document), the General Assembly of States Parties took note of the *Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage*, as endorsed by the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee, and decided to establish an **open-ended Working Group** of States Parties, assisted by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, with the mandate to develop the final version of the *Policy Document*, taking into account Decision **44 COM 7C**, as well as proposals for its effective implementation. The General Assembly also requested that this final version of *Policy Document*, which will be developed by the open-ended Working Group, be presented for consideration by its 24th session in 2023.
51. In addition, the General Assembly recommended that the Panel of experts requested by the World Heritage Committee (see above) be convened with the mandate to consider revisions to the *Policy Document* and its unresolved policy matters, and report to the open-ended Working Group established by the General Assembly, to inform its consideration of the *Policy Document* and proposals to implement it.

## **VIII. NEXT STEPS**

### **A. Open-ended Working Group**

52. An online inception meeting of the **Open-ended Working Group** established by the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention at its 23rd session in November 2021 will be organized on **22 March 2022**.
53. This first meeting will also be the occasion to provide background information on this matter to all States Parties and to proceed with the election of a Chairperson, one or more Vice-Chairpersons and a Rapporteur.
54. During this inception meeting, it is anticipated that the Open-ended Working Group will also decide on the frequency and length of its forthcoming meetings, on the lead up to the 24th session of the General Assembly of States Parties in November 2023.

## B. Panel of Experts

55. Concomitantly, and as requested by the World Heritage Committee at its extended 44th session in July 2021, experts for the **Panel of Experts** drawn from the *ad hoc* Working Group, the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and other qualified experts in the field of climate science and heritage, will meet online on **30, 31 March and 1 April 2022**.
56. A process has been put in place by the Secretariat in order to ensure that the Panel of Experts is balanced geographically as well as gender-balanced and the number of participating experts limited to ensure the full participation of each of them in constructive discussions (three (3) experts and two (2) observers for each region of the World, in addition to the representatives of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies.)
57. At its 23rd session, the General Assembly recommended that this Panel “*consider revisions to the Policy Document and its unresolved policy matters*”.
58. In addition, as explained in Section V above, at its extended 44th session in July 2021, the World Heritage Committee had requested that the Policy Document be revised, especially concerning the fundamental principle of CBDR-RC; the alignment of climate change mitigation actions with the CBDR-RC and the Nationally Determined Contributions accepted under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, except on an entirely voluntary basis, as well as the need for support and capacity-building assistance, as well as the encouragement of technology transfer and financing from developed to developing countries. A number of Committee members had made proposals in this regard (see Section VI above). These were presented to the General Assembly in Document [WHC/21/23.GA/INF.11](#)
59. The mandate of the Panel of experts will therefore consist of considering the revisions proposed by members of the World Heritage Committee, as reflected in Document [WHC/21/23.GA/INF.11](#). The Panel will subsequently report the outcomes of its work to the first working meeting of the Open-ended Working Group. The Panel of experts will also need to consider the Policy Document’s “*unresolved policy matters*” and provide clarifications thereon, as necessary.

## Decision 44 COM 7C adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/Online, 2021)

### 7C. Draft updated Policy Document on the impacts of climate change on World Heritage properties

#### **Decision: 44 COM 7C**

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/21/44.COM/7C,
2. Recalling Decisions **40 COM 7**, **41 COM 7**, **42 COM 7** and **43 COM 7.2**, adopted at its 40th (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016), 41st (Krakow, 2017), 42nd (Manama, 2018) and 43rd (Baku, 2019) sessions respectively,
3. Takes note with satisfaction of the wide range of climate change-related activities undertaken by the World Heritage Centre, in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies;
4. Thanks the State Party of the Netherlands for having funded the project to update the 2007 Policy Document on the impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage properties, and expresses its gratitude to all the experts and representatives of States Parties, of the World Heritage Centre and of the Advisory Bodies who contributed to the meetings of the Technical Advisory Group;
5. Takes note with appreciation that a wide diversity of stakeholders of the World Heritage Convention (States Parties, site managers, Advisory Bodies, World Heritage Centre and representatives of local communities, indigenous peoples, academics, NGOs and civil society) were able to contribute to the updating process through the online consultation launched by the World Heritage Centre;
6. Takes note of the new title proposed for the updated Policy Document to become "Policy Document for Climate Action for World Heritage";
7. Endorses the draft "Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage", as presented in Annex 1 of Document WHC/21/44.COM/7C, and requests the World Heritage Centre, in consultation with the Advisory Bodies, to revise it by incorporating views expressed and amendments submitted during the extended 44th session and, as appropriate, to consult Committee members, especially concerning the following points:
  - a) the fundamental principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC), which is one of the basic pillars of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC),
  - b) the alignment of climate change mitigation actions with the CBDR-RC and the Nationally Determined Contributions accepted under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, except on an entirely voluntary basis,
  - c) the need for support and capacity-building assistance, as well as the encouragement of technology transfer and financing from developed to developing countries;
8. Recalls Decision **41 COM 7** and reiterates the importance of States Parties undertaking the most ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement of the UNFCCC, and strongly invites all States Parties to ratify the Paris Agreement at the earliest possible opportunity and to undertake actions to address Climate Change under the Paris Agreement consistent with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances, that are fully consistent with their

obligations within the World Heritage Convention to protect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of all World Heritage properties;

9. Decides to transmit the draft "Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage", following final revisions, for review and adoption at the 23rd session of the General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention in 2021;
10. Also requests the World Heritage Centre, jointly with the Advisory Bodies, once the "Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage" is adopted by the General Assembly of the States Parties and within the available resources, to elaborate proposals for specific changes to the *Operational Guidelines* that would be required to translate the principles of this Policy Document into actual operational procedures, and to develop education and capacity-building initiatives that would be needed to enable wide implementation of this Policy Document, and calls on States Parties to contribute financially to this end;
11. Further requests the World Heritage Centre, in parallel with the processes outlined in Paragraph 10, to convene a panel of experts drawn from the ad-hoc Working Group, World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and other qualified experts in the field of climate science and heritage to meet by March 2022 and also calls on State Parties to contribute financially to this end;
12. Requests furthermore the World Heritage Centre, jointly with the Advisory Bodies, and subject to available resources, to consider preparing a Guidance Document to facilitate effective implementation of, and support for, the actions, goals and targets of this Policy Document, which could include indicators and benchmarking tools for measuring and reporting progress towards achieving the World Heritage Climate Action Goals, and further calls on States Parties to support this activity through extrabudgetary funding;
13. Encourages the States Parties, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to disseminate widely the "Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage", once adopted, through appropriate means to the World Heritage community and the broader public, including in local languages, and to promote its implementation;
14. Recommends that the "Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage" be interpreted in the context of the UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement (2015) and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, and in conjunction with the Policy Document for the integration of a sustainable development perspective into the processes of the World Heritage Convention (2015);
15. Urges States Parties and all stakeholders of the Convention to urgently integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation actions in risk preparedness policies and action plans, in order to protect the OUV of all World Heritage properties, in line with the "Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage";
16. Further recommends that World Heritage-related Category 2 Centres and UNESCO Chairs prioritize issues related to the implementation of the "Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage" within their capacity-building and research initiatives;
17. Finally requests the World Heritage Centre, in consultation with the Advisory Bodies, to present a progress report on the implementation status of the "Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage" at its 48th session, after four years of implementation.

### Resolution 23 GA 11 adopted by the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention at its 23rd session (UNESCO, 2021)

#### 11. Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage

##### **Resolution: 23 GA 11**

The General Assembly,

1. Having examined Documents WHC/21/23.GA/11 and WHC/21/23.GA/INF.11,
2. Recalling Decisions **40 COM 7**, **41 COM 7**, **42 COM 7**, **43 COM 7.2** and **44 COM 7C**, adopted respectively at the 40th (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016), 41st (Krakow, 2017), 42nd (Manama, 2018), 43rd (Baku, 2019) and extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021) sessions of the World Heritage Committee,
3. Thanking the State Party of the Netherlands for having funded the project to update the 2007 Policy Document on the impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage properties, and expressing its gratitude to all stakeholders of the *World Heritage Convention* who contributed to this process,
4. Noting the debate on this item that took place during the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee (Fuzhou/online, 2021), as well as the comments expressed by the Committee members on this draft through a written consultation process,
5. Noting that the World Heritage Committee has endorsed the draft "Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage", as presented in Annex 1 of Document WHC/21/44.COM/7C, at its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/online, 2021), and recommended its review in line with the principles mentioned in paragraph 7 of Decision **44 COM 7C**,
6. Takes note of the "Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage", as endorsed by the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee, and decides to establish an open-ended working group assisted by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, with the mandate to review and develop its final version taking into account Decision **44 COM 7C**, as well as proposals for its effective implementation, for consideration by the 24th session of the General Assembly of States Parties;
7. Recommends that the panel of experts as agreed in Decision **44 COM 7C**, be convened before March 2022, with a mandate to:
  - a) consider revisions to the Policy Document and its unresolved policy matters, and
  - b) report to the open-ended working group established in paragraph 6, to inform its consideration of the Policy Document and proposals to implement it;
8. Encourages States Parties to provide extra-budgetary funding for the open-ended working group.