



**Second meeting of the Open-ended Working Group
in relation to Resolution 23 GA 11
concerning Climate Change and World Heritage**

**16 September 2022
2.30pm – 5.30pm
(in presentia / online meeting)
Room XI
UNESCO Headquarters**

REPORT

The meeting was attended by 76 States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, with a total of 150 participants, either in the room or online, as well as 165 webcast connections.

Opening of the meeting by the Chairperson of the Open-ended Working Group

The **Chairperson of the Open-ended Working Group, H.E. Ms. Yvette Sylla, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Madagascar to UNESCO**, welcomed the delegates in the room as well as those present online for the second meeting of this Working Group. She reminded the Working Group's heavy responsibility to develop the final version of the *Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage* and expressed her confidence that a high-quality final version will be elaborated for examination at the 24th session of the General Assembly in 2023.

She emphasized on the importance of updating the Policy Document at this crucial time of rupture in the human history, by highlighting the disruptions and tensions related to climate change worldwide, reiterating the essential role played by the Open-ended Working Group (hereinafter OEWG) in the preservation of cultural, natural and mixed World Heritage properties.

The **Chairperson** recalled that part of the Bureau of the OEWG was elected, and the work was initiated during the first meeting, held on 22 March 2022. She reminded the Working Group that **Australia** and **Colombia** were elected as Vice-Chairpersons and that, in the absence of candidature for the position of Rapporteur, she also recalled that she had suggested to give the States Parties more time for the necessary consultations. Finally, she reminded all participants that this inception meeting was also the occasion to get contextual and background information by the Secretariat and to adopt a calendar of future meetings.

The **Secretariat** provided some brief technical information and also thanked the States Parties of Australia, Azerbaijan and the Netherlands for their financial support to the organization of the meetings of the Panel and of the OEWG.

Election of the Rapporteur of the Open-ended Working Group

The **Chairperson** informed the States Parties that the Delegation of France had a proposal regarding the designation of the Rapporteur of the OEWG.

The **Delegation of France** suggested Germany for the position of Rapporteur. Consequently, **Ms. Barbara Engels (Germany)** was unanimously elected to the position of Rapporteur. The Chairperson offered her congratulations on behalf of the States Parties.

Presentation of the Panel of experts' report by the Rapporteur of the Panel

The **Chairperson** reminded participants of the Panel of experts' mandate to revise the Policy Document and to report the results of its work to the Open-ended Working Group. Thus, she gave the floor to the Rapporteur of the Panel of experts, Ms. Abena White (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), to present the general conclusions of the Panel¹.

The **Rapporteur** first introduced some background information on the updating process of the Policy Document. She explained the working methodology followed by the experts during their meeting, which took place online on 30 March-1 April 2022, and notably that the experts focused their work on amendments to the draft Policy Document as per the Decision **44 COM 7C** and Resolution **23 GA 11**. Accordingly, the experts focused on 30 amended paragraphs which were considered potentially to have significant implications for the Policy Document. She also presented the way the Panel addressed the "unresolved policy matters". She highlighted that these issues were the subject of important deliberations and were discussed in an open debate, which aimed at sharing views and calling for a dialogue rather than providing set responses.

In addition, the Rapporteur of the Panel of experts presented the recommendations of the Panel whilst acknowledging its appreciation of the amendments that had been proposed by Committee members, and briefly described their main conclusions and results². Throughout her presentation, she emphasized the constructive way in which the various discussions took place and praised the high level of participation of the experts, always providing relevant inputs to the discussion, which greatly contributed to the success of this meeting in reaching consensus on their recommendations to the text of the Policy Document. She expressed her gratitude to the Chairperson of the OEWG for having attended the entire meeting of the Panel as an observer, and to Ms. Jyoti Hosagrahar Deputy-Director of the World Heritage Centre as moderator of the Panel of experts.

The **Chairperson** thanked the Rapporteur for her comprehensive presentation, congratulated all the experts who participated in the Panel for their high-level contributions and stressed the spirit of dialogue and the very keen sense of responsibility that prevailed through this 3-day meeting.

Questions & Answers and open dialogue

The **Chairperson** gave the floor to the OEWG members to express their views on the work of the Panel of experts. In doing so, she specified that the substantive and editorial aspects will be the topic of the next meetings of the OEWG and that the present interventions should be limited to the work of the Panel that had just been presented.

All **Delegations** who took the floor commended the work of the Panel of experts, which provided excellent proposals and recommendations.

¹ The full presentation of the Rapporteur of the Panel of experts as well as the supporting PowerPoints can be found at the following web address: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/1166/&p=whcc>

² For more details on the Panel of expert's remarks, observations and recommendations, please refer to the Panel of experts' report available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/1167/&p=whcc>

The **Delegation of Brazil** stated that the current draft of the Policy Document presents important advances to the work. The Delegation added that there should be a search for a balance between mitigation, adaptation, and implementation actions, emphasizing that the experts recognised in Paragraph 62 of its report that “*more work will be required about implementation rather than working on the Policy Document itself*”. The Delegation stressed other vulnerabilities of the Policy Document, such as the objectivity of the mitigation and adaptation commitments without tangible provisions for financial and technical support. The Delegation shared the hope that future discussions will improve the text to make it more equitable, coherent, and feasible, and stressed the importance of recognising the achievements of the Paris Agreement, particularly in terms of ‘Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and respective capabilities’ (‘CBDR-RC’). In this regard, the Delegation recalled the importance of equity – which should be a compass for the work - and the need to adjust for imbalances, adding that Brazil believes that this should be applied to States who have had a greater environmental impact.

The **Delegation of Norway** underlined that the Policy Document is a very good framework to guide States Parties and that it is crucial to adopt it at the next General Assembly in 2023, as only a few technical issues remain. It suggested that the members of the OEWG could share the draft text with their national experts familiar with the language of the climate international agreements to make sure that there is no conflict in the language used.

The **Delegation of South Africa** commended the efforts deployed in the revision of the Policy Document, adding that this area of work is not static and constantly evolving with time, as shown in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) reports. The Delegation described the many vulnerabilities from climate change faced by South Africa, enumerated the strategies in place, such as the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Sector Climate Change Strategy. It added that the Policy Document foresees that climate change will negatively impact the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of existing World Heritage properties, and the sites with potential OUV proposed for inscription. The Delegation concluded by expressing the need to ensure that there is an adequate, balanced and equal response for all World Heritage sites that will be facing this challenge and offered its support and participation in the Working Group.

The **Delegation of Australia** intervening as a State Party to the World Heritage Convention, and not as Vice-Chairperson of this OEWG, reminded that Australia called for the establishment of this OEWG and that, now that the Policy Document is almost agreed on, the focus should be on proposals for its implementation. It also highlighted the urgency of the situation and the need to develop contemporary processes under the Convention to respond to contemporary challenges. The Delegation then voiced the necessity to urgently take action before the end of the decade and concluded by suggesting that UNESCO’s influence in the global discussion on emission reduction would be maximised if the Committee could provide the world with evidence showing the devastating impacts of climate change on World Heritage properties, and the cost to humanity if the OUV was lost because of climate change.

The floor was given to the **Rapporteur of the Panel of experts** to reflect on the interventions. She noted the concerns of the speakers, particularly in terms of implementation, which she reminded, had also been a concern for the Panel of experts. Regarding the issues mentioned on adaptation and mitigation actions at World Heritage sites, she informed the Working Group that the experts were of the view that many of the impacts are beyond the sole control of the States Parties concerned themselves, and that there needs to be a more proactive approach in designing the global response to protect properties inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

The **Delegation of Uganda** took note of the unresolved policy issues, which in its view are not surprising given the wide-ranging situations surrounding the different World Heritage sites. It stated that it is now important to fully internalise the Policy Document and relate it closely to

the Convention and its Operational Guidelines. The Delegation questioned the Chairperson on the reason for selecting a limited number of amendments for discussion. In addition, the Delegation noted that in some of the conclusions drawn, for example on the List of World Heritage in Danger, the experts agreed that in most cases, climate change would not result in the complete loss of OUV. The Delegation gave the examples of floods in Uganda, in which case the effects were very dramatic and sudden, whereas a lot of 'general' impacts of climate change are very slow and progressive. The Delegation therefore pointed out that the conclusions needed to be thought out more carefully to include disasters.

The **Delegation of Zambia** noted that the subject of climate change is very complex and stressed the need to involve the indigenous peoples and local communities in the action against climate change. *[The Delegation was unable to continue its intervention due to the technical issues]*

The **Delegation of the United States of America** raised a few concerns with regards to the draft Policy Document. It first stressed the importance of including all the goals of Article 2. Then, it highlighted that the Paris Agreement is separate from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and requested that changes be made within the Policy Document to address this. The Delegation also requested the Chairperson of the Working Group to give some clarity on the methodology of work to be adopted by the OEWG for the coming sessions.

In response to the question raised by Uganda, the **Secretariat** clarified the methodology used for the selection of the paragraphs for amendments, reiterating what was previously stated by the Rapporteur of the Panel of experts.

Working methodology and expected results of the Open-ended Working Group

The **Chairperson** stated that the Delegation of the United States of America's statement served as a good introduction to start discussing on the work.

Clarifying the methodology as well as the expected outcomes of the OEWG, the **Chairperson** informed that the next meetings will focus on reviewing the text of the revised Policy Document, working on the consolidated version from the Panel of experts, proceeding chapter by chapter and section by section until there is a finalized version to recommend for adoption by the next General Assembly in 2023, supported by proposals concerning implementation, reminding that some interventions focused on the importance of implementation. For ease of reference, she stressed that the OEWG will be looking at the cleaned-up version of the updated Policy Document, available as Annex 1 of the report of the Panel of experts. The Chairperson added that she is expecting an open debate and constructive discussions on the policy matters that were examined by the Panel of experts. She proposed the following dates for future meetings indicating that this information will also be available on the webpage devoted to the work of the OEWG:

- **Wednesday 23 November 2022** (full day) to revise Section I and Section II
- **Tuesday 24 January 2023** (full day) to review Section III, the annexes and initiate a discussion on the policy issues
- **Tuesday 21 March 2023** (full day) to continue the discussion on policy issues
- **Tuesday 13 June 2023** (full day) to discuss the future implementation of the Policy Document and the need for capacity building and a supporting strategy
- **Friday 15 September 2023** (to be confirmed)

The **Delegation of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** requested clarification on whether what was suggested was for States Parties to send more amendments to be discussed in the OEWG. It also asked whether the OEWG was a negotiating group, adding that some States Parties had made interventions to express their satisfaction with the revised Policy Document and that the OEWG should move to recommend the text for adoption and now focus on its

implementation. The Delegation therefore proposed that the methodology be clarified, as the OEWG cannot ignore the work of the Panel of experts.

The **Chairperson** indicated that the revised Policy Document, as submitted by the Panel of experts, will be the version on which the OEWG will base its work and that the OEWG will have open debates. She reminded that the Working Group needs to finalise a text which reflects open discussions, but that some negotiations will certainly be necessary. She informed that a text is available which includes a red icon (🔴) marking all the paragraphs for which the Panel made specific recommendations. The Chairperson recalled that most of the proposed text of the Policy Document had not been subject to objections or amendments during its examination by the World Heritage Committee, and that all these paragraphs had *de facto* been considered entirely relevant by the Panel of experts in March 2022. She thus encouraged the States Parties to focus their attention on the 30 paragraphs for which the Panel has made recommendations (i.e., paragraphs marked with a red icon). She insisted on the fact that members of the OEWG should focus on these 30 paragraphs marked with the red icon, rather than sending amendments on the other paragraphs.

The **Secretariat** clarified that the text presented in Annex 1 of the report of the Panel of experts is indeed the clean text which will also be available on the web page dedicated to the OEWG. The Secretariat indicated that ahead of the next meeting on 23 November 2022, should any members have amendments, they can submit them in advance in track changes mode at least 48 hours prior to the meeting (therefore, 20 November 2022, midnight, Paris time). The amendments received will be uploaded on the dedicated webpage of the Working Group. The Secretariat added that it may not be possible to integrate amendments received past this deadline in the version that will be shown on the screen. Those will therefore need to be made directly from the floor by the submitting State Party.

The **Delegation of Australia** clarified that -while participation from States Parties is greatly appreciated- this Policy Document has previously been extensively discussed. The Delegation voiced its preference to focus on the paragraphs, which were subject to discussion and recommendations by the Panel of experts.

The **Delegation of the Bolivian Republic of Venezuela** underlined that it would follow the recommendations of the Chairperson, adding that it is hopeful that the discussions will be constructive to reach a good consensus on the Policy Document. However, the Delegation mentioned the principle that has always prevailed at UNESCO that “*nothing is adopted until everything is adopted*”, meaning that even though there has been a “pre-agreement”, there are still other views. The Delegation indicated that it does not want States Parties to be restrained in their participation, therefore all observations should be considered, even on paragraphs that have been pre-agreed to.

The **Delegation of Switzerland** reminded the OEWG of the Resolution of the General Assembly, which asked the Working Group to concentrate first and foremost on the unresolved policy matters, which has been done by the Panel of experts. The mandate of the OEWG is therefore to focus on the paragraphs that are still open for discussion. The Delegation added, following the intervention of the Delegations of Norway and of the United States of America, that it also considers important to coordinate the text of the Policy Document with other texts and other important international agreements on climate change. The Delegation invited the OEWG to reflect on this.

The **Chairperson** agreed with the suggestion from the Delegation of Switzerland.

Closure the meeting

The **Chairperson** warmly thanked the OEWG members for attending this second meeting and for their active contributions to the debate and closed the meeting. She reminded the OEWG

that the next meeting will be held in November in order to start the redaction work on the Policy Document in line with its mandate.

The **Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Mr Lazare Eloundou-Assomo**, thanked the States Parties for their comments and congratulated the Panel of experts for its excellent work. He noted that a lot of progress has been made, but that some points remain to be addressed. He reiterated that the Secretariat would continue to facilitate this work, and thanked again the States Parties of Australia, Azerbaijan and the Netherlands for their generous support to the organization of the OEWG. He added that the Working Group needs to be cautious in the way it moves on, as resources are however limited.

The **Chairperson** thanked the Director and informed him that she will ensure that the good on-going working relationship with the Secretariat be maintained.

The meeting was closed at 4.20pm.