

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

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION  
OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**Extended forty-fifth session  
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**Item 5D of the Provisional Agenda:  
World Heritage Convention and Sustainable Development**

**SUMMARY**

In conformity with Decision **44 COM 5D** (Fuzhou/online, 2021), this document presents the progress made in implementing the World Heritage Sustainable Development Policy (WH-SDP) since the extended 44th session of the Committee.

**Draft Decision: 45 COM 5D, see point XI**

## I. BACKGROUND

1. By Decision **40 COM 5C** (Istanbul, 2016), the World Heritage Committee welcomed the adoption of the “Policy Document for the integration of a sustainable development perspective into the processes of the World Heritage Convention” by the 20th General Assembly of States Parties (Resolution **20 GA 13**; UNESCO 2015). The text of the said Policy, (hereinafter referred to as the World Heritage Sustainable Development Policy or “WH-SDP”) can be found at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabledevelopment/>. Subsequently, by Decisions **41 COM 5C**, **43 COM 5C** and **44 COM 5D**, the World Heritage Committee welcomed the follow-up activities and the progress made in disseminating and mainstreaming the WH-SDP into the activities of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies and into the texts and processes of the Convention. The Committee requested the World Heritage Centre to continue to pursue, within the available resources, the development of activities including policies, tools, guidance, and communication towards operationalising the WH-SDP supporting States Parties in its implementation. This document considers the progress made by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies since the 44th session of the Committee (Fuzhou/online 2021) to disseminate and mainstream the sustainable development perspective into activities and processes of the Convention, in accordance with the WH-SDP.

## II. WORLD HERITAGE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT POLICY (2015)

2. Sustainable development has been mainstreamed into the processes of the World Heritage Convention by integrating related concepts actions, and monitoring as appropriate. In the framework of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting exercise (2018-2024), UNESCO has ensured the integration of indicators to measure the achievements of the sustainable development implementation of States Parties, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the WH-SDP. Since the start of the exercise in 2018, States Parties from 4 regions, namely Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean (representing 73% of the total States Parties to the Convention), have carried out the exercise. Reporting indicates that States Parties recognise that inscription on the World Heritage List contributes meaningfully to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, notably in protecting biological and cultural diversity and ecosystem services and benefits (93.40%), respecting, protecting and promoting human rights (91.40%), and strengthening resilience to natural hazards and climate change (88.10%).
3. Following the Third Cycle of the Periodic Reporting exercise, Regional Action Plans have been developed for the Arab States, Africa, and Asia and the Pacific regions to include strategic objectives related to sustainable development. Since the last reporting in 2021, sustainable development has been mainstreamed in the conservation and management of World Heritage properties in at least 49 States Parties from the region concerned, including 18 in Africa and 4 Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
4. The [MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration](#), unanimously adopted at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development - MONDIACULT 2022, held in Mexico City, from 28 to 30 September 2022, sets out States’ common priorities in the field of cultural policies and outlines an agenda to mobilize and integrate the transformative potential of culture in sustainable development, calling for culture to be fully recognised as a global public good and as standalone goal in the international

development agenda post-2030. The Declaration emphasizes the importance of the protection of cultural heritage to confront the challenges of climate change and armed conflicts, supporting the efforts of the Centre outlined in the WH-SDP, as well as of enhancing synergies with the safeguarding of intangible heritage and other culture conventions.

5. To mark the 50th Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, the World Heritage Centre carried out a survey of States Parties and key stakeholders in 2021 (see WHC/23/45.COM/13). Responses highlighted that a majority of the stakeholders consider that integration of heritage conservation with sustainable development goals and objectives is vital, including with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda (SDGs) for Sustainable Development, the African Union Agenda 2063, the Sendai Framework, and the SIDS SAMOA Pathway, among others. Integrating heritage into strategies for Climate Action and for those to 'Build Back Better' from the COVID-19 recovery were also identified as critical for heritage conservation.
6. As requested in Decision **43 COM 5C and 44 COM 5D**, and also called for in Decisions **43 COM 5D and 44 COM 5C**, tools have been developed to support the operationalization of the WH-SDP and emphasised the need for a platform of good practices in integrating heritage conservation with sustainable development, the World Heritage Centre's online platform "[World Heritage Canopy – Heritage Solutions for Sustainable Futures](#)", for heritage conservation-based solutions for sustainable development, has been developed and expanded to include over 65 case studies providing examples of local implementation of heritage-based solutions. With the support of the Netherlands, a new thematic area on climate change was added and launched during the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 27). *Canopy* has the potential to be expanded to include natural heritage and complements the existing solutions platform PANORAMA, which is coordinated by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and partners, and includes thematic communities and over 80 solutions that integrates World Heritage linked solutions of many place-based approaches across a range of themes. As requested in Decisions **44 COM 5D and 44 COM 5C**, the Secretariat in consultation with the Advisory Bodies has also continued work on the refinement and implementation of the tools, the *World Heritage Sustainable Development Preliminary Health-Check*, and the *World Heritage Project Sustainability Check* to support States Parties in the implementation of the WH-SDP.
7. The World Heritage Centre contributed to the UN General Assembly Dialogue with the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, regarding World Heritage and cultural rights in October 2022. Finally, the World Heritage Centre also provided substantive inputs to UN-Habitat for the Synthesis Report on Goal 11 to the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) and to the President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on behalf of the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee for the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) from the perspective of the World Heritage Convention. The Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO also participated in the launch of the Synthesis Report on Goal 11 at an HLPF side event in July 2023.

### III. ENHANCING ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE (SDG 14, 15)

8. The World Heritage Centre has contributed to the development of the post-2020 biodiversity framework through the work of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions, comprised of the heads of the secretariats of eight key biodiversity-related conventions. Following a four-year consultation and negotiation process, which was significantly delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (GBF) was adopted during the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) organised in December 2022 in Montreal, Canada (see Document WHC/23/45.COM/7 for further information).
9. UNESCO, together with the Advisory Bodies, has closely worked with the corporate sector for more than two decades to enhance their engagement in the protection of World Heritage with a view to minimising the environmental, social, and governance risks of their operations. More than 50 major public and private companies, industry associations, and other corporate sector stakeholders have demonstrated their commitment to protect World Heritage properties by adopting strategies or policies that respect UNESCO World Heritage sites as no-go areas for harmful industrial activities and large-scale development projects, known as the World Heritage ‘no-go’ commitment. This work culminated in 2022 with the launch of “UNESCO guidance for the world heritage ‘No-Go’ commitment: global standards for corporate sustainability” and a database for corporate sector commitments to protect World Heritage (see Document WHC/23/45.COM/7 for further information).
10. With generous support from Norway, UNESCO has embarked on a range of ambitious conservation activities in Africa benefitting to date 20 natural, 7 cultural and 3 mixed World Heritage sites in Africa, 14 of which are included on the List of World Heritage in Danger. The presence of eleven natural World Heritage sites in Central Africa testifies to the exceptional importance of the tropical forests of the Congo Basin, which are among the most biodiverse and carbon-rich ecosystems on the planet. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNESCO works with all five of the country’s natural World Heritage properties. Okapi Wildlife Reserve protects one-fifth of the unique Ituri forest, providing a refuge to endemic and threatened species, including Okapi, an endangered forest giraffe. The park is also inhabited by traditional nomadic pygmy Mbuti and Efe hunters. UNESCO supports participatory boundary mapping aimed at a conflict resolution over contested resource use and land occupation. In Garamba National Park, a major target for militant ivory and bushmeat poachers in the region, more than 6000 people benefit from mobile clinics, environmental education is offered in local schools and the operational capacities of local authorities and park management teams is strengthened through UNESCO’s support. Manovo-Gounda St. Floris National Park, located in the neighbouring Central African Republic protects a wealth of flora and fauna inhabiting its forests and vast savannas which encompass the entire watershed of three major rivers. Due to insecurity, on-the-ground management of the park was difficult until 2018. Recent monitoring data reveals a recovery of its megafauna, including elephants.
11. The protection of the world’s forests is crucial for achieving the SDGs and is considered as one of the most cost-effective forms of climate action by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The continued loss of forest cover globally is a major concern in this regard. In 2021, UNESCO and IUCN published a study entitled “World Heritage forests: carbon sinks under pressure”,

demonstrating that between 2001 and 2020 World Heritage sites lost 3.5 million hectares of forest (more than the area of Belgium), thereby impeding their capacity to store carbon (see: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379527.locale=en>)

12. In line with the World Heritage Convention's recognition of the linkages between nature and culture, the World Heritage Centre also serves as the Secretariat of the *UNESCO-Greece Melina Mercouri International Prize for the Safeguarding and Management of Cultural Landscapes* to reward outstanding examples of action to safeguard and enhance the world's major cultural landscapes. A call for proposals for the 2023 award has been launched (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscapesprize/>).

#### IV. DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

13. Natural disasters have impacted World Heritage properties during the reporting period – flooding in Yemen, Sudan and Pakistan, earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, to name a few. Each time, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies have reacted quickly to provide support as needed. The World Heritage Centre also provides technical and financial support for properties to minimize the risks of disasters as well as their impact, particularly for sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger. For example, with the support of Japan, UNESCO is providing urgent assistance in the World Heritage sites in danger of the Old City of Sana'a and the Old Walled City of Shibam to face the adverse impact of climate change hazards like flooding, through the establishment and reinforcement of early warning systems and capacity-building.
14. Environmental hazards are particularly acute for SIDS. In response to the Secretary General's call to address the challenges of the Triple Planetary Crisis of climate Change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution and waste, Samoa has launched a response plan (Vai o le Ola initiative) to ultimately achieve climate stability, live in harmony with nature, and move towards a pollution free planet including several actions for sites to be prepared for eventual nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List. The proposed actions within this response plan will be implemented also by UNESCO, UNESCAP, and UNEP, with the Government of Samoa with available funds from the Joint SDG Fund.
15. The Centre has supported numerous initiatives that aim at strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in World Heritage Sites. For example, in Cambodia, a resilience plan for Angkor World Heritage Site has been produced in partnership with the World Bank, through consultations between Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) experts and site managers. In Pakistan, UNESCO is developing a strategy to increase resilience and preparedness for climate change related disasters for the World Heritage sites Archaeological Ruins at Moenjodaro and Historical Monuments at Makli, Thatta which were heavily damaged by the exceptional rainfall of August 2022 (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2484>). In Sudan, UNESCO has provided support to the property 'Gebel Barkal and the Sites of the Napatan Region' which was impacted by flooding and high groundwater levels through an Emergency Assistance project (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/intassistance/3294>).
16. Activities for integration of the disaster risk preparedness and response mechanisms to the Management Plans of selected World Heritage properties of the Caribbean are conducted. Pilot Initiatives to adapt the Guidelines for the Development of a National

Strategy and Plan of Action for Disaster Resilience and Recovery in the Caribbean's Culture Sector to the national context are ongoing in selected pilot countries.

17. Following the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Regional Cultural Committee decisions of 2020 and 2021, UNESCO engaged a team of regional experts to work with relevant Ministries and institutions to undertake a situation analysis of CARICOM Member States and Associate Members for further elaboration of the Caribbean Plan of Action for Disaster Resilience and Recovery of the Culture Sector. The Caribbean Plan of Action for Disaster Resilience and Recovery of the Culture Sector is completed and to be discussed during a next Meeting of the Regional Cultural Committee of CARICOM in 2023 (see: <https://core.unesco.org/en/project/2210516031>).

## **V. FURTHERING CLIMATE ACTION WITH WORLD HERITAGE (SDG 13)**

18. Climate change is one of the greatest threats facing cultural and natural World Heritage properties globally and we see its growing impact including extreme weather related events and related disasters. The state of conservation of more than a third of all properties and 70% of marine properties have negative impacts related to climate change (see WHC/23/45.COM/7A and WHC/23/45.COM/7B).
19. The updated 2007 Policy Document on the impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage properties, will be presented for adoption by the General Assembly of States Parties at its 24th session in November 2023 see Document WHC/23/45.COM/7 for further details.
20. Joining forces with the IPCC and ICOMOS, UNESCO co-organized the first ever international co-sponsored meeting on culture, heritage and Climate Change in December 2021, to further integrate culture into the international climate agenda, including in future IPCC assessment reports. The *Global Research and Action Agenda: Scientific Outcome of the International Co-Sponsored meeting on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change* was published in December 2022 and a number of strategic recommendations to advance the integration of culture and heritage into the international climate agenda, including IPCC 7th Assessment Report (AR7) and Special Report on Climate Change and Cities (<https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/2716/>).
21. In the framework of COP 27 in December 2022, UNESCO launched the results of a new study on World Heritage glaciers carried out by the World Heritage Centre and IUCN, which encompass 10% of the world's glaciers. (<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-finds-some-iconic-world-heritage-glaciers-will-disappear-2050>) The study finds that some 60% of these glaciers could disappear by 2100 under current emissions scenarios. (see the full study: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383551>).
22. Thanks to the support of the Government of the Netherlands, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies launched the '[Guidance for Wind Energy Projects in a World Heritage Context](#)' as an online tool for States Parties in the Europe and North America region in March 2023. The Guidance aims to assist all relevant stakeholders in the planning of wind energy projects while providing insights to explore options for proactive conservation for World Heritage site managers and heritage protection authorities. The World Heritage Centre had previously published, with the support of the Ministry of Ecological Transition of France, a [collection of case studies](#) showcasing

wind energy development planning in relation to the protection of the visual integrity of World Heritage properties in Europe and North America.

23. The Flexible Mechanism comprised of representatives from Greece, UNESCO, UNFCCC and the WMO aims at promoting and accelerating the implementation of actions and cooperation schemes, to bridge scientific knowledge and climate mitigation and adaptation tools with informed decision making by interested States and to enhance the relevant research. Presentations have been organized at COP 25, COP 26, and COP 27.

## **VI. ENABLING POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES (SDG 1, 8, 12)**

24. World Heritage properties offer great potential to alleviate poverty and enhance sustainable livelihoods of local communities, as acknowledged in the WH-SDP, as well as in the UN GA Resolution (A/RES/68/223) on Culture and Sustainable Development (2013). Engaging local communities in the conservation and management of World Heritage properties, and heritage sites in general, is one of the five Strategic Objectives of the World Heritage Committee, along with Conservation, Credibility, Capacity and Credibility (5 Cs). Based on the 4 regions that have reported during the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting exercise, the World Heritage properties of Asia and the Pacific Region have the highest number of properties (90.5%) where the management system/plan for the World Heritage property includes a strategy with an action plan, to manage visitors, tourism activity and its derived economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts. Since the Second Cycle of Periodic Reporting, all the regions have shown an increase in the number of properties with a management plan comprising a formalised framework for community participation.
25. The World Heritage Centre's efforts to promote local communities and their livelihoods as well as their management of properties has been particularly focused on Africa, thanks also to the generous support of Norway. For example, UNESCO supports activities to re-establish an efficient management system and to support local communities, including shea and honey processing, and revitalization of village hunting areas of Manovo-Gounda St. Floris National Park, located in the Central African Republic. Another example is Lake Malawi National Park World Heritage property where activities in support of SDGs 1 (end poverty), heritage target 11.4, target 14.4 (sustainable fishing) and 15.1 (healthy terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services) and in partnership with the State Party of Malawi and the civil society, UNESCO works to strengthen sustainable co-management of fish resources as key livelihood and heritage asset. Local fishing communities in which women have an important role now establish brush parks as sanctuaries for young fish, lead self-financing mechanisms, confiscate illegal fishing gear, conduct beach cleaning and plant trees.
26. The Advisory Bodies through the World Heritage Leadership Programme together with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies is incorporating the concept of services and benefits of heritage to be recognized as a basic element of the management system for World Heritage properties within the upcoming *Managing World Heritage Resource Manual*. Thanks to the support from the Government of the Republic of Korea provided to ICCROM, a People-Nature-Culture Forum was convened in October 2022 in Suwon, Republic of Korea to discuss the aspects of "Benefits of Heritage", to further develop the content needed for the resource manual.

27. The transboundary Maloti-Drakensberg Park (Lesotho and South Africa) and Okavango Delta in Botswana are among the World Heritage properties to benefit from the community management of protected areas for conservation (COMPACT) programme led by UNESCO and the UNDP/GEF Small Grants programme that demonstrates how community-based initiatives can significantly increase the effectiveness of biodiversity conservation in globally important protected areas, while helping to improve the livelihoods and wellbeing of local people.
28. In partnership with the European Union, UNESCO has implemented the projects “Cash for Work: Promoting livelihood opportunities for urban youth in Yemen” (2018-2021) (see: <https://en.unesco.org/doha/cashforworkyemen>) and “Youth Employment through Culture and Heritage in Yemen – YECHY” (2022-2026) (see: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-and-european-union-support-youth-employment-through-culture-yemen>) across Yemen including World Heritage properties of the Old City of Sana’a, the Old Walled City of Shibam and the Historic Town of Zabid. The projects aim to promote the creation of sustainable employment opportunities for young women and men in the field of culture through a cash-for-work modality in urban rehabilitation and cultural programming, supporting local stakeholders to promote and safeguard cultural properties in Yemen.
29. ICOMOS launched the *‘Heritage and Sustainable Development Goals: Policy Guidance for Heritage and Development Actors’* flagship initiative in March 2021 aimed to provide a robust and versatile resource to all kinds of stakeholders, within and outside of the heritage community, on the role of cultural heritage in sustainable development.
30. Thanks to the Government of Japan, a global project is ongoing to explore strategies to support local livelihoods including digital solutions and entrepreneurship training with a view to supporting the recovery of World Heritage properties in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Piloted in four properties across different regions, the project could provide valuable lessons for other World Heritage properties.
31. UNESCO Sustainable Travel Pledge, in partnership with Expedia Group, has continued its global expansion since 2021, developing an industry-first approach to develop more environmentally and socially conscious global travel market. The Pledge has welcomed the support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), for the project *Promoting sustainable tourism and private sector engagement for inclusive community development in response to the COVID-19 crisis*, which has been implemented in seven countries and ten World Heritage communities: Cambodia (Angkor Wat), Indonesia (Yogyakarta), Vietnam (Trang An and Hoi An), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Mostar), Georgia (Historical Monuments of Mtskheta), Kenya (Fort Jesus and Lamu Town) and Namibia (Namib Sand Sea and Twyfelfontein). (see: <https://unescosustainable.travel/en/german-federal-ministry-supports-the-pledge> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2262>)
32. Numerous activities have been promoted by the World Heritage Centre and UNESCO Field Offices, in line with UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme and WH-SDP recommendation to support locally driven sustainable tourism initiatives in and around World Heritage properties, as a way to complement economic diversification and strengthen social and economic resilience of local communities. As an example of these efforts, UNESCO has established a partnership with the government of Mexico City and Airbnb to promote sustainable tourism in World Heritage Sites of Xochimilco and Tlahuac (Mexico), (see:



<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-announces-partnership-airbnb-promote-cultural-tourism-empower-communities-and-protect-mexicos>).

33. UNESCO has established a partnership with the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) with the aim to create links between heritage preservation and sustainable tourism in line with the priority actions identified in the Regional Work Plan for World Heritage for the Pacific 2021-2025. (see <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000372745>).

## VII. SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND SETTLEMENTS (SDG 11)

34. Of the 1,157 World Heritage properties today, nearly one third are World Heritage Cities and more than 70% of cultural properties are located in urban areas, making them vulnerable to the pressures of uncontrolled urbanization and poorly conceived development projects. Following the Decisions of the Executive Board (for example, Decision **214 EX/13.V**) the framework, methodology and activities related to the 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011 Recommendation) have been aligned with the World Heritage Sustainable Development Policy (2015), the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the New Urban Agenda as well as climate action.
35. The Third Member States Consultation on the implementation of the 2011 Recommendation carried out in 2022-2023 resulted in 187 reports from 69 Member States including national and city level reports. Of the 125 cities that responded, 51% had World Heritage properties inscribed, and 29% of the responding cities had sites inscribed on their national Tentative List. The reports received overwhelmingly confirmed the importance of the 2011 Recommendation as a tool for managing urban heritage integrating heritage conservation with urban development plans and processes in the framework of sustainable development and climate resilience (see also Document WHC/23/45.COM/5A).
36. The Member State reports covered six thematic areas of implementation at the national and local levels that captured the key principles of the 2011 Recommendation in the framework of the 2030 Agenda including SDG11. These included the mapping and inventorying of heritage values and attributes, governance mechanisms, laws, regulations, and planning tools to protect these different attributes, inclusive and participatory decision-making, equitable economic development, the impacts of climate change, and the use of digital technologies for managing urban heritage including capacity building. The World Heritage Centre in consultation with experts including the Advisory Bodies has developed a digital tool, the *Urban Heritage Atlas* that supports cultural mapping and inventorying on a geographic information system (GIS) base. The complete findings are available in the [Consolidated Report on the Third UNESCO Member States Consultation on the Implementation of the 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape](#).
37. During the major global celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Recommendation in 2021, bringing together mayors and city leaders, the UNESCO HUL Call for Action was launched to raise awareness and engage cities everywhere regarding urban heritage.
38. UNESCO has also provided technical assistance to national and local management authorities in implementing the 2011 Recommendation, including developing management plans in Albania, Ghana, and Mozambique.

39. With regard to Priority Africa, with support from Norway, the 2011 Recommendation approach (SDG 11) to safeguard World Heritage in the urban contexts of Africa: Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi (Uganda), the Royal Palaces of Abomey (Benin), the Historic Town of Grand-Bassam (Côte d'Ivoire) and Koutammakou, the Land of the Batammariba (Togo) are being undertaken. All these properties face challenges of development pressure and uncontrolled urbanisation that may negatively impact their heritage values. The first online workshop on the management challenges of the Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi, was held in December 2022.
40. As a wrap-up of the 10th Anniversary of the 2011 Recommendation, an international conference on “Urban Heritage and Traditional Building Practices for Sustainable Development” was organised in Cordoba from 12 to 14 September 2022. With 240 attendees including from Africa and SIDS.

#### **VIII. PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES INCLUDING YOUTH, WOMEN, AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES (SDG 5, 10)**

41. The World Heritage Centre actively contributes to the implementation of the Intersectoral Programme ‘Promoting Indigenous Knowledge, Culture and Languages as a Pathway to Inclusion’ as adopted by UNESCO’s General Conference in the 41C/5, in close cooperation with other Entities in the Culture Sector, the Natural Sciences, the Communication and Information, and the Education Sectors respectively. In addition, the World Heritage Centre’s enhanced action to strengthen the recognition of indigenous values and the respect of indigenous rights in nomination and management processes fits into the Organisation’s overall intersectoral and interdisciplinary implementation of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL) (2022-2032), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2019. In particular, the World Heritage Centre contributed to the elaboration of the IDIL Global Action Plan and to the organisation of the IDIL celebration event on 13 December 2022 at UNESCO Headquarters, including through the organisation, together with the Natural Sciences Sector and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, of a roundtable discussion on ‘Indigenous languages, culture and knowledge for climate action and environmental sustainability’, in which the current Chairperson of the International Indigenous Peoples’ Forum on World Heritage (IIPFWH) took part.
42. The World Heritage Committee specifically encourages the effective and equitable involvement and participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in decision-making, monitoring and evaluation of World Heritage properties and the respect of indigenous peoples’ rights in nominating, managing and reporting on World Heritage properties in their own territories (Decision **35 COM 12E**). The Operational Guidelines encourage States Parties to adopt a human-rights based approach and participation of a wide variety of stakeholders and rights-holders, including indigenous peoples, in the identification, nomination, management and protection processes of World Heritage properties. States Parties are encouraged to obtain the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of indigenous peoples before including sites on the Tentative List and before nominating sites affecting their lands, territories or resources and shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples to obtain their free, prior and informed consent. States Parties are also encouraged to follow a rights-based approach that includes full involvement of all rightsholders and stakeholders in line with the Policy on World Heritage and Sustainable Development, the UNESCO

Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and international human rights standards. Furthermore, the *Operational Guidelines* also indicate that effective and inclusive participation of indigenous peoples in the nomination process is essential to enable them to have a shared responsibility with the State Party in the maintenance of the property.

43. Following the revision of the Operational Guidelines in 2021, revised nomination formats were agreed by the World Heritage Committee. These ensure that it is demonstrated that the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples concerned has been obtained prior to the submission of the nomination dossier, and that information is provided on whether and how local communities and indigenous peoples have been consulted during the nomination process, and whether they are involved in the management of the property.
44. These formats are introduced for all nominations submitted from 1 February 2023 onwards and will therefore apply to nominations examined by the World Heritage Committee from its 46th session in 2024. ICOMOS and IUCN, as the Committee's Advisory Bodies, ensuring that appropriate procedures are in place to incorporate inputs from indigenous peoples in their evaluation processes. ICOMOS is currently conducting a pilot evaluation project to analyse the potential of desk review screening to identify heritage and rights issues in World Heritage nomination dossiers. Despite these efforts, much remains to be done to ensure full implementation of the principles of UNESCO's Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples and the WH-SDP by States Parties, including consideration of ways in which the Committee can further strengthen its support and oversight.
45. Several concerning allegations of human rights violations and abuses towards Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) in and around World Heritage properties have been reported to the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies since 2021. In each case, UNESCO has followed up with the State Party to provide clarifications and verify the facts, and to clarify the position of UNESCO and that of the World Heritage Convention.
46. In October 2022, the report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, José Francisco Calí Tzay, on 'Protected areas and indigenous peoples' rights: the obligations of States and international organizations' was examined by the (Third) Committee on Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs of the United Nations General Assembly<sup>1</sup>. The Special Rapporteur's report outlines a number of recommendations to Member States and four recommendations to UNESCO to which the Committee may wish to give consideration with a view to applying a strong human rights-based approach to the inclusion of sites in the World Heritage List (see Annex 1 "[A/77/238: Protected areas and indigenous peoples' rights: the obligations of States and international organizations - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples | OHCHR](#)"):
  - a) Human rights impact assessments carried out together with indigenous peoples before the nomination process begins;
  - b) The revision of the World Heritage Committee's rules of procedure to ensure the effective participation of indigenous peoples and United Nations human rights

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a77238-protected-areas-and-indigenous-peoples-rights-obligations-states>.

- experts in decision-making processes affecting indigenous peoples before the Committee makes its final decision;
- c) Periodic reporting on, and reviews of, the human rights situation at World Heritage sites and measures to reconsider World Heritage status if requirements are not met;
  - d) The establishment of an independent grievance mechanism for violations at World Heritage sites.
47. In parallel, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies have intensified their cooperation with the IIPFWH (see <https://iipfwh.org/>) and with UN Special Rapporteurs in relevant fields. The aim of the IIPFWH, established during the 41st session of the Committee (Kraków, 2017), is to serve as 'an important reflection platform on the involvement of Indigenous Peoples in the identification, conservation and management of World Heritage properties, with a particular focus on the nomination process' (Decision **41 COM 7**). As such, the IIPFWH can serve as a platform for dialogue and enhanced cooperation on indigenous peoples' issues in and around World Heritage properties, drawing on indigenous peoples' knowledge and management practices. In that vein, the World Heritage Leadership Programme has asked IIPFWH to review the *Resource Manual on Managing World Heritage*, which is currently being updated by the World Heritage Centre, ICCROM, IUCN, and ICOMOS. From December 2022 to April 2023, the World Heritage Centre, in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies, organized a number of meetings that provided an opportunity to discuss a number of issues and reflection on ways to ensure a more effective and systematic recognition of the rights and values of indigenous peoples in the processes of the World Heritage Convention.
48. The World Heritage Centre received a letter dated 15 May 2023 from the Chairperson of the IIPFWH informing of their intention to hold in January 2024 an international expert workshop on recognizing and respecting indigenous peoples' heritage values in World Heritage sites. The expert workshop would follow a similar format to the International Expert Workshop on the World Heritage Convention and Indigenous Peoples held in Copenhagen in 2012 (the results of which the Committee noted in its Decision **37 COM 5A** while requesting to consider implications for future revisions of the Operational Guidelines) and will involve indigenous experts, UNESCO, the Advisory Bodies and the three UN mechanisms on the rights of indigenous peoples. The expert workshop will follow up on some of the World Heritage Committee's decisions relating to indigenous peoples in a World Heritage context. In response, UNESCO has agreed to mobilise financial contributions and provide the necessary support to co-organise the expert workshop with IIPFWH. The Committee may thus wish to encourage States Parties to support the organisation of the international expert meeting, prior to its next session, through voluntary contributions to the World Heritage Fund and request the secretariat to report on the meeting at its next session.
49. Since the last Second Cycle of the Periodic Reporting Exercise (2008-2015), the ongoing Third Cycle of the Periodic Reporting exercise shows a significant commitment of States Parties with regards to the effective involvement of local communities and indigenous peoples in the different stages of preparing national Tentative Lists and nominations. This has been particularly achieved in the Arab States region with substantial increase in the involvement of the stakeholders and rightsholders both in the process of preparation of Tentative List (24.3% increase) and the preparation of nomination dossiers (24.3% increase). Latin America and the

Caribbean region has also shown a substantial increase with 27.8% increase of State Parties recording effective involvement of communities in the preparation of Tentative List and a 46.8% increase in the preparation of nomination dossiers.

50. With regard to enhancing the participation of youth in World Heritage, in 2021, the Programme implemented the first online edition of the World Heritage Young Professionals Forum (Fuzhou/online, 2021), which brought together young professionals from nearly 30 States Parties to discuss, debate and provide their recommendations on the theme of "World Heritage and Sustainable Livelihoods". Through the World Heritage Volunteers (WHV) Initiative, the Programme is implementing 74 action camp projects in 2023 at 67 World Heritage properties and sites on the Tentative Lists, by 58 organizations in 33 countries, which will actively involve youth and local communities in concrete preservation activities. With the aim to better integrate World Heritage into early-education curricula, the programme is developing the re-edition of the World Heritage in Young Hands Kit, which was last revised in 2002 (see document WHC/23/45.COM/5A).
51. The World Heritage Centre and four World Heritage sites in four regions (Cabo Verde, Sudan, Viet Nam and Honduras) are developing pilot project to increase resilience of local communities' livelihoods and innovative models of sustainable tourism and heritage product development in the post COVID-19 context. WHC, with the support of Felissimo (Japan) will assist the World Heritage sites in Asia and Africa to upgrade the signature products to be designed and developed for expanding the association of local communities, in particular women and youth, under the overarching policy of valorising the World Heritage related cultural values and assets ([Post COVID-19 World Heritage Site Management: Integration of Conservation, Tourism and Local Livelihood Strategies at World Heritage sites](#)).
52. The World Heritage Centre has continuously promoted a gender-balanced participation within the properties' management. Most of the World Heritage properties with a management system comprise a formalised framework for women's participation. This is particularly high in the Africa and in the Asia and Pacific regions where 91.7% World Heritage properties involved such a framework. In Latin America and the Caribbean it was 74.5% and in Arab States 69.5%. Even though the number of State Parties that have explicitly considered a gender-balanced contribution and participation in the process of preparation of Tentative Lists is fairly low in Africa (15%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (15.2%); in contrast, higher equality has been observed in two regions (Asia and the Pacific: 85.7% and Africa: 65.2%) regarding gender-balanced contribution in the preparation of nominations.

## **IX. PROMOTING PEACE AND SECURITY AND FACILITATING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION (GOAL 16, 17)**

53. UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022 was hosted from 28 to 30 September 2022 by the Government of Mexico, and unanimously adopted the historic [MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration](#). The text affirms culture as a "global public good" and the need to embrace cultural heritage as a means of building trust and social cohesion by bringing together different communities was strongly emphasized. The declaration affirms the imperative of protecting cultural heritage from the risk of destruction or damage in the context of armed conflicts; and reiterates the individual and collective responsibility to ensure the conservation, safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage, both tangible and

intangible, ensuring greater equity, geographical balance and representativity of heritage across all regions.

54. Promoting peace and security through World Heritage has often proven to be challenging, especially in conflict situations. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, the World Heritage Centre has actively contributed to rolling out UNESCO Action Plan for Culture in Ukraine through providing support to national authorities for protecting and safeguarding its World Heritage properties – a catalyst for peace and cohesion for the future. This effort mobilized a significant international cooperation, which allowed, amongst others, the launch, in 2023, of a large-scale UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trust supported project to ensure emergency preparedness and protection of Ukraine’s World Heritage properties and sites on the Tentative List, including by putting in place protective measures and undertaking urgent repair work, and to continue satellite monitoring. Another example of strengthened international cooperation around World Heritage under threat was the assistance provided to Ukraine by Italian experts in 2022 for the preparation of a nomination file of the Historic Centre of Odesa which the Committee decided to inscribe on the List of World Heritage at its 18th extraordinary session (Decision **18 EXT.COM 5.2**). This topic is also extensively discussed in WHC/23/45.COM/7.
55. The World Heritage Convention has continuously proved to be a powerful tool for promoting international cooperation for the establishment of common priorities and strategies to face heritage conservation and preservation challenges. For instance, the fourth edition of the Pacific Regional World Heritage Action Plan for World Heritage 2021-2025 was developed, and a new Working Group involving various stakeholders across the Pacific sub region was established pointing out the Convention’s potential for the establishing long-lasting international and regional partnerships for sustainability. (see: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/state-parties-pacific-reassess-their-priorities-concerning-world-heritage>)
56. Celebrating in 2023 the 4th decade of commitment, the International Coordinating Committee for Angkor has been an exemplary global scientific platform and a unique model of multilateral cooperation, gathering over 30 countries for the safeguarding and sustainable development of the Angkor and Sambor Prei Kuk World Heritage sites. Similar structures of the International Advisory mechanisms for World Heritage in Uzbekistan and Nepal are also gathering countries and experts from different regions to engage and cooperate on heritage conservation ([ICC-Angkor: 25 years of model international cooperation \(unesco.org\)](#)).

## **X. MEASUREMENT AND MONITORING OF CULTURE IN THE 2030 AGENDA**

57. For SDG 11.4.1, according to UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) data (custodian for Indicators 11.4.1), while the coverage rate increased by 100% from the first iteration in 2020 to the third in 2022, the number of countries reporting data for 11.4.1 Indicator is not sufficient to report global or regional figures. This indicator looks at investment at all levels of government. An increasing number of countries are able to report data by level of government. According to UIS, public expenditure on heritage for developing countries is significantly less compared to developed countries. The results for the 57 countries for which data are available from 2018 to 2021, show that the range of values for public expenditure on heritage for developing countries is significantly less compared to developed countries. While national expenditure plays a major role in heritage preservation for most countries, local governments take the

lead in the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage in some countries. Further details of the data collected are available at <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-institute-statistics-releases-key-findings-new-cultural-and-natural-heritage-report> and the data can be found at <http://data.uis.unesco.org>.

58. UNESCO has successfully completed the pilot implementation of the *UNESCO Culture|2030 Indicators: Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda*, starting in early 2021 with selected countries and cities with the generous support of donors (European Commission), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). The framework of 22 indicators has already been adopted and implemented in 13 countries and 17 cities globally. The initiative has highlighted the institutional, regulatory and policy issues that need to be structured to harness the full potential of culture for sustainable development. In this framework, data is gathered for 22 indicators along four key dimensions: Environment and Resilience, Prosperity and Livelihoods, Knowledge and Skills, Inclusion and Participation. One indicator for example is on the Sustainable Management of Heritage where some key structures for sustainable management of heritage have been identified. For available reports and data, see <https://whc.unesco.org/en/culture2030indicators>.
59. A high-level side event “Data collection and measurement of culture towards evidence-based policies” was organized during the UNESCO MONDIACULT 2022 Conference by SIDA and the Philippine National Commission to create a framework for countries to present their experiences in data collection in the field culture through the implementation of the *UNESCO Culture|2030 Indicators*, the monitoring of the global SDG Indicator 11.4.1 and other relevant initiatives.

## XI. DRAFT DECISION

### **Draft Decision: 45 COM 5D**

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. Having examined Document WHC/23/45.COM/5D,
2. Recalling Decision **44 COM 5D** adopted at its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/online, 2021), as well as Resolution **20 GA 13** adopted by the General Assembly at its 20th session (UNESCO, 2015),
3. Also recalling Decision **35 COM 12E** that the World Heritage Committee specifically encourages the effective and equitable involvement and participation of indigenous peoples and local communities in decision-making, monitoring and evaluation of World Heritage properties and the respect of indigenous peoples’ rights in nominating, managing and reporting on World Heritage properties in their own territories;
4. Recalls that the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) designates that the defence of cultural diversity implies a commitment to human rights that is also included in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and also recalls the UNESCO Policy on Engaging with Indigenous

*Peoples that underlines UNESCO's commitment to promote the human rights-based approach in the implementation of its normative instruments including the 1972 Convention;*

5. *Welcomes the progress made so far in the development of tools to support the implementation of the "Policy Document for the integration of a sustainable development perspective into the processes of the World Heritage Convention" (WH-SDP) into activities of the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, including through the World Heritage Leadership Programme at national and local levels and encourages States Parties to support their development and implementation in and around World Heritage properties, also welcomes the synergies evident in the consolidated report of the Third Member State Consultation on the implementation of the 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011 Recommendation), with the WH-SDP in view of advancing sustainable urban development and climate resilience in and around World Heritage properties in cities and settlements;*
6. *Also takes note of the progress made towards the collection of quality data related to cultural and natural heritage in line with the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration, including with the implementation of the UNESCO Culture|2030 Indicators to support evidence-based policies and actions in line with the 1972 World Heritage Convention;*
7. *Notes with appreciation the collaboration of UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies with the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on World Heritage (IIPFWH), welcomes their intent to co-organise with UNESCO, working with the Advisory Bodies and other partners, in early 2024 an international expert workshop on the recognition and respect for the heritage values of indigenous peoples within the framework of the World Heritage Convention and invites States Parties to contribute financially towards this event and requests the Secretariat to include a report on it at its 46th session;*
8. *Requests the States Parties to implement the WH-SDP systematically in and around World Heritage properties, ensuring that sustainable development objectives are mainstreamed into their management plans and conservation actions for the World Heritage properties, and to integrate heritage conservation into national and local plans, policies, processes to advance sustainable development;*
9. *Also requests the World Heritage Centre to continue to pursue, within the available resources, the development of activities including policies, tools, guidance, and communication towards operationalising the WH-SDP supporting States Parties in its implementation while protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties;*
10. *Calls on States Parties and other potential partners to contribute financially or through in-kind support to activities towards mainstreaming and operationalising the WH-SDP including the development of tools and guidance by the World Heritage Centre with the Advisory Bodies;*
11. *Requests furthermore the World Heritage Centre, in cooperation with the Advisory Bodies, to present a progress report in this regard at its 47th session.*