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World Heritage Convention

**45 COM**

WHC/23/45.COM/8

Paris, 4 July 2023

Original: English

**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  
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
10 - 25 September 2023**

**Item 8 of the Provisional Agenda: Establishment of the World Heritage List and of the List of World Heritage in Danger**

**8. Nomination Process**

**Summary**

This document presents overall topics concerning the nomination process for inscription on the World Heritage List.

The document is divided into three parts:

Part I Sites of memory associated with recent conflicts

Part II Reflection on nominations under natural criteria

Part III Nominations not evaluated for the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee

**Draft Decision: 45 COM 8, see point IV**

## I. SITES OF MEMORY ASSOCIATED WITH RECENT CONFLICTS

1. Following reflections initiated in 2018, the World Heritage Committee decided in 2021 (Decision **44 COM 8**) to establish an Open-ended Working Group of States Parties to the *Convention*, in order to broaden the scope of the reflections on sites of memories of recent conflicts, accommodating other views not reflected in the reports it examined, and to consider whether and how the “sites associated with recent conflicts” relate to the purpose and scope of the *World Heritage Convention* and requested this group to incorporate the outcomes of all the previous reflections in their final report, to be presented for consideration by the 45th session of the World Heritage Committee.
2. The Open-ended Working Group chaired by Ms. Vera Lacoeylthe, Deputy Permanent Delegate of Saint Lucia, with Ms. Hellen Gichuhi, Deputy Permanent Delegate of Kenya, as Rapporteur and a member of the Bureau along with Austria, Japan and South Africa, met in nine meetings between November 2021 and June 2022.
3. The meetings recorded high participation of 85 to 90 States Parties and an average of 200 participants at each meeting (this figure does not include connections via the webcast).
4. During the meetings, States Parties first expressed their views and ideas on how to move forward on this topic, and continued with debates on technical issues such as Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity and the application of criterion (vi), and possible ways of dealing with potential tensions among States Parties. Consensus arose concerning lifting the blanket ban on the evaluation of sites of memory associated with recent conflicts and also about avoiding any unfairness towards nominations that were already submitted.
5. The Open-ended Working Group progressively agreed on a text of the Draft Decision, which was divided in two parts. In Part I – Guiding Principles, the group recommended to the Committee to lift the moratorium on the evaluation of sites of memory associated with recent conflicts and to process nominations of sites of memory associated with recent conflicts submitted by 1 February 2022 and considered complete (six nominations) according to the procedures and criteria in force at the time of their submission. Part I also included definitions of the terms “recent”, “conflict” and “sites of memory” and Guiding Principles for the preparation of nominations of sites of memory associated with recent conflicts. In Part II, the Open-ended Working Group recommended the Committee to adopt a Contestation Mechanism for sites of memory included on the Tentative Lists and newly submitted nominations using criterion (vi).
6. The Draft Decision and the report of the Open-ended Working Group were presented to the Committee at its 18th extraordinary session (UNESCO, 2023) (Documents WHC/23/18.EXTCOM/4 and WHC/23/18.EXTCOM/INF.4). The Committee decided to adopt the Draft Decision recommended by the Working Group, and also decided that given the exceptional circumstances (i.e., an ordinary session of the World Heritage Committee was not held in 2022), which affected the timetable for the six nominations already submitted, procedures will be applied so as to allow, for those States Parties which had requested it at the 18th extraordinary session, the examination of their nominations at its extended 45th session in 2023. The following concerned States Parties have requested that these four nominations be examined at the extended 45th session: **Argentina**: ESMA Museum and Site of Memory – Former Clandestine Center of Detention, Torture and Extermination; **Belgium and France**: Funerary and memorial sites of the First World War (Western Front); **Rwanda**: Genocide memorial sites: Nyamata, Murambi, Gisozi and Bisesero; **South Africa**: Human Rights, Liberation and Reconciliation: Nelson Mandela Legacy Sites.
7. Finally, regarding to the contestation mechanism adopted for Tentative List entries and nominations under criterion (vi), and in line with several requests received, the World Heritage Centre stands ready to facilitate further reflections on how to deal with potential contestations of nominations that are not proposed under criterion (vi), should the Committee decide to conduct such reflections in the future.

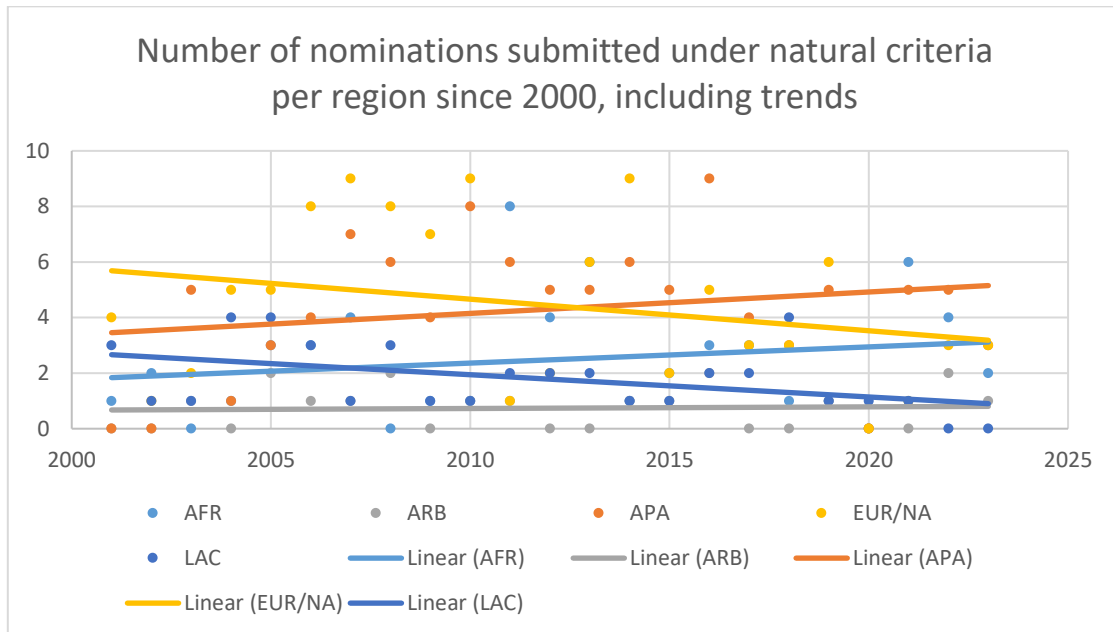
## II. REFLECTION ON NOMINATIONS UNDER NATURAL CRITERIA

8. In 2013, IUCN conducted global gap analyses to identify potential terrestrial and marine candidate sites for inclusion on the World Heritage List for their biodiversity values. In view of the relatively small number of nominations under natural criteria, in spite of the potential of natural heritage sites to fill important gaps on the World Heritage List and to improve the regional balance of the List, World Heritage Centre and IUCN propose a reflection on how to promote nominations under natural criteria.
9. Since the 1990s, IUCN has conducted reviews and studies with respect to the completeness and gaps on the World Heritage List for nature. These include global gap studies and various thematic and regional studies covering all five regions. The below paragraphs outline the more recent resources, which have been developed and all been funded through extra-budgetary projects initiated by IUCN. Due to the prevailing lack of funds from the Regular Programme of UNESCO, such studies have been carried out based on voluntary contributions since the 2012-2013 biennium, in partnership with the African World Heritage Fund, the Agency for Nature Conservation and Ministry for Environment of Germany, the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH), the Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Korea, the European Commission, the MAVA Foundation, the National Geographic Society, the Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and many others.
10. Key global thematic studies by IUCN include “*Terrestrial biodiversity and the World Heritage List: identifying broad gaps and potential candidate sites for inclusion in the natural World Heritage network*”, 2013 (available in English, French and Spanish at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/10399>), providing guidance on areas with high potential for sites to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value under biodiversity criteria (ix) and (x). Marine biodiversity is covered in the study “*Marine Natural Heritage and the World Heritage List Interpretation of World Heritage criteria in marine systems, analysis of biogeographic representation of sites, and a roadmap for addressing gaps*”, 2013 (<https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2013-033.pdf>). “*Geological World Heritage: a revised global framework for the application of criterion (viii) of the World Heritage Convention*”, 2021 (<https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/49575>) provides an updated conceptual framework for sites with geological values and guidance on possible gaps in coverage. Completing the analysis of all four natural criteria IUCN has also undertaken a “*Study on the application of criterion (vii): considering superlative natural phenomena and exceptional natural beauty within the World Heritage Convention*”, 2013 (<https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/10424>) which reviewed, clarified and strengthened the application and assessment of criterion (vii).
11. To complement these key studies, a series of thematic studies have been undertaken by IUCN on the level of representation on the World Heritage List of globally significant values on issues such as forests, wetlands, mountains, caves and karst, desert landscapes, volcanoes, fossil sites etc. All these thematic studies provide relevant guidance on gaps on the World Heritage List for the respective criteria and thematic fields. Along with the thematic studies, it is important to recall the recently published “*Guidance on Developing and Revising World Heritage Tentative List*” (UNESCO, ICOMOS, IUCN, ICCROM, 2020), which notably aims at enabling a more balanced and credible World Heritage List. As highlighted in the Operational Guidelines, Tentative Lists are important planning tools and their compilation should consider the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List. In this context, ICOMOS and IUCN, in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre, have prepared this Guidance to support States Parties at the earliest stage of the World Heritage nomination process. In addition, a toolkit for Advisory Bodies resource persons is currently under development to support States Parties putting in place a sound process for the selection of candidate sites to be included on Tentative Lists (see also Documents WHC/23/45.COM/8A and WHC/23/45.COM/9A).
12. For the Africa region, an updated regional study has been completed in 2020 with the publication of “*Natural World Heritage in Africa: progress and prospects*” (available in

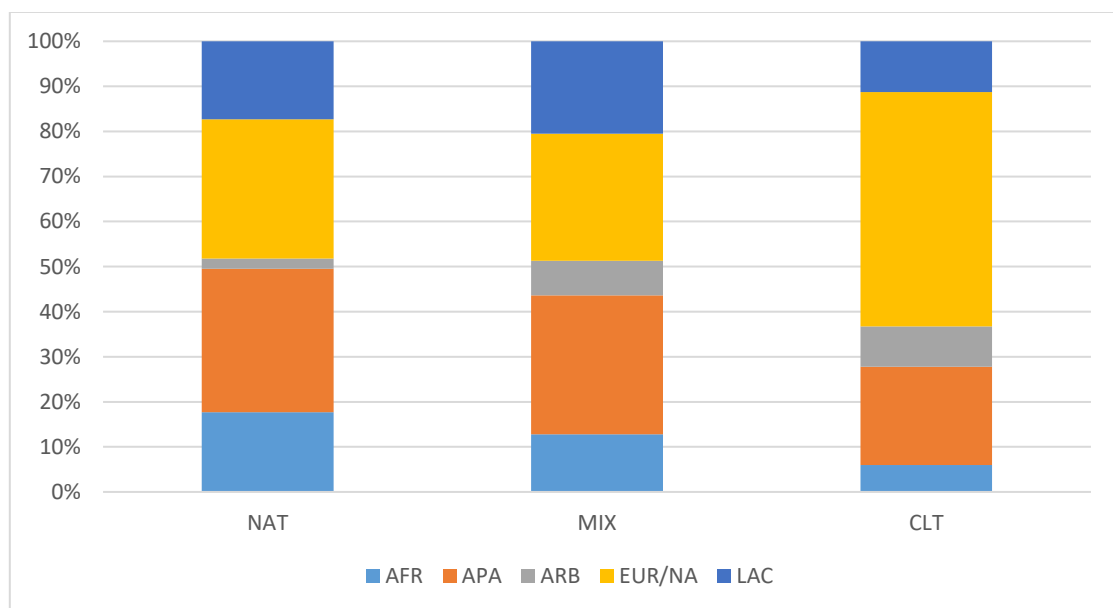
English and French at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/49029>). This study highlights areas with potential for World Heritage listing and provides a synthesis of key information on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in Africa, including guidance on how it might contribute to global conservation efforts and sustainable development in the future.

13. For the Arab States region, “*Tabe’a III : nature–culture linkages, conflict, and climate change impacts on natural heritage in the Arab region*” (available in Arabic and English at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/49845>) was published in 2021 completing a series of two previous regional studies. The Tabe’a III report follows “*Tabe’a: nature and world heritage in the Arab States: towards future IUCN priorities*” (<https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/10060>) and the “TABE’A II report : enhancing regional capacities for World Heritage” (<https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/46818>).
14. For the Asia-Pacific region, areas with World Heritage potential were discussed in the 2021 study “*Leveraging the World Heritage Convention for conservation in the Hindu Kush Himalaya: an independent assessment of natural World Heritage potential*” (<https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/49840>). The “*World Heritage thematic study for Central Asia*” (<https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/48972>) identifies priority sites for World Heritage nominations under criteria (ix) and (x). Another study specifically focusing on the Pacific is currently being finalised.
15. For the Europe and North America region, areas of potential Outstanding Universal Value in the Arctic are discussed in the 2016 report “*Natural marine World Heritage in the Arctic Ocean*” (available in English and Russian <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/46678>), jointly prepared with the World Heritage Centre.
16. For the Latin America and Caribbean region, a new study is planned on the Caribbean sub-region. If funding can be secured, further work in the Latin America and Caribbean region is envisaged further to the publication “*Natural world heritage in Latin America and the Caribbean: options to promote an underutilized conservation instrument*”, 2013 (available in English and Spanish at <https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/45118>).
17. Preparing further gap studies would allow to point to the sites that should be prioritised and assist States Parties in identifying sites with a high potential to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value. Working at the regional level is also effective to ensuring that globally exceptional sites are identified, national Tentative Lists are harmonized and larger scale, serial and transnational configurations with potential for inscription are identified.
18. In conclusion, it can be noted that important gaps remain on the World Heritage List for natural heritage, especially for regions that are currently underrepresented on the World Heritage List. These regions show strong potential for successful nominations under natural criteria. However, this potential is not being fully realized in the number and type (such as serial and transnational) of nominations submitted (see image 1). In this respect, it deserves to be noted that the regional imbalance for natural properties on the World Heritage List is significantly less pronounced than for cultural properties (see image 2).

**Image 1:** Nominations submitted under natural criteria and trends per region



**Image 2:** Differences in the regional balance/imbalance of World Heritage properties by category



19. Therefore, it is suggested to launch reflections on a possible new approach supporting natural heritage nominations, to improve the regional balance of natural sites on the World Heritage List and to fill important gaps that still remain on the List. IUCN also intervened in this respect in the framework of the Ad-hoc Working Group suggesting the need to invest in a comprehensive set of 10-year action plans for World Heritage in priority regions. Such an approach would, in essence, provide support to a greater balance between the cultural and natural sites on the World Heritage List and ensuring that globally exceptional natural sites are encouraged to develop nominations, and to build awareness and capacity at regional levels. A priority objective might be to support those regions underrepresented in natural heritage sites to build World Heritage capacity with respect to natural heritage, thus ensuring the necessary expertise for both the identification and development of potential nominations for natural World Heritage sites and for the conservation of listed natural heritage sites.

20. Such regional action plans would take the action needed to invest in under-represented regions most in need of support for natural heritage and could potentially address the following areas:
- i. Complete regional and thematic studies to review and harmonize Tentative Lists, identify gaps, and foster transnational and serial approaches;
  - ii. Identify common threats to and capacity needs for World Heritage at the regional scale, using state of conservation monitoring data including IUCN World Heritage Outlook;
  - iii. Capacity development and awareness-raising, including sustained upstream support to bring forward candidate nominations to the World Heritage Committee;
  - iv. Integrated conservation and development support to find solutions that see heritage conservation and development as complementary;
  - v. Training in impact assessment and strategic environmental assessments (SEAs);
  - vi. Training in benefit optimization and sharing;
  - vii. Enhancing regional diversity within Advisory Body networks.
21. Voluntary contributions over the long-term and at a realistic level would be required to achieve sustained and verifiable regional progress for natural World Heritage, while also contributing to the UNESCO Global Priority Africa.

### III. NOMINATIONS NOT EVALUATED FOR THE EXTENDED 45TH SESSION

22. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic or security reasons, the Advisory Bodies were unable to evaluate the following two nominations submitted by States Parties in 2020 and 2021, which will thus not be examined by the World Heritage Committee at its extended 45th session:
- The evaluation of the nomination of the Lake Chad cultural landscape (Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria) submitted in 2020, could not be undertaken due to security reasons;
  - The evaluation of the nomination of Mt. Kumgang – Diamond Mountain from the Sea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) submitted in 2021, could not be undertaken following the request of the State Party due to the COVID-19 situation in the country.
23. Should the health and/or the security situation allow their evaluation, these nominations will be presented for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 46th session, without impinging on national and overall quota of nominations to be examined (see Paragraph 61 of the *Operational Guidelines*). Their evaluation process will be undertaken in accordance with the timeframe foreseen in Paragraph 168 of the *Operational Guidelines*.
24. The evaluation missions for the following two nominations could not be undertaken in time for their examination by the extended 45th session due to the COVID-19 situation in China:
- Badain Jaran Desert - Towers of Sand and Lakes (China) submitted in 2020;
  - Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China (Phase II) (China) submitted in 2022.

However, the evaluation missions for these two nominations took place in May and June 2023 and they are foreseen for examination by the Committee at its 46th session, without impinging on national and overall quota of nominations to be examined (see Paragraph 61 of the *Operational Guidelines*). Their evaluation process will be undertaken in accordance with the timeframe foreseen in Paragraph 168 of the *Operational Guidelines*.

## IV. DRAFT DECISION

### **Draft Decision: 45 COM 8**

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/23/45.COM/8,

#### **REFLECTION ON NOMINATIONS UNDER NATURAL CRITERIA**

2. Recalling Paragraph 71 of the Operational Guidelines, encourages States Parties to consult the relevant IUCN gap analysis, and to seek as early as possible upstream advice from the Advisory Bodies during the development of their Tentative Lists, as appropriate, and to make full and effective use of IUCN's global, regional and thematic studies when preparing nominations to be submitted under natural criteria;
3. Taking into account the heavy budget constraints on the Convention's resources, the need for an effective management of the increasing size of the World Heritage List and the call for a more balanced World Heritage List, urges States Parties to provide the necessary financial voluntary contributions to support the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to prepare and implement jointly with the respective States Parties a series of 10-year regional action plans to provide priority support to regions under-represented in natural heritage, with a view to improving the regional balance on the World Heritage List and to fill important gaps that remain on the List for natural heritage;

#### **NOMINATIONS NOT EVALUATED FOR THE EXTENDED 45TH SESSION**

4. Decides that nominations, which were submitted for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021) and the extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023) sessions but which could not be evaluated due to the health and/or security situation, be examined at the 46th session of the Committee without impinging on national and overall quota of nominations (Paragraph 61 of the Operational Guidelines) to be examined at the 46th session, in accordance with the timeframe foreseen in Paragraph 168 of the Operational Guidelines.