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World Heritage Convention

45 COM

WHC/23/45.COM/9A
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 9 of the Provisional Agenda: Global Strategy for a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List

9A. Upstream Process

Summary

Further to Decision **44 COM 9A**, this document presents a report on the implementation of the Upstream Process requests, including the remaining Pilot Project, since the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee (Fuzhou/online, 2021). It also includes the Upstream Process requests received by the 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2023 deadlines.

Draft Decision: 45 COM 9A, see point IV

I. BACKGROUND

1. At its 32nd session (Quebec City, 2008), the World Heritage Committee launched a process of reflection on the future of the *World Heritage Convention*. In this framework, the Committee, aware of the challenges that exist in the process for nominating a site to the World Heritage List, proposed an initiative entitled Upstream Processes. The aim was to find options for improving and strengthening the nomination process.
2. In 2010, by Decision **34 COM 12**, the World Heritage Committee requested the World Heritage Centre “in cooperation with the Advisory Bodies and other relevant organizations, to invite one or two States Parties from each of the UNESCO regional groups to undertake, on an experimental basis, voluntary pilot projects related to identifying options and preparing dossiers for nomination”. The following year, by Decision **35 COM 12C**, the Committee took note of the 10 pilot projects that had been chosen to implement this experimental approach.
3. In 2016, following Decision **40 COM 9A**, the experimental phase of this process could be considered concluded. Out of the 10 pilot projects originally selected, one is not yet finalised. This document details the progress made concerning this project since the extended 44th session of the World Heritage Committee (Fuzhou/online, 2021).
4. In 2015, at its 39th session, the World Heritage Committee included the Upstream Process in the *Operational Guidelines*, thereby recognizing that the Upstream Process has extended far beyond the pilot projects and has become a mainstream process considered beneficial to many States Parties.
5. At its 41st session (Krakow, 2017), the Committee adopted Decision **41 COM 9A**, which could be considered as a turning point in the establishment of the Upstream Process as a statutory procedure. Through this decision, the Committee addressed several fundamental issues from a procedural point of view, including the adoption of the Upstream Process request format and a timeline for submission of requests for upstream advice, with two deadlines per year. In the same decision, the Committee decided to give priority to requests for the preparation or revision of Tentative Lists to Least Developed Countries, Low-Income and Lower-Middle Income Countries and Small Island Developing States, followed by the mechanism of Paragraph 61.c) of the *Operational Guidelines*.
6. In 2018, the Committee, by Decision **42 COM 9A**, approved a revised definition of the Upstream Process proposed by the Ad-Hoc Working Group, and at its 43rd session (Baku, 2019), the Upstream Process request format was included in the *Operational Guidelines*, becoming their new Annex 15 (Decision **43 COM 11A**).
7. At its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/online, 2021), the Committee, by Decision **44 COM 9A**, limited to one (1) the number of requests per State Party that can be addressed in each cycle. In the same Decision, the Committee decided to remove the 31 October deadline for submission of Upstream Process requests, retaining only the 31 March annual deadline. By Decision **44 COM 12**, this annual deadline was included in Paragraph 121 of the *Operational Guidelines*.
8. Following the publication of the “Guidance on Developing and Revising World Heritage Tentative Lists” (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/184566/>), as a first step to address the Upstream Process requests regarding the creation or revision of Tentative Lists, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies are working on the operationalization of this guidance. For this purpose, a toolkit for States Parties and resource persons was developed. This toolkit will be used in the organisation of workshops conducted by the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and IUCN about the development and revision of Tentative Lists. The pilot cases, selected respecting a geographical balance, were the first ones to benefit from the toolkit, which was further

refined based on the experience with these cases. Following this pilot phase, the toolkit will now contribute to a streamlined and consistent implementation of all Upstream Process requests concerning creation or revision of Tentative Lists also including the revision of national Tentative Lists that are part of preparatory assistance projects in the framework of International Assistance under the World Heritage Fund.

9. It is important to emphasize that the application of the Upstream Process approach does not imply that a site would ultimately be inscribed on the World Heritage List. The main aim of the Upstream Process is to reduce the number of sites that experience significant problems during the nomination process, and to avoid significant investment in financial and human resources where the proposed sites do not demonstrate potential for justifying Outstanding Universal Value.

II. PROGRESS MADE ON THE UPSTREAM PROCESS REQUESTS

A. Selected Pilot Projects

Pilot Project on the **Coral Stone Mosques of the Maldives**, Maldives

10. No further progress has been reported for this project since the end of 2019. Consequently, the World Heritage Centre proposes the phasing out of this Pilot Project, which will no longer be followed directly by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies. However, the State Party has the possibility to continue the nomination project and develop a dossier through its own initiative.

B. Requests received by the 2018 and 2019 deadlines

11. From the Upstream Process requests received by the annual deadlines in 2018 and 2019, five concerning the potential future nomination of specific sites are still not finalised. Three out of these five requests are currently under implementation. The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies are making all possible efforts to complete all these requests in the shortest possible time viable in the framework of the resources available. From the same cycles, there are nine pending requests concerning the revision of Tentative Lists of States Parties, which will benefit from the above-mentioned toolkit.

C. Requests received by the 2020 and 2021 deadlines

12. Regarding the Upstream Process requests received by the 2020 and 2021 deadlines, seven concerned the development or revision of Tentative Lists. The “Toolkit for Preparing /Revising Tentative Lists” will also be used for the implementation of these requests as soon as possible and subject to the availability of funding.
13. From the same cycles, four Upstream Process requests were phased out after the submission by the concerned States Parties of the nomination dossier or the draft nomination dossier of the sites that were supposed to undergo the Upstream Process. Out of the five requests concerning the potential future nomination of specific sites still pending, three are currently being implemented.
14. The Upstream Support budget line of the World Heritage Fund was created for the first time for the 2020-2021 biennium and was used, among others, to finance the implementation of the Upstream Process requests from Madagascar and Zimbabwe received in 2020, and the development of the above-mentioned Tentative List Guidance and toolkit. In the 2022-2023 biennium, this budget line was used, among others, to finance the implementation of the Upstream Process requests from Grenada, Saint

Vincent and the Grenadines, and Saint Kitts and Nevis, as well as the finalisation of the toolkit.

III. NEW UPSTREAM PROCESS REQUESTS RECEIVED

15. By the 31 March 2022 deadline, the World Heritage Centre received seven Upstream Process requests. In terms of regional breakdown, four of these requests are from Europe and North America, one from the Arab States region and two from one State Party in the Asia-Pacific region. As to the criteria of eligibility for receiving financial support, two requests are from one Lower Middle-Income Country, one from an Upper Middle-Income Country and four from High Income Countries. Furthermore, regarding the object of the advice demanded, all seven requests concern the potential future nomination of specific sites.
16. On the basis of the combination of all criteria outlined in Decision **41 COM 9A**, the World Heritage Centre established a list of requests received by the 2022 deadline, in order of priority (see Annex I of this Document). Two requests from 2022 are currently under implementation. Moreover, as only one request per State Party can be addressed in each cycle (Decision **44 COM 9A**), the State Party that submitted two requests for the 2022 cycle was asked to opt for one of them. The State Party may wish to resubmit the other request in a future cycle.
17. By the 31 March 2023 deadline, the World Heritage Centre received one Upstream Process request, from Togo (Africa region, Least Developed Country). It concerns the potential future nomination of the “Ancient Ferrous Metallurgy Sites of Bassar”. As only one request was received, no list in order of priority of requests received by the 2023 deadline was established.
18. Annex II of this document presents the list of pending Upstream Process requests received from 2018 to 2023. Based on the experience with the formalised Upstream Process, it has to be noted that the timeline to deal with Upstream Process requests depends on various factors, such as the number of requests received, their scope, expectations of the State Party, availability of funding and the prioritisation system. Therefore, while some requests may be dealt with swiftly, others require more time to ensure quality outcomes. Accordingly, it is advisable not to expect receiving the outcome of an Upstream Process request within less than, on average, 18 months after the deadline at which it is submitted. The advice to be provided in the framework of each Upstream Process request is reviewed and endorsed by the respective Advisory Bodies’ World Heritage Panels. Furthermore, it is worth noting that there is a stark imbalance between requests for natural heritage and cultural heritage, with the vast majority of requests being submitted for cultural sites.

IV. DRAFT DECISION

Draft Decision: 45 COM 9A

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC/23/45.COM/9A,*
2. *Recalling Decision **44 COM 9A**, adopted at its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/online, 2021), and its previous decisions concerning the Upstream Process,*

3. *Also recalling that upstream support should take place at an early stage, preferably at the moment of preparation or revision of States Parties' Tentative Lists, welcomes that States Parties from all regions make use of the Upstream Process;*
4. *Also welcomes the preparation by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies of a toolkit to operationalise the "Guidance on Developing and Revising World Heritage Tentative Lists", in response to Upstream Process requests concerning Tentative Lists and invites States Parties to follow this guidance and toolkit whether or not they engage with the Upstream Process;*
5. *Recognizes the efforts undertaken by the State Party involved, the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre in the implementation so far of the project and decides to phase out the Pilot Project of the Coral Stone Mosques of the Maldives (Maldives);*
6. *Takes note of the progress made regarding the Upstream Process requests received from 2018 to 2021;*
7. *Further welcomes the submission of the Upstream Process requests received by the 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2023 deadlines, and the efforts by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to process all requests received in the timeliest manner possible within the resources available;*
8. *Also invites the States Parties to contribute extra-budgetary resources for the overall coordination and capacity building support of the Upstream Process, and also decides, in case the resources are insufficient to ensure continuity, to supplement the funding of an extra-budgetary position from the Upstream Support budget line in the World Heritage Fund;*
9. *Thanks the States Parties of Slovenia, Switzerland and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for their financial support to the overall coordination of the Upstream Process;*
10. *Requests the World Heritage Centre, in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies, to present a progress report on the support offered to Upstream Process requests received, for consideration at its 46th session.*

List of Upstream Process requests received by 31 March 2022

7 Upstream Process requests were received following the requested format and are presented here in the order of priority. The prioritization was made on the basis of Decision **41 COM 9A**, paragraphs 11 and 12.

Region	State Party	Type of economy	C / N	TL / NOM	Request complete as of 31/03/2022	Type of activity / site
APA	Viet Nam	LMIC	C	NOM	YES	Oc Eo -Ba The archaeological site (<i>on TL since 2022</i>)
APA	Viet Nam	LMIC	C	NOM	YES	Con Moong cave (<i>on TL since 2006</i>)
EUR/NA	Türkiye	UMIC	C	NOM	YES	The Historical Port City of Izmir (<i>on TL since 2020</i>)
ARB	Kuwait	HIC	C	NOM	YES	Ahmadi Company Township (<i>not on TL</i>)
EUR/NA	Norway	HIC	N	NOM	YES	Reindeer Hunting Area in Dovrefjell (<i>not on TL</i>)
EUR/NA	Finland	HIC	C	NOM	YES	The Architectural Works of Alvar Aalto - a Human Dimension to the Modern Movement (<i>on TL since 2021</i>)
EUR/NA	Slovakia	HIC	C	NOM	YES	Memorial of Chatam Sófer (<i>on TL since 2002</i>)

C = cultural heritage N = natural heritage TL = Tentative List NOM = nomination file	AFR = Africa APA = Asia-Pacific ARB = Arab States EUR/NA = Europe & North America LAC = Latin America & the Caribbean	LDC = Least Developed Country LIE = Low Income Economy LMIC = Lower Middle Income Country SIDS = Small Island Developing State UMIC = Upper Middle Income Country HIC = High Income Country
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Note: As only one Upstream Process request was received by the 31 March 2023, no list in order of priority of requests received by the 2023 deadline was established (see paragraph 17 of this document).

List of pending Upstream Process requests received from 2018 to 2023

This list shows all Upstream Process requests received from 2018 to 2023 and that are not yet finalised (i.e., pending or under implementation). They are divided by year of submission and object of the advice requested (TL or NOM), and presented in alphabetical order by State Party.

Region	State Party	C / N	TL / NOM	Year of Submission	Type of activity / site
AFR	Eswatini	C/N	TL	2018	Revision
AFR	Eritrea	C	NOM	2018	Qoahito Cultural Landscape
AFR	Malawi	C	NOM	2018	Malawi Slave Routes & Dr. David Livingstone Trail
EUR/NA	Ukraine	C	NOM	2018	Archaeological Site "Stone Tomb"
EUR/NA	Armenia	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
LAC	Colombia	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
AFR	Guinea	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
LAC	Jamaica	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
ARB	Jordan	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
APA	Lao People's Democratic Republic	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
APA	Nepal	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
AFR	Nigeria	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
LAC	Grenada and St. Vincent & The Grenadines	C/N	NOM	2019	Grenadine Island Chain
EUR/NA	United States of America	C	NOM	2019	Civil Rights Movement Sites
LAC	Ecuador	C/N	TL	2020	Revision
ARB	Egypt	C/N	TL	2020	Revision

AFR	Ethiopia	C/N	TL	2020	Revision
APA	Kiribati	C/N	TL	2020	Development
LAC	Nicaragua	C/N	TL	2020	Revision
ARB	Saudi Arabia	C/N	TL	2020	Revision
EUR/NA	Belarus	C	NOM	2020	Kalozha Church of Sts. Boris and Gleb in Grodno
EUR/NA	Belgium	C	NOM	2020	Public zoological gardens in the 19th century - a new typology in a rapidly changing world
EUR/NA	Serbia	C	NOM	2020	Archeological site Belo brdo in Vinča
AFR	Zimbabwe	C	NOM	2020	Naletale Cluster of Dzimbabwes
LAC	El Salvador	C/N	TL	2021	Revision
EUR/NA	Finland	N	NOM	2021	The Ringed Seal Archipelagos of Lake Saimaa
EUR/NA	Finland	C	NOM	2022	The Architectural Works of Alvar Aalto - a Human Dimension to the Modern Movement
ARB	Kuwait	C	NOM	2022	Ahmadi Company Township
EUR/NA	Norway	N	NOM	2022	Reindeer Hunting Area in Dovrefjell
EUR/NA	Slovakia	C	NOM	2022	Memorial of Chatam Sófer
EUR/NA	Türkiye	C	NOM	2022	The Historical Port City of Izmir
APA	Viet Nam	C	NOM	2022	Oc Eo -Ba The archaeological site
AFR	Togo	C	NOM	2023	Sites de la métallurgie ancienne du fer de Bassar

C = cultural heritage N = natural heritage TL = Tentative List NOM = nomination file	AFR = Africa APA = Asia-Pacific ARB = Arab States EUR/NA = Europe & North America LAC = Latin America & the Caribbean
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