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**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 10 of the Provisional Agenda:

Progress report on the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting in the other regions

Summary

This document is presented pursuant to Decision **44 COM 10D** and contains a report on the overall conduct and coordination of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting including the preparation and start of the exercise in the Europe and North America region. It includes details on the preparatory steps taken by the Secretariat for the commencement of the exercise in the region in September 2022. In addition, this document presents information about other activities carried out by the Secretariat with regards to the conduct of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting exercise.

The web platform of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting can be accessed at the following address: whc.unesco.org/en/prcycle3

The general web page on Periodic Reporting on the *Convention's* implementation can be accessed at the following address: whc.unesco.org/en/periodicreporting/

Draft Decision: 45 COM 10E, see point IV

I. Background

1. At its 41st session in 2017 the World Heritage Committee launched the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting and decided to maintain the same order of regions as for the previous cycles, with one region reporting each year (Arab States, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and North America). Subsequently, in line with Decision **41 COM 10A** (Krakow, 2017), Europe and North America region has started the reporting phase of the exercise in September 2022 and States Parties are expected to submit their reports in July 2023.
2. As per Decisions **41 COM 10A** (Krakow, 2017), **42 COM 10A** (Manama, 2018), **43 COM 10B** (Baku, 2019) and **44 COM 10D** (Fuzhou/Online, 2021) the World Heritage Centre was requested to ensure that, for the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting, a holistic approach is adopted across reporting regions by providing the overall coordination and analysis while facilitating a State Party-driven approach of the exercise.
3. The Secretariat has been requested to continue to update and make available sets of tools and guidance materials for a broad range of stakeholders in this process and to ensure its dissemination to encourage effective preparation and implementation of the exercise in each region. As well, the Committee by Decision **44 COM 10A** request to Secretariat to report on the follow-up on the Third Cycle process.

II. Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting in the Europe and North America region

Preliminary preparations

4. In view of the commencement of the upcoming reporting exercise in Europe and North America in September 2022, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre has taken a number of measures to facilitate the process. Among others, these include carrying out a full review and update of records and contacts for the States Parties in the World Heritage databases, preparing circular letters to States Parties to identify the national focal points responsible for the implementation of the *Convention* at the national level and World Heritage site managers who will be responsible for carrying out the reporting process in the region as well as maintain a helpdesk, which will provide technical and content support during the reporting period.
5. As Europe and North America is the last region to commence the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting, the region is benefitting from all guidance, training material and tools that have already been developed, updated or revised for the previous regions that have gone through the Third Cycle, ensuring a holistic approach across regions in line with Decision **41 COM 10A**.
6. Prior to the exercise, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre organised a consultation with the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee (ICOMOS, ICCROM and IUCN) to discuss and agree on all relevant processes and stages of the Periodic Reporting exercise in the region.
7. In accordance with the Committee Decision **41 COM 10A**, which states that the UNESCO World Heritage Centre is to facilitate a State Party-driven approach for the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting, States Parties were invited to financially support these activities carried out in the framework of this reporting exercise in Europe and North America.
8. Contrary to the reporting exercise during the Second Cycle of Periodic Reporting, when Europe and North America were reported on separately and noting that this practice has

had considerable resource and workload implications, Europe and North America are being considered as a single reporting region during Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting.

9. In parallel with, and complementary to both the Periodic Reporting exercise and the Retrospective Inventory project, the World Heritage Centre launched the World Heritage Online Map Platform project, thanks to the generous support of the Government of Flanders (Belgium). The goal of this project is to develop an online Geographic Information System (GIS) for World Heritage properties. The Europe and North America region has been chosen as a pilot for the development of this online platform which will include georeferenced boundaries and buffer zones of World Heritage properties. At the beginning of the project, the analysis of the few GIS files that were already available at the World Heritage Centre showed that only 13% of World Heritage properties in Europe and North America have GIS data that can be used. In conjunction with the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting and the Retrospective Inventory project, all States Parties in the region were invited to submit GIS layers of the World Heritage properties located on their territory and their buffer zones, if any.
10. As of 30 April 2023, GIS data for 57% of the properties in the region had been received. Once a critical mass of geographic data was verified against the maps of the inscribed properties as adopted by the Committee, an online, open-to-all and interactive platform was developed, joining the geospatial data to the existing World Heritage databases. Through an advanced multi-search engine enabling precise data visualization and extraction, the platform displays georeferenced polygons of the boundaries of the properties and their buffer zones (if any) over different basemaps fitting diverse purposes. Measurements, annotations, data aggregation, visual comparisons and export to common image formats can be easily undertaken through a user-friendly interface. The official launch of the World Heritage Online Map Platform takes place during the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Start of Periodic Reporting questionnaires' completion by States Parties

11. The World Heritage Centre initiated the Periodic Reporting exercise in the region on 21 September 2022. National Focal Points for the implementation of the *Convention* and World Heritage site managers in the region were invited to complete Sections I and II of the Periodic Reporting questionnaires, covering the implementation of the *Convention* at the national and property levels respectively.
12. Subsequently, a kick-off meeting with the national focal points was organised online on 20 and 21 October 2022. This was an opportunity to take stock of the lessons learned from the Second Cycle and share experience related to the Third Cycle from those regions that have already completed the reporting phase, Africa in particular. Key information was shared with just over 80 representatives of States Parties from the region on the overall objectives of the Periodic Reporting exercise, as well as on key dates of the cycle. The new features and themes in the questionnaires to be completed by States Parties were also introduced. The meeting included contributions from the three Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee (ICOMOS, ICCROM and IUCN) as well, who had the opportunity to present the set of tools and resources developed jointly with UNESCO over the last few years, which States Parties can rely on during the Periodic Reporting exercise and beyond.
13. States Parties from Europe and North America were able to leverage the experience of their predecessors and benefit from the valuable participation of two national focal points to the *World Heritage Convention* from Senegal and South Africa. Through the sharing of an overview of the challenges encountered and lessons learned during the process, African focal points provided valuable insights that allowed others to enhance their understanding of the exercise. Feedback on the Second Cycle and in particular, the

development of the Helsinki Action Plan was also shared by the focal point for the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention* from Norway.

14. The reporting exercise is considered a valuable opportunity for regional cooperation and exchanges, which are to be reflected in the results of the Third Cycle. This will lead, for the first time, to the elaboration of a joint report and action plan for Europe and North America which is to be submitted to the World Heritage Committee for approval at its 46th session.

Early review of the Periodic Reporting questionnaires

15. To address any difficulties faced by the States Parties before the final submission, an early review modality of the questionnaire was instituted for the Europe and North America questionnaires, similarly to the practice undertaken by other regions. Early completion deadlines were set for 31 January 2023 and 31 March 2023 for Sections I and II of the questionnaires respectively. Therefore, States Parties who wished to have their questionnaires reviewed by the World Heritage Centre before their final submission have had the possibility to do so, on a voluntary basis.
16. At the time of writing, three months before the final submission deadline, the overall average completion of the Periodic Reporting questionnaire for the Europe and North America region was 45% for Section I and 64% for Section II.

Next steps

17. The deadline for submission of the completed Sections I and II of the questionnaires is **31 July 2023**.
18. Following the submission of the completed questionnaires by the national focal points, a preliminary analysis of the outcomes of the exercise will be conducted by a panel of heritage experts and shared with the national focal points by late 2023 for discussion and preparation of the draft Action Plan.
19. An Action Plan workshop between the World Heritage Centre, heritage experts and national focal points is foreseen in person at UNESCO Headquarters in December 2023, on which occasion participants will contribute to the draft regional Action Plan and identify subregional priorities and challenges, based on the preliminary analyses and using a results-based management approach. Some States Parties expressed their willingness to financially support the organisation of the workshop. A dedicated workshop for States Parties from South-East Europe could also be organised in autumn 2023 if the funding mobilised by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, located in Venice, is confirmed.
20. The draft Action Plan will be finalised by the World Heritage Centre and the independent experts based on the discussions held during the workshop and will be circulated among national focal points for final input prior to its finalisation and presentation to the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee, together with the regional synthesis report containing the analysis of the questionnaire data.

III. Measures taken by the Secretariat to the implementation of the Third Cycle process and recommendations

Ensuring a holistic approach of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting

21. The World Heritage Centre has developed additional and new training modules to build capacity of site managers in line with the different key topics of the questionnaire. These modules include tourism management, disaster risk reductions and Monitoring Indicators, which are relevant to ensure a comprehensive approach. Additionally, the

modules are made to specifically address the questions arising from the several site managers of the Latin America and the Caribbean, and subsequently benefited the Europe and North America region who have undergone the filling process of the exercise at the time of the preparation of this report.

22. The World Heritage Centre further carried out a global update of its web platform to be in concord with the new UNESCO Graphic Charter from December 2021 to June 2023. The Periodic Reporting webpage and platform now offers its users a clear and customisable data presentation in the form of tables and easily readable charts that are exportable in spreadsheets. The users also have the possibility to sort the information using different filters, for e.g., by World Heritage property, by question type, by chapter as well as by sub-regions. In addition, recurring technical issues raised by national Focal Points and World Heritage site managers have been fixed.
23. However, it is becoming crucial that the Centre continues to maintain and also regularly update and transform the Periodic Reporting platform. This is essential in order to adapt to the evolving trends in terms of accessibility to the platform, notably as the various ways in which site managers and national focal points access the online questionnaire, the national datasets and indicators. More often users use new connectivity devices and support (such as handheld computers, tablets and mobile phones) to carry out the exercise. Since the launch of the exercise in 2018, the Centre has recorded an increase by around 30% in its web analytics, of the users that access their Periodic Reporting questionnaire by the means of a tablet. This trend has significantly increased with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. It must be highlighted that there is a need to have additional human and financial support for the Periodic Reporting process. In addition, as a follow-up to the Declaration adopted at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2022 (28-30 September 2022, Mexico City), which underlined the need to coordinate, strengthen and develop instruments and mechanisms for the integrated analysis, monitoring and measurement of culture and its impact on sustainable development, efforts are being undertaken by the Secretariat to explore synergies between the existing Periodic Reporting platforms in the field of culture with a view to develop a shared data platform to optimise efficiency and facilitate cross-sectoral analysis.
24. The World Heritage Committee by Decisions **42 COM 10A** and **43 COM 10B** recommended the Secretariat “to continue to ensure that a holistic approach is operated across regions”. Since the launch of the Third Cycle exercise in 2018, the Centre has been continuously ensuring that a global approach is implemented throughout the process and across all regions, while also ensuring the overall coordination of the exercise by a responsible Periodic Reporting Coordinator. This continuous support has been made possible so far thanks to the funds made available by the Government of Sweden.
25. To date the current level of human resources at the Secretariat does not allow the work in the framework of this statutory process to be carried out by a permanent staff member. Therefore, States Parties are invited to contribute extrabudgetary support for the exercise, notably following the start of the exercise in Europe and North America region since September 2022 (alongside the continued follow-up in the implementation of Third Cycle action plans in other regions). This has created an increase in the coordination work and also due to the fact that the Europe and North America region alone encompasses more than half of the properties on the World Heritage List.

Feasibility of a global report following the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting

26. During the Reflection Period for the preparation of the Third Cycle, 81% of the States Parties indicated that they would welcome information on the feasibility of a Global World

Heritage Report at the end of the Third Cycle exercise (please see results global survey: whc.unesco.org/en/pr-reflection/). In accordance with Paragraph 204 of the *Operational Guidelines*, the World Heritage Committee may thus decide to use the Reflection Period to initiate the development and publication of a global World Heritage report, based on the outcomes of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting in all regions (Decision **41 COM 10A**).

27. In light of the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration calling upon the Director-General of UNESCO “to develop conceptual studies on the impact of culture in all its dimensions, together with relevant data, and produce a comprehensive Global Report on Cultural Policies on a quadrennial basis, building on information, data and existing indicators provided by its Member States, notably in the framework of the periodic reports of the Organization’s complete set of normative instruments in the field of culture, as well as related programmes and statistical and indicator frameworks at its disposal”, the World Heritage Committee may wish to ensure that the periodic reports submitted by States Parties under the Third Cycle feed into UNESCO’s Global Report on Cultural Policies due in 2025.
28. Therefore, provided that the necessary funds are secured, the Committee may wish to use the Reflection Period following the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting to consider the feasibility of moving from a regional approach to Periodic Reporting to a global approach, to consider the implementation of the *Convention* at the global level through a succinct analytical report prepared by the Secretariat, and to adapt the analytical framework of periodic reporting and its monitoring indicators to ensure effective integration into UNESCO’s cultural policy monitoring efforts. This period of reflection could thus serve to design a streamlined and comprehensive process allowing for effective coordination and benefiting from the work already undertaken at the request of the Committee in its Decision **41 COM 10A** and a relevant contribution by States Parties to the commitments of the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration.
29. Such a feasibility study will require financial and human resources support for the World Heritage Centre, which the Committee may invite States Parties to provide.

IV. DRAFT DECISION

Draft Decision: 45 COM 10E

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC/23/45.COM/10E,*
2. *Recalling Decisions **41 COM 10A**, **41 COM 11**, **42 COM 10A**, **43 COM 10A.1**, **43 COM 10B**, **43 COM 11A** and **44 COM 10D** adopted at its 41st (Krakow, 2017), 42nd (Manama, 2018), 43rd (Baku, 2019) and extended 44th (Fuzhou/Online, 2021) sessions respectively, as well as the provisions of Paragraph 204 of the Operational Guidelines,*
3. *Notes with appreciation the successful start of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting in the Europe and North America region and commends the preparations undertaken by the Secretariat prior to the exercise;*
4. *Noting that the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting is following a holistic and a State Party-driven approach, invites States Parties to financially support activities in the framework of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting in the Europe and North America region;*

5. *Thanks the Government of Sweden for the funds provided to ensure that the Secretariat is able to maintain a holistic approach throughout the Third Cycle, and calls upon States Parties to continue providing sustainable funding towards the global coordination of the Periodic Reporting exercise and its follow-up;*
6. *Takes note of the outcomes of the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration and the opportunity provided by the UNESCO Global Report on Cultural Policies to analyse the relevant input from States Parties to UNESCO's cultural policy monitoring efforts, requests the Secretariat to use the Reflection Period to proceed with a feasibility study to consider the practical modalities of enhancing the Periodic Reporting of the Convention in this framework, including, inter alia, the possibility of moving from a regional approach to Periodic Reporting to a global approach, examining the implementation of the Convention at global level through a succinct analytical report prepared by the Secretariat, and reviewing the analytical framework for Periodic Reporting and its monitoring indicators;*
7. *Calls upon States Parties to provide to the World Heritage Centre, through earmarked contributions to the World Heritage Fund, other voluntary contributions and/or seconded personnel, the necessary financial and human resources to proceed with the requested feasibility study;*
8. *Requests the World Heritage Centre to submit a report on the overall implementation of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting at its 46th session.*