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Report

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**REPORT OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE
FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL
AND NATURAL HERITAGE ON ITS ACTIVITIES**

OUTLINE

Source: Article 29.3 of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (“the World Heritage Convention”) stipulates that “the Committee shall submit a report on its activities at each of the ordinary sessions of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization”.

Background: The Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (“the World Heritage Committee”) was established under Article 8 of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by the General Conference at its 17th session on 16 November 1972.

Purpose: This document presents the report concerning the main activities and Decisions taken by the World Heritage Committee since the 23rd session of the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention held from 24 to 26 November 2021. This document is an updated summary of document WHC/23/45.COM/5A that was presented to the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee (Riyadh, 2023) and that is available at the following address: <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2023/whc23-45com-5A-en.pdf>



Job: 202303674

Introduction

1. This document is intended to provide the UNESCO General Conference with information regarding the main activities and decisions taken by the World Heritage Committee since the 23rd General Assembly of States Parties (24-26 November 2021) in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. The main activities and decisions of the World Heritage Committee have been grouped according to its Strategic Objectives. No session of the Committee was held in 2022, therefore an extended 45th session was held from 10 to 25 September 2023 in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia).

II. Information on statutory meetings

Current number of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention

2. As of May 2023, there are 195 States Parties to the World Heritage Convention¹. On 18 May 2023, Tuvalu became the 195th State Party to the Convention. With this new ratification, the UNESCO World Heritage Convention nears universal recognition, as one of the most ratified legal instruments in the world.

Current members of the World Heritage Committee

3. **21 members:** Argentina, Belgium, Bulgaria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Mali, Mexico, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Zambia.

4. Terms of office are: until the **end of the 42nd session of the General Conference (2023)**: Egypt, Ethiopia, Mali, Nigeria, Oman, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand and until **the end of the 43rd session of the General Conference (2025)**: Argentina, Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Qatar, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Zambia.

Composition of the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee since the 23rd General Assembly of State Parties (2021)

5. At its 18th extraordinary session (24-25 January 2023) the World Heritage Committee decided to hold its extended 45th session *in presentia* from 10 to 25 September 2023 in the city of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, under the Presidency of Her Highness Princess Haifa Al Mogrin (Saudi Arabia), Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of Saudi Arabia to UNESCO, designated as Chairperson, and also decided that, to give due consideration to Rule 13.3, the other Members of the Bureau shall be as follows: Argentina, Italy, Russian Federation, South Africa, Thailand, and the Rapporteur Ms Shikha Jain (India) until the end of the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee. However, in August 2023, the Saudi authorities informed that Her Highness Princess Haifa Al Mogrin would not be available during the upcoming World Heritage Committee due to other national commitments and proposed that Dr Abdulelah Al-Tokhais, Director of the Culture Sector at the Saudi National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, replace her as Chairperson of the extended 45th session of the Committee. By written consultation, the members of the World Heritage Committee approved this proposal on 23 August 2023 and Dr Abdulelah Al-Tokhais's designation as Chairperson of the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee became effective immediately.

6. Hence, the Bureau of the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee was as follows: Chairperson: Dr Abdulelah Al-Tokhais (Saudi Arabia); Vice-Chairpersons: South Africa, Thailand, Argentina, Italy and Russian Federation; and Rapporteur: Ms Shikha Jain (India).

¹ The list of States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* is available at the following web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/>

7. The Committee, at its extended 45th session, decided to hold its 19th extraordinary session during the 24th session of the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention in November 2023 in order to elect the Bureau of its 46th session, and also decided to prolong the mandate of its current Bureau (composition indicated in para. 5 above) until its 19th extraordinary session.

III. Information related to the Implementation of Strategic Objectives

(a) Strengthening the credibility of the World Heritage List

8. Since the 23rd General Assembly (2021), 45 properties have been inscribed on the World Heritage List, including five on the World Heritage List in Danger and one property was removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger. In addition, the Committee has approved the extension of five properties already inscribed. At its 18th extraordinary session (UNESCO, 2023), the World Heritage Committee inscribed three cultural properties and at its extended 45th session (Riyadh, 2023) it inscribed nine natural and 33 cultural properties and approved the extension of five properties already inscribed on the List.

9. The total number of properties on the World Heritage List as of September 2023 is 1,199 (933 cultural, 227 natural and 39 mixed).² These properties are located in 168 States Parties (i.e., 27 States Parties have no property inscribed on the World Heritage List). The breakdown by region of the World Heritage List is as follows:

- Africa: 103 properties
- Arab States: 93 properties
- Asia-Pacific: 288 properties
- Europe/North-America: 566 properties
- Latin America/Caribbean: 149 properties

(note: the trans-regional properties are counted in only one region).

10. The total number of properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger as of September 2023 is 56 (40 cultural and 16 natural)³. Furthermore, out of six recommendations to inscribe properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger, the Committee decided to inscribe two properties on this List.

11. At its extended 45th session, the World Heritage Committee, following rich deliberations, decided not to endorse the Advisory Bodies' recommendations on nominations, which were presented in the Draft Decision for 17 out of 20 cases. Nine Referrals became Inscriptions, seven Deferrals became Inscriptions and one Non-Inscription became a Deferral.

12. The *ad-hoc* Working Group established by the Committee in 2014, which meets intersessionally was requested to (a) analyse and propose sustainable and innovative solutions for financing of the nomination process including the Preliminary Assessment and (b) present concrete proposals on the long-term financial sustainability of the World Heritage Convention, on the possibility of having additional service providers, and on feasible procedures related to Article 11.3 of the Convention. The Committee, at its extended 45th session, decided to transfer the mandate of the *ad hoc* Working Group to an Open-ended Working Group, which will have also to consider how to start a fundamental reflection on the operations of the World Heritage Convention. The Committee will review the outcomes of this Open-ended Working Group at its 46th session.

13. In addition, international, inter-regional and regional meetings as well as workshops have been organized for the implementation of the Global Strategy for a representative, balanced and credible

² The World Heritage List is available online at the following address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>.

³ The World Heritage List in Danger is available online at the following address: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/danger>

World Heritage List. Details of all these activities are available in document WHC/23/45.COM/5A (<https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2023/whc23-45com-5A-en.pdf>).

(b) Ensuring the effective conservation of World Heritage properties

State of conservation reports of World Heritage properties examined by the World Heritage Committee since the 23rd General Assembly (2021)

14. A total of **263** State of conservation reports, including **53** reports of properties inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, were examined during the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee (Riyadh, 2023). Since the 23rd session of the General Assembly of States Parties in 2021, 5 properties have been inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger and one property has been removed from it.

Approved International Assistance (IA) from the World Heritage Fund since the 22nd General Assembly (2019)

15. An amount of US \$1,132,943 has been approved since the 23rd General Assembly (2021). Detailed information can be found at <https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2023/whc23-45com-14-en.pdf>

Periodic reporting

16. Reports on the results of the Third Cycle of the Periodic Reporting exercise in Asia-Pacific and in Latin America and the Caribbean were presented at the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee (Riyadh, 2023). A follow-up on the implementation of the Action Plans for the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting in the Africa and Arab States regions was also presented, as well as progress report on the implementation of the Action Plans for the Second Cycle of Periodic Reporting in the other regions and a progress report on the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting in the other regions.

Reinforced Monitoring Mechanism

17. The Reinforced Monitoring Mechanism is a constant cooperative process with the State Party concerned (Decision **31 COM 5.2**). Based on the World Heritage Committee's decisions, the Reinforced Monitoring Mechanism applies to 11 properties: *Manovo-Gounda Saint-Floris* (Central African Republic), *Virunga National Park* (Democratic Republic of the Congo), *Kahuzi-Biega National Park* (Democratic Republic of the Congo), *Okapi Wildlife Reserve* (Democratic Republic of the Congo), *Timbuktu* (Mali), *Tomb of Askia* (Mali), *Temple of Preah Vihear* (Cambodia), *Old City of Jerusalem and its Walls* (site proposed by Jordan), *Medieval Monuments in Kosovo* (Serbia), *Selous Game Reserve* (United Republic of Tanzania), *Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra* (Indonesia).

(c) Promoting the development of effective capacity-building in States Parties

Capacity-building strategy

18. Over the past biennium, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, in close cooperation with States Parties and category 2 centres, have undertaken a number of activities which contributed directly to the implementation of the World Heritage Capacity-Building Strategy (WHCBS), adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 35th session (UNESCO, 2011). These included programmes aimed at strengthening regional and national institutions responsible for heritage protection, training initiatives targeting professionals and youth and the development of new guidance materials. An independent results-based evaluation of the outcomes of the WHCBS, based on close consultation and a participatory, transparent, and inclusive process with the States Parties and other capacity-building stakeholders and beneficiaries, has been examined by the Committee at its extended 45th session. During this session, the Committee decided to request the World Heritage Centre, in cooperation with ICCROM, IUCN and ICOMOS, to develop a new World Heritage Capacity-Building Strategy for the decade 2025-2035.

Education activities

19. A number of international and regional World Heritage Youth Fora were organized by the World Heritage Centre, or with the assistance of the latter, to develop educational activities, including by the Host Country of the last session of the World Heritage Committee (Saudi Arabia).

20. The World Heritage Volunteers 2022 campaign carried out 43 action camp projects at 42 World Heritage properties and sites on the Tentative Lists in 22 countries and the 2023 campaign is currently implementing 74 action camp projects at 67 World Heritage properties and sites on the Tentative Lists in 33 countries.

21. A detailed inventory of the activities mentioned above, and others education activities can be found in document WHC/23/45.COM/5A.

(d) Increasing public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through communication

Awareness-raising

22. In 2022, the UNESCO World Heritage website (<https://whc.unesco.org>) received an average of 43,602 visits per day. The visits to the World Heritage Centre website represent 39% of the total UNESCO page views.

23. Articles and interviews on World Heritage have been published in response to requests by numerous national and international well-known media.

Publications

24. Between 2022 and 2023, 43,000 copies of the map were produced and disseminated in English, French, and Spanish. The Arabic version was electronic and is available online.

25. Four issues of the magazine *World Heritage* (issues 101 to 104) were published between November 2021 and September 2023.

Bilateral Agreements with States Parties and Partnerships

26. During the reported period, bilateral agreements were concluded or continued with 14 States Parties and the European Commission.

27. During the reported period, the World Heritage Centre has established and/or extended 19 partnerships with private sector companies, foundations, and NGOs, all of which are managed in close consultation with UNESCO's Bureau of Strategic Planning (BSP). Inventories of on-going and envisaged partnerships with the private sector and foundations were presented to the Committee in document WHC/23/45.COM/5A.