



**Eighth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group  
in relation to Resolution 23 GA 11  
concerning Climate Change and World Heritage**

**3 November 2023  
(in presentia / online meeting)  
Room XI  
UNESCO Headquarters**

**REPORT**

The meeting was attended by 72 States Parties to the Convention, with a total of 130 active participants (both *in presentia* in Room XI and connected by the Zoom link), as well as 62 webcast connections.

**Opening of the meeting of the Open-ended Working Group**

At the opening of the eighth and last meeting, the **Chairperson of the Open-ended Working Group** welcomed all participants and thanked them for their flexibility and availability. She raised her deep concerns regarding the work progress of the Working Group, as it was running extremely late. She insisted that this last meeting was the only opportunity left for the Working Group to reach consensus. She highlighted that the Group had not been able to discuss the Policy Document's implementation measures, although they were part of its mandate. She once more reiterated that the Policy Document was non-binding, did not create any new obligations for States Parties and was by no means calling into question the principles set out in the context of climate change legally-binding.

Before continuing the revision of the Policy Document, the **Rapporteur** presented her report of the seventh meeting of the Working Group, held on 18 July 2023.

In order to make the best use of the limited time ahead, the **Chairperson** suggested to:

- Firstly, focus on very concrete decisions to make in **Annexes I and III, Paragraph 21** and the part of **Paragraph 58** related to GHG emissions;
- Secondly, move to the paragraphs related to the issue of CBDR-RC, UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, such as **Paragraphs 58, 25, 27 (Goal 3) and 94**.
- Thirdly, to go back to the paragraphs already approved by the Working Group and left in square brackets until the end of the Policy Document's revision, namely **Paragraphs 27 (chapeau and Goal 2), 11 and 2**.

### ***Annex I – Glossary (Definitions of Common but Differentiated Responsibility and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs))***

The **Chairperson** recalled that, in Annex I, participants should decide whether the definitions of CBDR-RC and NDCs shall be included in or deleted from the Glossary of the Policy Document.

After a long debate on whether such a glossary should be part of the Policy Document as Annex I, notably considering that the Glossary includes the definitions of terms and concepts such as the CBDR-RC Principle and the NDCs, that have not been subject to States negotiations nor formal adoption, even in other major international for a such as that of the UNFCCC, a proposal was put forward by the **Rapporteur** to take out Annex I entirely from the Policy Document and to have the Glossary as an educational resource on the website of the World Heritage Centre and as a living document reflecting updates from the UNFCCC and the IPCC as well as the CBD and IPBES. A proposal was also put forward to add a disclaimer on the website, clarifying that the definitions included in the Glossary have never been formally negotiated nor adopted by States' experts.

***The Working Group consequently decided that Annex I will be moved to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre's website as an educational resource and a disclaimer will be added to clarify the status of the definitions included in the Glossary.***

### ***Annex III, Paragraph 9, second bullet***

In **Annex III, Paragraph 9, second bullet**, it was suggested to delete the word “*Net*” in front of the reference to “*GHG emissions*”. The Delegations of **Ecuador** and **Brazil** had **previously disagreed with this proposal**. In a spirit of consensus, the Delegation of the **United States of America** withdrew its amendment and agreed to keep the reference to “*Net GHG emissions*”.

***Annex III, Paragraph 9, second bullet was adopted as amended.***

### ***Paragraph 21***

During its previous meeting in July, the Working Group had agreed on a shorter text for this paragraph, which was left in square brackets. However, the Delegation of **Argentina** insisted that Paragraph 21 could not be agreed on before Paragraphs 25 and 94 were also ready to be adopted, as it considers them as a ‘package’. The **Chairperson**, strongly supported by the Delegation of **Switzerland**, suggested to first start with the simplest issues and to leave the more complex topics at the end of the meeting.

Expressing its disagreement, the Delegation of **Argentina** asked for the deletion of the entire Paragraph 21. The Delegation of **Grenada** disagreed with the proposal and insisted to keep the reference to the “*precautionary approach*”. This intervention was supported by the Delegation of **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** (supported by the Delegations of **Mexico**, **Grenada** and **Switzerland**), which proposed to add “*...and contributing to protect the World Heritage properties from these risks.*” in order to focus the precautionary approach on climate actions for World Heritage.

The Delegation of **Saudi Arabia** suggested to add a “chapeau” text to Paragraph 21 to clarify that international climate policies are governed by the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, and that these international agreements provide a broader framework for global climate action and establish commitments and obligations for signatory parties.

The **Rapporteur** proposed to move this new sentence at the end of Paragraph 20 regarding the scope of the Policy Document, to which **Saudi Arabia** agreed. Building upon the Rapporteur's proposal, the Delegation of **Argentina** added a reference to the UNESCO Declaration of Ethical Principles in relation to climate change and suggested moving this sentence to a "chapeau" text to the Guiding Principles before Paragraph 21.

Reacting to these proposals, the Delegation of the **United States of America** proposed adding "...*(t)he following principles should be considered within the scope of this Policy Document in relation to World Heritage protection.*" This new "chapeau" text was supported by the Delegation of **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**.

The Delegation of **Argentina** finally suggested adjusting the language of the last sentence of Paragraph 21 to replace "as a reason for not implementing such a precautionary approach" by "as a reason for postponing action".

**Paragraph 21 was adopted as amended.**

### **Paragraph 58**

After a longer discussion, a consensus was reached on **Paragraph 58**. The Delegation of **China** asked to delete the reference to "1.5°C" in contrast to the Delegations of **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**, the Kingdom of the **Netherlands**, **Switzerland** and **France**, which preferred keeping the first section of the text with no further amendments. Furthermore, the Delegations of the **Kingdom of the Netherlands**, **Switzerland** and **France** stressed the importance of finalizing the document today and hence emphasized that the Working Group should not consider any new amendment to the text introduced at this final stage.

Further discussion took place in the last section of the Paragraph on keeping (**China**) or deleting (**United States of America**) "*in line with the aforementioned guiding principles of this policy*". To maintain the "*guiding principles*" in the text, the Delegation of **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** proposed a change of language, saying "*taking into account*" instead of "*in line with*", which was agreed upon by the **United States of America**.

**Paragraph 58 was adopted as amended.**

### **Paragraphs 25**

The **Rapporteur** introduced Paragraph 25 by saying that States Parties had to decide whether they wished to rather go for Version B. or Version C., in reference to the CBDR-RC Principle.

The Delegations of **Argentina**, **Brazil**, **Peru** and **China** expressed their preference for Version C, but stated that, to facilitate reaching a consensus, they could accept Version B. as long as the reference to "*principles*" was maintained. The Delegations of the **Syrian Arab Republic**, **South Africa**, the **Russian Federation**, **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**, **Colombia**, **India**, **China** and **Paraguay** also raised the importance of having the "*principles*" included.

The Delegation of the **United States of America**, supported by the Delegation of **Japan**, **Canada**, **Norway**, **Germany** and **Australia**, expressed its strong preference for Version B., but proposed to delete the mention of Paragraph 11 and to add a reference to the Paris Agreement instead.

The last proposal by the Delegation of the **United States of America** received no objection.

**Paragraph 25 was adopted as amended.**

### ***Paragraph 27, Goal 3***

The first issue on Goal 3 of Paragraph 27 was for the participants to decide between addressing climate mitigation with a reference to their NDCs or with their commitments under the Paris Agreement. The Delegation of the **United States of America** suggested replacing the reference to the NDCs with “*consistent with their commitments under the Paris Agreement*”.

The second focus of the debate was whether the Working Group wanted to refer to “*appropriate measures*” more generally or to clarify the text with “*climate mitigation frameworks*”. The Delegation of the **United States of America** suggested replacing “*appropriate climate mitigation frameworks*” by “*appropriate measures*”.

***Goal 3 of Paragraph 27 was adopted as amended.***

### ***Paragraph 94, first bullet point***

The **Rapporteur** recalled that Paragraph 94 was also put on hold until the Working Group came up with a consensual agreement on the integration of the CBDR-RC principle within the Policy Document.

The Delegation of **Australia** suggested replacing the explicit reference to the CBDR-RC principle by the “*Paris Agreement*”. The Delegation of **Brazil**, supported by **Argentina**, agreed with this proposal but asked to specify “*the Paris Agreement adopted under the UNFCCC*” to stay consistent within the Policy Document.

The Delegation of **Argentina** further suggested to erase the reference to the precautionary approaches since this principle is not part of the Paris Agreement. The Delegation of **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** disagreed with the deletion of the CBDR-RC principle and of the precautionary approach.

While previously discussing the adoption of Paragraph 21, the Delegation of **Argentina** agreed to keep and clarify the reference to the precautionary approach in Paragraph 94 only if Paragraph 21 was removed from the Policy Document, but proposed however a new wording as follows: “*Implementing precautionary approaches aimed at minimizing the risks to World Heritage properties*”, which was agreed by the Delegation of **Saudi Arabia**. However, the Delegation of **Grenada** strongly opposed this position, and insisted on the importance to keep Paragraph 21 and to retain the reference to the precautionary approach in both Paragraphs 21 and 94.

The Working Group, in a spirit of consensus, decided to keep Paragraph 21 and to adopt Paragraph 94 as previously amended.

***Paragraph 94, first bullet point, was adopted as amended.***

### ***Paragraphs 27 (“chapeau” text and Goal 2), 11 and 2***

As agreed during its previous meetings, the Open-ended Working Group came back to the paragraphs it had already approved but left in square brackets until the rest of the Policy Document was ready to be adopted.

***Paragraphs 27 (“chapeau” text and Goal 2), 11 and 2 were adopted as amended without further discussion.***

### **Implementation measures**

The Chairperson congratulated the Open-ended Working Group for its efforts and its success to come up with a consensual text. She reiterated the mandate given by the General Assembly to the Working Group to also develop proposals for the implementation of the policy document.

The **Deputy Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Ms. Jyoti Hosagrahar** was invited to provide clarifications on what was expected from the Open-ended Working Group regarding implementation measures on the Policy Document. In her intervention, the **Deputy Director of the World Heritage Centre** recalled that by Decision **44 COM 7C** (also referred to in the General Assembly’s Resolution establishing the mandate of this Open-ended Working Group), the World Heritage Committee, at its extended 44th session in July 2021, has already decided on a series of measures to facilitate the implementation of the Policy Document, once adopted by the General Assembly. She added that during the consultation of World Heritage Committee members requested by the Committee itself at its extended 44th session, a number of suggestions highlighted the issue of the implementation of the Policy Document after its adoption.

The **Chairperson** then invited the Delegation of **Australia** to give a brief introduction to its Non-Paper on the implementation of the Policy Document. For more information on this Non-Paper, please see the online documentation published under the eighth meeting of the Open-ended Working Group (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/1166/&p=whcc>).

The **Chairperson** thanked the Deputy Director for UNESCO World Heritage and Australia for their clarifications and proposals. No further comments were made.

### **Closing of the meeting**

In her closing remarks, the **Chairperson** thanked for the collaboration and fruitful discussions and highlighted that the final outcome has the merit of consensus after long and productive debates. She reminded that the work on the Policy Document has started many years ago and that she was confident that it will be a great guidance for all States Parties to the World Heritage Convention.

The **Director of World Heritage, Mr. Lazare Eloundou-Assomo**, thanked the Chairperson for her wisdom and diplomatic skills. He congratulated all members of the Open-ended Working Group on the historic work, as this is the first update made to the Policy Document on World Heritage and Climate Change. He continued in thanking the Rapporteur for her outstanding work throughout this process.

***The Chairperson closed the meeting at 6.20 pm.***