

States Parties to the World Heritage Convention**Culture Sector
World Heritage Centre**

Ref: CL/WHC-23/07

7 December 2023

Subject: First meeting of the Open-ended Working Group of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention in conformity with Decision 45 COM 11

Dear Sir/Madam,

By Decision **45 COM 11** (attached herewith), the World Heritage Committee decided to establish an Open-ended Working Group of States Parties to the Convention, in order to:

- a) Consider the necessary improvement aiming at reducing the gap of the representation of States Parties on the World Heritage List and enhancing the balance of the List,
- b) Propose solutions to the technical evaluation requirements, including improving capacity building activities,
- c) Explore the possibility of using additional service providers,
- d) Propose sustainable solutions to the financial requirements of the nomination process to implement the above including the Preliminary Assessment.

Furthermore, the Open-ended Working Group will be required to consider the mandate and working methods for its extension, with a view to starting a fundamental reflection on the operation of the World Heritage Convention.

As per Decision **45 COM 11**, the Open-ended Working Group will work in consultation with the World Heritage Centre, Advisory Bodies and as appropriate, relevant stakeholders, and will submit its report and recommendations to the 46th session of the Committee.

I am pleased to inform you that a first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group is scheduled to take place on **5 February 2024 from 2.30 pm to 5.30 pm (Paris time)**, both *in praesentia* at UNESCO Headquarters and online (exact room and technical details will be communicated in due course). This inception meeting will be the occasion to proceed to the election of a Bureau (i.e., Chairperson, 4 Vice-Chairpersons and a Rapporteur), to discuss the expected outcomes and to decide on the frequency and length of the meetings.

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In this regard, I encourage all electoral group to consult between themselves to propose candidates to the Bureau of the Open-ended Working Group before end of January 2024. Allow me in this regard to recall the Committee consensus in favour of Saudi Arabia assuming the chairpersonship of the Open-ended Working Group.

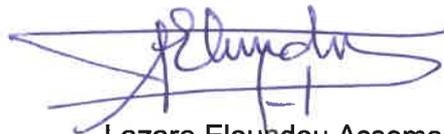
In accordance with the Committee's decision, States Parties are invited to voluntarily contribute to the creation of this Open-ended Working Group through voluntary contributions. In this regard, I would like to sincerely thank Brazil, Switzerland and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for having already expressed their intention to financially contribute to the organization of the meetings of the Group.

Please note that the Secretariat will provide a budget estimate of the costs of meetings once the Open-ended Working Group has decided on their length and frequency.

Please do not hesitate to contact Mr Alessandro Balsamo (a.balsamo@unesco.org) or Ms Frédérique Aubert (f.aubert@unesco.org) should you require any further information.

Thanking you for your continuous collaboration and support in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'L. Assomo', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Lazare Eloundou Assomo
Director

cc: Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee (ICOMOS, ICCROM, IUCN)

11. FOLLOW-UP TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF EVALUATIONS AND AUDITS ON WORKING METHODS AND OUTCOMES OF THE AD-HOC WORKING GROUP

Decision: 45 COM 11

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Having examined Document WHC/23/45.COM/11.Rev,
2. Expresses its appreciation to the Ad-hoc Working Group for its efforts and takes note of its recommendations;
3. Recalling Decisions **40 COM 11**, **42 COM 12A**, **43 COM 8**, **43 COM 12**, **44 COM 8**, **44 COM 11** and **44 COM 12** adopted at its 40th (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016), 42nd (Manama, 2018), 43rd (Baku, 2019) and extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021) sessions respectively,
4. Taking into account the heavy budget constraints of the World Heritage Fund and the need for an effective management of the increasing size of the List and the call for a more balanced World Heritage List, considering the aspirations of non-represented and under-represented States Parties and regions on the World Heritage List;
5. Taking note of the Global Strategy adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 18th session (Phuket, 1994) to provide a broad framework for an analysis and action programme to reduce the gap in regional representation to achieve a balanced and credible World Heritage List, considering the aspirations of non-represented and under-represented States Parties and regions on the World Heritage List;
6. Decides to create an Open-ended Working Group of States Parties to the Convention, transfer the mandate of the Ad-hoc Working Group to it and allow all States Parties to the Convention to continue contributing to the discussions in order to:
 - a) Consider the necessary improvement aiming at reducing the gap of the representation of States Parties on the World Heritage List and enhancing the balance of the List,
 - b) Propose solutions to the technical evaluation requirements, including improving capacity building activities,
 - c) Explore the possibility of using additional service providers,
 - d) Propose sustainable solutions to the financial requirements of the nomination process to implement the above including the Preliminary Assessment,
 - e) Consider the mandate and working methods for an extension of this Open-ended Working Group, with a view to starting a fundamental reflection on the operation of the World Heritage Convention;
7. Also decides that the Open-ended Working Group shall work in consultation with the World Heritage Centre, Advisory Bodies and, as appropriate, relevant stakeholders, and submit its report and recommendations to the 46th session of the Committee;

8. Calls upon States Parties to the Convention to voluntarily contribute to the creation of this Open-ended Working Group through voluntary contributions;
9. Also takes note of the Committee consensus in favour of Saudi Arabia assuming the chairpersonship of the Open-ended Working Group.