



BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP

IN RELATION TO DECISION **45 COM 11**

APRIL 2024

Prepared by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre

Table of Contents

BACKGROUND	3
PART I – 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	4
A. Overall context	4
B. Normative work by the World Heritage Committee and by the General Assembly of States Parties concerning credibility, representativity and balance of the World Heritage List: a comprehensive overview of Decisions and Resolutions taken between 1977-2023.....	5
C. Processes, measures, provisions, objectives and audits	8
1. International cooperation and assistance	8
2. Tentative Lists Process	9
3. The Global Study.....	9
4. The World Heritage Strategic Plan of 1992.....	10
5. The Global Strategy (1994)	10
6. The Advisory Bodies Gap Analysis (2004).....	12
7. The Advisory Bodies' Thematic Studies	12
8. Paragraphs 59, 60, 60.bis and 61 of the Operational Guidelines	13
9. Limitations to the number of nominations to be examined	13
10. The Budapest Declaration and the 5Cs	15
11. Draft Nominations.....	15
12. The 2011 Audit of the Global Strategy.....	16
13. Upstream Process.....	16
14. Preliminary Assessment.....	17
15. Declaration of principles to promote international solidarity and cooperation to preserve World Heritage.....	17
16. Africa 2009.....	19
17. Priority Africa.....	19
18. Capacity Building Strategy	20
D. Other reflections	21
1. The Future of the Convention.....	21
2. The Reform of the Nomination Process.....	22
E. Advisory Bodies Recommendations and Committee Decisions (analysis of the period between 2010-2023)	23
F. In relation to balance of the World Heritage List	24
G. Manuals and Guidance.....	25
H. Some suggestions for possible ways forward.....	26
1. (Sub)regional relevance for global importance	27
2. Nominations	27
3. Gap analysis and thematic studies	28
4. Full Stakeholder and Rights-holder involvement.....	29
5. Updating nomination format	29

6.	International Cooperation	30
7.	Tentative Lists	31
8.	Capacity building.....	31
9.	Resources.....	33
PART II – PROPOSE SOLUTIONS TO THE TECHNICAL EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING IMPROVING CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES		33
A.	Advisory Bodies.....	33
B.	Capacity building	34
PART III – EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF USING ADDITIONAL SERVICE PROVIDERS.....		35
A.	Background.....	35
B.	Possible options for additional service providers presented to the 2022/2023 Ad-hoc working group.....	38
	Option 1	38
	Accreditation of additional service providers + services budgeted in advance.....	38
	Option 2	38
	Accreditation of additional service providers + services budgeted in advance for the current service providers and on an ad-hoc basis for the additional ones	38
	Option 3	38
	Accreditation of additional service providers + services budgeted on an ad-hoc basis	38
	Option 4	38
	No accreditation of additional service providers + contracting on an ad-hoc basis	38
PART IV – PROPOSE SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS TO THE FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE NOMINATION PROCESS TO IMPLEMENT THE ABOVE INCLUDING THE PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT		40
A.	Background.....	40
B.	Cost of the evaluation of nominations.....	41
1.	Costs of evaluations: Preliminary assessment.....	41
2.	Costs of evaluations by the Advisory Bodies: second phase	41
C.	Summary of the solutions envisaged for increasing the level of the World Heritage Fund and their outcomes (as of end 2023).....	42

BACKGROUND

1. At its extended 45th session in September 2023, the World Heritage Committee (hereafter “the Committee”), through its [Decision 45 COM 11 §6](#), decided 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;”*
2. It is worth recalling that the intersessional Ad-hoc Working Group was established by the Committee at its 38th session (Doha, 2014) by Decision [38 COM 13, §9](#) to further discuss some critical issues between Committee sessions. While the composition as well as mandate of the Group varied through the years (all Committee members plus a limited number of States Parties non-Committee members, and mandate adjusted at each session), the two main issues covered by the seven Ad-hoc Working Groups, which met between 2014 and 2023, were as follows: the nomination process (operationality, credibility and representativity of the List) and the sustainability of the World Heritage Fund, both issues being often interlinked. The matter regarding modalities for the possible use of advisory services from other entities was more recently part of the mandate of the Group. Following Decision **45 COM 11**; all these topics are now part of the mandate of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG).
3. During its inception meeting on 9 February 2024, the OEWG confirmed the need to have from the Secretariat detailed background information as soon as possible, so as to avoid repeating and rediscussing decisions and recommendations already examined and made in the past. This document should also enable the OEWG drawing on past actions to undertake strategic thinking for the future. It was agreed that the Secretariat would prepare this background document, and that it would include a bibliography of previous documents related to the topics under discussion.
4. This document follows the structure provided by the mandate of the OEWG, the four parts of the document corresponding to the first four paragraphs of the mandate. The fifth paragraph foreseeing a reflection on the extension of the mandate of the OEWG is under the purview and decision of the Group itself.

PART I – 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

A. Overall context

5. The preamble of the World Heritage Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage supposes “that parts of the cultural and natural heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole.” For this purpose, the preamble demands “a convention establishing an effective system of collective protection of the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value”.
6. The UNESCO World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 1972) is widely acknowledged as the primary conservation instrument for identifying and protecting the outstanding cultural and natural heritage of humankind for the present and future generations. As the only Convention in the world encompassing both natural and cultural heritage, it represents a unique and powerful link between the instruments dealing with cultural heritage and those addressing natural heritage.
7. Although adopted in 1972, the Convention came into force only in 1976 after ratification by 20 countries, and inscriptions on the World Heritage List started in 1978. Today the Convention is almost universally ratified. The number of countries that have ratified the Convention substantiates its popularity and success, and currently stands at 195. Currently, the World Heritage List comprises 1199 properties, including 933 cultural, 227 natural and 39 mixed properties.
8. The principal requirement for including properties on the World Heritage List is that nominated properties must meet the threshold of Outstanding Universal Value (Paragraph 49 of the Operational Guidelines), i.e. ‘...significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity’. The determination of whether or not a property has Outstanding Universal Value is decided by the World Heritage Committee using “such criteria as it shall establish” (Article 11.2 of the World Heritage Convention).
9. The World Heritage Convention establishes a World Heritage List to which States Parties having ratified it can nominate cultural and/or natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value. For over more than four decades the List has progressively grown longer, but still demonstrates gaps. It has been observed, for example, particularly in reference to UNESCO regions, that there is a strong predominance of some regions on the World Heritage List, while certain countries in other regions of the world are only marginally or not at all represented. Similarly, certain typologies of properties are well represented, while others may be absent or slightly represented.

B. Normative work by the World Heritage Committee and by the General Assembly of States Parties concerning credibility, representativity and balance of the World Heritage List: a comprehensive overview of Decisions and Resolutions taken between 1977-2023¹

10. This section presents a chronological synopsis of World Heritage Committee's Decisions and General Assembly's Resolutions relating to the establishment of the World Heritage List, its credibility, representativity and balance. The full text and list of the related decisions and resolutions is available as Annex 2 to this document.
11. **In 1977**, the World Heritage Committee initiated debates on the establishment of the World Heritage List, focusing on the philosophical underpinnings and the criteria for property inclusion ([Decision 1 COM VI.A\(a\).17](#)). Members stressed the need for an exclusive List, emphasizing geographic and thematic balance, and the role of both nominating States Parties and the Committee in ensuring exclusivity ([Decision 1 COM VI.A\(a\).18](#)). Discussions also focused on the challenges of adopting criteria at the national level, recognising the changing and subjective nature of evaluations ([Decision 1 COM VI.A\(a\).19](#)). The adoption of criteria for inscription provided critically important guidance for States Parties in nominating properties, while proposals for limiting initial submissions were considered but not endorsed ([Decision 1 COM VI.A\(a\).20](#)).
12. **In 1985**, during the 9th session of the World Heritage Committee (Decision 9 COM VII.14-18), the Committee addressed the surge in nominations and the need for effective monitoring of conservation status. Instead of imposing strict rules, the Committee suggested voluntary restrictions on the number of nominations from States with many properties.
13. **In 1987**, the 11th session of the World Heritage Committee addressed the challenges posed by a rising number of nominations ([Decision 11 COM XII.31-36](#)). Concerns over imbalance and the impact on the evaluation process led to considerations such as voluntary limits by States Parties and the establishment of a working group to review existing sites and criteria application. Simultaneously, the session recognized representation imbalances and underrepresentation of African States on the Committee ([Decision 11 COM XV.42-43](#)). The Committee requested proposals to rectify this issue, aligning with the Convention's principles.
14. **In 1988**, the 12th session of the World Heritage Committee focused on enhancing representativity and balance in the evaluation process ([Decision 12 COM VII.12-19](#)). A working group was established to improve efficiency, emphasising careful nomination preparation and the need of a global study to foster property identification.
15. **In 1989**, during its 13th session, the World Heritage Committee, in response to the General Assembly's resolution, allocated funds to ensure equitable representation of different regions and cultures ([Decision 13 COM VII](#)). More in particular, a budget of 20,000 USD was destined to facilitate the participation of experts from the United Nations List of Least Developed Countries. This measure aimed to enhance diversity among Committee members and promote turnover. The 13th session also addressed the Global Study and Thematic Studies ([Decision 13 COM XIV.42-43](#)). Plans for thematic studies, including mixed sites and rural landscapes, were endorsed.

¹ For the purpose of transparency and future reference, it is important to present the methodology followed to prepare the present chapter of the document. Following a thorough search within the Database of the World Heritage Convention, using the keyword/theme "Credibility", it was retrieved a comprehensive list of decisions and resolutions forming the pool of information analysed. The first broad result was reviewed through the lens of more specific criteria identifying categories such as balance, representativity, credibility, limitations on the number of nominations and the Global Strategy. This also implied to filter out decisions and resolutions that were too geographically specific and not of global significance. The extracted and synthesized relevant information from the selected decisions and resolutions aimed to provide a coherent narrative that highlights the global significance of the decisions.

16. In **1994**, the 18th session of the World Heritage Committee launched the Global Strategy for a Representative World Heritage List ([Decision 18 COM X.10](#)). Efforts by the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS to prepare a conceptual framework were discussed. Recommendations from an expert meeting prompted actions for 1995.
17. In **1995**, the 19th session of the World Heritage Committee focused on a balanced representation of natural and cultural heritage ([Decision 19 COM X](#)). The Committee urged States Parties to nominate sites of under-represented types. A progress report on the implementation of the “Global Strategy and Thematic Studies” in 1995 ([Decision 19 COM XI.A.1.3](#) and [Decision 19 COM XI.B.10](#)) highlighted priority areas for subregional meetings on African and Caribbean cultural heritage.
18. In **1997**, a comprehensive review of progress on the Global Strategy demonstrated a multifaceted effort ([Decision 21 COM IX.1-9](#)). The Committee recognised achievements in Africa, where expert meetings and workshops facilitated the preparation of Tentative Lists and nominations. Challenges, including financial constraints, were acknowledged, prompting proposals for a coherent training policy in collaboration with ICCROM. The Pacific region also received attention, with the Committee supporting Global Strategy work in the sub-region and proposing a follow-up meeting. These decisions underscored the Committee's commitment to addressing representativity concerns by encouraging adherence to and implementation of the Convention in underrepresented regions and by financing Global Strategy meetings ([Decision 21 COM IX.10](#)).
19. During the 22nd session in **1998**, the World Heritage Committee expressed gratitude for the Amsterdam Global Strategy meeting outcomes, emphasising the urgent need for a representative list ([Decision 22 COM IX.1](#)). The Committee outlined a two-part policy for nominations, valuing submissions from all States Parties and strategically focusing resources to increase nominations from underrepresented regions. The Global Strategy was extended to also cover natural heritage.
20. During its 23rd session in **1999**, the World Heritage Committee addressed significant matters related to the Global Strategy. [Decision 23 COM VI.14](#) acknowledged the positive impact of regional action plans on the Global Strategy's implementation. [Resolution 12 GA 30-48](#), from the 12th session of the General Assembly in 1999, underscored the paramount importance of the Global Strategy. It urged States Parties to integrate heritage protection into planning, prioritise categories emphasising human-environment interaction, and invited voluntary actions from States Parties with a substantial representation of sites and those with under-represented heritage. The resolution also called for continued support from Advisory Bodies, the Committee, the Secretariat, and the international community in implementing the Global Strategy. Additionally, it addressed concerns about equitable representation within the Committee, proposing the establishment of a working group to study this issue and submit proposals to the 13th General Assembly of States Parties.
21. At the 24th session of the World Heritage Committee in **2000** discussions emphasised the importance of implementing the Global Strategy, particularly in Africa, with calls for expanded partnerships ([Decision 24 COM IX.1-11](#)). Efforts were directed at improving the representativity of the World Heritage List. Aiming to manage the Committee's workload and improve the geographic distribution of properties on the List, the Committee adopted the “Cairns Decision” introducing, for the first time, limits to the number of nominations to be examined.
22. In **2003**, States were encouraged to link the revision of their Tentative Lists to the Periodic Reporting, and enhanced status for Tentative Lists was recommended. The importance of cooperation between well-represented and under-represented States Parties was stressed, along with support for practical actions to achieve a balanced and representative List ([Decisions 27 COM 13.1](#), [27 COM 13.3](#)).
23. The [Decision 28 COM 13.1](#), adopted during the 28th session in **2004**, emphasises the importance of implementing the “Cairns Decision” and addressing gaps in the List due to technical capacity limitations. The Decision calls for strategic capacity-building efforts, particularly in the identification of potential properties, preparation of Tentative Lists,

nomination dossiers, and conservation management. It urged increased support to under-represented States Parties and requested analyses by IUCN and ICOMOS.

24. In the same year, a legal opinion on the imposition of restrictions on the submission of nominations by members of the Committee was presented at the 7th extraordinary session of the Committee (Document [WHC-04/7 EXT.COM/4B.Add](#)). In the light of Article 11.1 of the Convention, which provides that every State Party shall submit “*an inventory of property forming part of the cultural and natural heritage, situated in its territory and suitable for inclusion in the list provided for in paragraph 2 of this Article*”, this legal opinion states that “*the submission of nominations by States Parties constitutes the exercise of the right to have their inventory considered by the Committee, a right which stems from the terms of Article 11, paragraph 2.*” It follows that prohibiting States Parties from nominating a site would result in those States Parties being unable to exercise their rights under the Convention.
25. In 2007, [Resolution 16 GA 9](#) by the General Assembly expressed concern over limited progress in achieving a balanced World Heritage List and urged increased support, emphasising representativity.
26. In 2010, the Committee adopted Terms of Reference for the external audit evaluation of the Global Strategy and PACT initiative. ([Decision 34 COM 9A](#)). The Phuket expert meeting introduced the new concept of Upstream Process.
27. In 2011, in its [Decision 35 COM 12C](#), the Committee acknowledged the launch of ten pilot projects to test the Upstream Process, urging collaboration and financial support for States Parties that do not have the necessary financial means.
28. In 2012, [Decision 36 COM 9A](#) the Committee noted that the World Heritage Centre, in close collaboration with the Advisory Bodies, produced a working document on the recommendations of the independent evaluation by UNESCO’s external auditor with a prioritised list of recommendations in the framework of the objectives of the Strategic Action Plan. [Decision 36 COM 12C](#) addressed the improvement of Upstream Process pilot projects urging international support to State Parties that were not able to identify adequate resources.
29. In 2013, [Decision 37 COM 9](#) underscored the importance of enhanced dialogue and communication among relevant parties, urging collaboration and international assistance for successful pilot projects.
30. In 2015, [Decision 39 COM 9A](#) acknowledged the Upstream Process and its definition was introduced in the text of the Operational Guidelines. In its [Resolution 20 GA 9](#), the General Assembly, while noting good follow-up of most of the recommendations of the implementation as detailed in the implementation plan, urged the Committee to pursue undertaken efforts for an independent evaluation of the Global Strategy and the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan as part of the reflections on the Future of the World Heritage Convention.
31. In 2017, [Decision 41 COM 9A](#) highlighted progress in Upstream Processes, approving a revised request format and setting a trial limit of ten requests annually. It established prioritisation criteria and called for progress reports on pilot projects.
32. In its [Decision 42 COM 12A](#) in 2018, the World Heritage Committee noted “*with concern the number of deviations of the decisions of the World Heritage Committee from the recommendations of the Advisory Bodies*” and considered that, in order to address them, it was necessary to review the nomination process, Tentative Lists and Upstream Process, bearing in mind the Global Strategy, and to consider other possible measures, such as a Code of conduct of the World Heritage Committee.
33. In its [Decision 43 COM 8](#) in 2019, the Committee recalled that the Operational Guidelines set out the conditions for inscription on the World Heritage List, strongly reiterating that only meeting criteria is not enough to warrant inscription as to be deemed of Outstanding Universal Value a site must also meet the conditions of integrity (and authenticity) and must have an adequate protection and management system to ensure its safeguarding. In the same decision, the Committee recommended to give consideration to using the opportunity of the

50th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention in 2022 to undertake a reflection on the Global Strategy.

34. In its [Decision 44 COM 8 in 2021](#), the Committee welcomed the independent study analysing the impact of the Global Strategy on the World Heritage List and noted its findings, which would have served as a basis for a reflection on the Global Strategy to be undertaken on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention in 2022.
35. **In 2023**, in its [Decision 45 COM 11](#), the Committee decided to create an Open-ended Working Group of States Parties to the Convention, *inter alia*, to 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.

C. Processes, measures, provisions, objectives and audits

36. For the purpose of the established Open-ended Working Group, it is important to take stock of the main measures, initiatives, processes, actions and provisions that have been conceived and undertaken to achieve the objectives of the Convention and those particularly in relation to identifying and inscribing properties on the World Heritage List, supporting States Parties in their efforts to nominate sites and trying to address the issues of credibility, representativity and balance.
37. Some of these measures were put in place even before the launching of the Global Strategy. A comprehensive list including brief descriptions of each measure is presented below.

1. International cooperation and assistance

38. To reach its goal of conservation, in Article 4, the Convention calls upon each Member State to “do all it can to this end, to the utmost of its own resources and, where appropriate, with any international assistance and co-operation [...] which it may be able to obtain”.
39. Article 7 of the World Heritage Convention reads: “For the purpose of this Convention, international protection of the world cultural and natural heritage shall be understood to mean the establishment of a system of international co-operation and assistance designed to support States Parties to the Convention in their efforts to conserve and identify that heritage”.
40. This principle of cooperation is a formal, structural principle of the Convention through which the idea of solidarity comes into play. In general terms, it may be said that the main tenet of the Convention is international cooperation for conservation, however, it is often argued that in order to conserve sites these must be nominated and possibly inscribed.
41. All States Parties to the World Heritage Convention are eligible, provided they have paid their contributions to the World Heritage Fund.
42. The Operational Guidelines outline that when funds available are limited and a selection has to be made, preference should be given to:
 - a Least Developed Country (LDC) or Low Income Economy (LIE) as defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council's Committee for Development Policy, or
 - a Lower Middle Income Country (LMIC) as defined by the World Bank, or
 - a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), or
 - a State Party in a post-conflict situation.
43. Since 1978, for 2198 approved requests the total amount granted is 48,239,514 USD. Out of the approved requests, 55% were for cultural heritage, 35% for natural heritage and 10% for mixed heritage. In terms of type, 71% of approved requests were towards conservation, 20% for preparatory assistance and 9% for emergency assistance.

2. Tentative Lists Process

44. According to Article 11.1 of the Convention “Every State Party to this Convention shall, in so far as possible, submit to the World Heritage Committee an inventory of property forming part of the cultural and natural heritage, situated in its territory and suitable for inclusion in the list provided for in paragraph 2 of this Article. This inventory, which shall not be considered exhaustive, shall include documentation about the location of the property in question and its significance.” Through this inventory, called “Tentative List”, States Parties identify cultural and/or natural heritage sites with a potential to demonstrate Outstanding Universal Value, that they may consider nominating to the World Heritage List.
45. The Tentative List process is described in the Operational Guidelines (Chapter II.C). Sites on the Tentative List can be added, removed or updated at any time. The process of revising a Tentative List can take the form of both a complete revision of the List, or the addition or removal of individual sites. Until the early 2000s, inclusion on the Tentative List was a requirement only for cultural sites. In 2011, the requirement of including the site at least one year prior to the submission of the related nomination was introduced as it was noted that a large number of sites were included in the Tentative List just before the submission of the nomination (sometimes just a few days before). Tentative Lists should take into account the Cairns-Suzhou Decision and the 10 year cycle of the Tentative List recommended by the Operational Guidelines.
46. The importance of Tentative Lists has been stressed by the Committee since its early discussions regarding the representativity and balance of the World Heritage List. The purpose of the Lists is to enable the World Heritage Committee to evaluate within the widest possible context the OUV of each property nominated to the World Heritage List. At its 24th session (Cairns, 2000), the Committee confirmed the importance of these Lists for planning purposes, comparative analyses of nominations and for facilitating the undertaking of the global and thematic studies. The harmonisation of the Tentative Lists at the regional and thematic levels has been stressed by the Committee on many occasions.
47. The Expert meeting on the concept of Outstanding Universal Value (Kazan, 2005) recommended, among others, that regional meetings on harmonisation of Tentative Lists should identify types of properties for nomination in a given region and those for possible inclusion as transnational and transboundary properties. The experts also recommended that the compilation of Tentative Lists should take account of the Global Strategy, thematic studies and the Advisory Bodies gap analysis, should involve local communities and indigenous peoples and should include public consultation where appropriate. However, it is to be noted that regional harmonisation of Tentative Lists has happened only very sporadically and did not become part of the Tentative List procedure or practice.
48. As of 2016 States Parties might seek upstream advice from the Advisory Bodies regarding the revision or updating of their Tentative Lists through the Upstream Process. In 2020 the Guidance on Developing and Revising World Heritage Tentative Lists was prepared by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies as a tool to assist States Parties in this process.
49. The percentage of States Parties having submitted Tentative Lists rose from 53% in 1994 (74 of 139 States Parties) to 75% in 2004 (132 of 177 States Parties). As of 2024, 96% of States Parties (188 of 195 States Parties) have established a Tentative List. All Tentative Lists submitted to the World Heritage Committee by States Parties are available at the World Heritage Centre’s website (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>).

3. The Global Study

50. Initial efforts by UNESCO and ICOMOS to analyse and correct imbalances concerning cultural sites focused on meetings for the harmonisation of Tentative Lists (which, until 2000 included

only cultural sites) in countries belonging to the same geographical and cultural regions (1983-87). These efforts were then shifted to the initiation of a Global Study targeting cultural sites.

51. The World Heritage Committee has sought to set up a Global Study which would assist the Committee in its task of protecting sites of Outstanding Universal Value to humanity. The study covered all geo-cultural areas on earth from the earliest times, which can be considered of outstanding universal significance and included sites belonging to States that were not yet party to the Convention. In particular, the purpose of the study was:
1. Aid the World Heritage Committee in the examination of cultural properties by providing a comparative analytical framework,
 2. Identify gaps so that action can be taken to protect all sites of Outstanding Universal Value,
 3. Guide States Parties in the preparation of nominations and Tentative List,
 4. A Study Group of the Bureau decided to conduct the study in the following phases:
 - a) Elaborate a draft global framework,
 - b) Place the existing World Cultural Heritage Sites in that framework,
 - c) Place cultural sites on Tentative Lists within that framework,
 - d) Identify cultural properties worthy of consideration for inscription on the World Heritage List, using various means (experts, ICOMOS/ICCROM, regional meetings, submissions of States Parties etc.)
52. The Global Study Working Group was established in 1989, reporting to the Committee for the first time in 1990. The Working Group agreed that “chronology must be one of the axis or dimensions of the global study”. The Group proposed “a mixed approach to the second axis which would include spatial/thematic/cultural aspects, in the spirit of the criteria for inscribing cultural properties on the World Heritage List”. (CC-90/CONF.004/9). However, the proposal of categorization of cultural heritage that was presented was not approved by the Committee at its 17th session in 1993.

4. The World Heritage Strategic Plan of 1992

53. The concern with maintaining rigour in the application of Outstanding Universal Value was a key issue for the World Heritage Strategic Plan, approved by the Committee in Sante Fe on the 20th anniversary of the Convention in 1992 (<https://whc.unesco.org/archive/1992/whc-92-conf002-4e.pdf>). In the two years of discussion leading up to the final plan, concerns were expressed and debated about “debasing the coinage” of World Heritage. There was a perception that the standards were being lowered and that recent World Heritage sites fell below the benchmark of Outstanding Universal Value. Goal 2 in the Strategic Plan specifically called for refining and updating the criteria and maintaining objective and consistent evaluation procedures.
54. Among the recommendations of the report, States Parties were “asked to submit more detailed applications” and it was also underlined that “incomplete nominations should not be put forward for consideration”.

5. The Global Strategy (1994)

55. At its 17th session (Cartagena, 1993) the Committee decided that the questions of representativity and imbalance identified by the Global Study should be considered through a broader reflection and decided to create an expert group to define and set a plan based on a common methodological approach. The expert group (UNESCO Headquarters, June 1994) came up with the concept of the Global Strategy “[...] which conjured up the idea of a study that was rigid, unique, and definitive” into an action programme. In order to ensure a World Heritage List that was at the same time representative, balanced and credible, the expert group

considered it to be necessary not only to increase the number of nominations from under-represented regions, types and periods of cultural heritage, but also to take into account the new concepts of cultural heritage that had evolved considerably in meaning, depth, and extent over the past twenty years since the adoption of the Convention ([WHC-94/CONF.003/INF.6](#)). The Committee adopted the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List at its 18th session (Phuket, 1994). Initially, the Global Strategy focused only on cultural heritage, but its scope was extended to include natural and mixed heritage in 1996 ([WHC.96/CONF.201/INF.8](#)).

56. By adopting the Global Strategy, the Committee has broadened the definition of World Heritage to better reflect the full spectrum of the world's cultural and natural heritage, including some modifications to the criteria for inscription, and provided a comprehensive framework and operational methodology for implementing the Convention. Crucial to the Global Strategy are efforts to:
 - encourage countries to become States Parties to the Convention,
 - organise regional and sub-regional meetings on harmonisation and prepare comparative and thematic studies to identify gaps on the List,
 - prepare Tentative Lists,
 - prepare nominations of properties from categories and regions currently not well-represented on the World Heritage List.
57. Since its adoption, progress reports on the Global Strategy were regularly presented to the General Assembly and the Committee. The General Assembly at its 12th session (1999), in its [Resolution 12 GA 30-48](#) adopted a “[...] structure that identifies the responsibilities of each of the partners involved in the implementation of the Global Strategy, and the choice of the measures proposed which aim to improve the representativity of the World Heritage List”.
58. The Committee at its 24th session (Cairns, 2000) ([Decision 24 COM VI](#)), requested that an evaluation of the Global Strategy (1994-2004) be conducted by ICOMOS and IUCN ([WHC-04/28.COM/13](#)) and presented to the Committee at its 28th session (Suzhou, 2004). The reports prepared by Advisory Bodies present their analysis of the World Heritage List and the Tentative Lists on a regional, chronological, geographical, and thematic basis in order to identify under-represented categories and the likely trends in the short to medium term. ICOMOS in its report identified certain categories/themes that are under-represented, recognised structural and qualitative reasons why gaps on the List still persist, and proposed an Action Plan with five key aims. IUCN in its report set out some indicative future priorities and proposed recommendations with regards to, among others, nominations and Tentative Lists, comparative analysis, global theme studies, wider use of serial and transboundary nominations etc. The Committee ([Decision 28 COM 13.1](#), also known as the Cairns-Suzhou Decision) noted the results of the analyses and expressed its concerns over the fact that the elements identified by the analyses are the same that have been identified in 2000 by the "Cairns Decision", recognising that the recommendations have not been fully implemented.
59. In 2009, at the request of the General Assembly ([Resolution 17 GA 9](#)) an external auditor was tasked with assessing the Global Strategy (see paragraph on **The 2011 Audit of the Global Strategy** below). Following the presentation of the report of the External Auditor, the General Assembly decided ([Resolution 18 GA 8](#)) to establish an open-ended working group including experts from the different geographic regions to examine the report in order to produce an implementation plan for the recommendations for consideration by the Committee and the General Assembly. The open-ended working group prepared an Implementation Plan which indicated how to implement the recommendations, by whom, by when and the costs or funding required, following an order of priorities (from the highest to the lowest priority) ([WHC-12/36.COM/9A](#)).
60. At its 43rd session (Baku, 2019) the Committee in its [Decision 43 COM 8](#), as well as the General Assembly in 2019 ([Resolution 22 GA 9](#)) recommended using the opportunity of the 50th anniversary of the Convention to undertake a reflection on the Global Strategy. The World

Heritage Centre has therefore commissioned an independent study to analyse the impacts of the Global Strategy on the World Heritage List. The study brought forward topics that might contribute towards the reflection on the Global Strategy in order to achieve a more balanced and representative List and provided a large scale of baseline data to be considered. However, the findings of the study require further reflection and an establishment of clear priorities focusing on addressing the remaining significant challenges in order to achieve a balanced and representative World Heritage List.

6. The Advisory Bodies Gap Analysis (2004)

61. The World Heritage Committee at its 24th session (Cairns, 2000) decided on a brief for work by ICOMOS and IUCN on an analysis of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and sites on the Tentative Lists on a regional, chronological, geographical and thematic basis. The gap analysis would provide the States Parties with a clear overview of the composition of the World Heritage List and Tentative Lists by 2002-2003 and identify likely trends in the short-medium term with a view to identify under-represented categories of heritage of potential Outstanding Universal Value ([WHC-02/CONF.201/6](#)).
62. ICOMOS presented its findings in 2004 in the publication *The World Heritage List: Filling the Gaps - an Action Plan for the Future*. ICOMOS based its study on 14 categories or themes, related to geo-cultural regions of the world. ICOMOS noted that “*balance should not be seen to refer to a balance between countries, or types of properties, but rather to how well a particular type of heritage of outstanding universal value is represented on the list*” and that “*cultural regions that need to be seen as the main framework for the analysis of the World Heritage List do not necessarily correspond to political boundaries. It is therefore not possible to aim for a ‘balance’ at State Party or country level, nor even in relation to larger political entities*”.
63. In the same year, IUCN published a strategy paper *The World Heritage List: Future priorities for a credible and complete list of natural and mixed sites* which identified 20 key areas with potential for World Heritage inscription. Since then, at least 12 properties have been inscribed located within those key areas. IUCN stated that “*as noted at the outset, it is a core principle that all natural and mixed sites inscribed on the World Heritage List must be of OUV. Therefore, there is a clear implication that there must be a finite number of existing and potential sites for inclusion on the World Heritage List. Though further analytical work will be required to determine this with confidence, IUCN considers that a number in the range of 300 natural and mixed World Heritage sites should be sufficient to complete this part of the World Heritage List. This might be done over say a 10-year time period. However subsequent additions to the list may be needed in the light of new information and scientific knowledge*”.
64. The number stated by IUCN in 2004 of around 300 natural and mixed sites has not been reached in 2023 where there are 227 natural properties and 39 mixed properties inscribed giving a total of 266. On Tentative Lists, 391 sites are being proposed as potential natural sites, while 218 as potential mixed sites, bringing the total to 609 potential new natural and mixed nominations.

7. The Advisory Bodies’ Thematic Studies

65. One important tool to contribute towards the Global Strategy are thematic studies, as one of the key objectives has been to expand the understanding of heritage and include new categories to the World Heritage List. The Vanoise Report considered a series of thematic studies on natural heritage crucial ([WHC-96/CONF.202/INF.9](#)). Both ICOMOS and IUCN have developed thematic, regional, and other studies. States Parties are encouraged to consult these thematic studies when preparing Tentative Lists and nominations (Operational Guidelines, Par. 72 and 147). In 1998 the report to the Committee highlighted the fact that “*well-focused thematic studies have become important guides for the implementation of the Convention in different regions*” ([WHC-98/CONF.203/12](#)).

66. ICOMOS thematic studies addressed specific exploration on categories of heritage globally or in a certain region that are under-represented on the World Heritage List. 26 thematic studies for cultural sites have been published, including rock art, fossil hominid sites, bridges, canals, railways, workers settlements, archaeoastronomy, tea landscapes. ICOMOS published as well Pre-nomination Guidelines for Rock Art sites and a survey *exploring potential offered for a more balanced World Heritage List in the Arab region*. (<https://www.icomos.org/en/component/content/article?id=198>).
67. IUCN has published over 30 thematic studies and World Heritage related documents which address the identification of ecosystems under-represented on the World Heritage List, such as fossil sites, wetland and marine protected areas, forest protected areas and mountain protected areas, caves and karst among others. IUCN published a resource manual for practitioners on Natural World Heritage nominations in 2008, as well as an analysis of serial properties, the conservation of World Heritage properties via the List of World Heritage in Danger, and a study on the standards for OUV of Natural World Heritage. In 2020, regional and sub-regional studies were also published, including the Natural World Heritage in Africa and the thematic study for Central Asia. ([see Annex 7](#)).
68. A list of thematic and comparative studies by the Advisory Bodies can be found in the “Select World Heritage Bibliography”, available at the end of the Operational Guidelines.

8. Paragraphs 59, 60, 60.bis and 61 of the Operational Guidelines

69. These paragraphs (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidelines/>) present other measures to promote the establishment of a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List.
70. In Paragraph 59, States Parties are requested to consider whether their heritage is already well represented on the List and if so, to slow down their rate of submission of further nominations by:
 - a) spacing voluntarily their nominations according to conditions that they will define, and/or;
 - b) proposing only properties falling into categories still under-represented, and/or;
 - c) linking each of their nominations with a nomination presented by a State Party whose heritage is under-represented; or
 - d) deciding, on a voluntary basis, to suspend the presentation of new nominations.
71. Paragraph 60 requests States Parties whose heritage of Outstanding Universal Value is under-represented on the World Heritage List to:
 - a) give priority to the preparation of their Tentative Lists and nominations;
 - b) initiate and consolidate partnerships at the regional level based on the exchange of technical expertise;
 - c) encourage bilateral and multilateral cooperation so as to increase their expertise and the technical capacities of institutions in charge of the protection, safeguarding and management of their heritage; and,
 - d) participate, as much as possible, in the sessions of the World Heritage Committee.
72. However, it is to be noted that the Operational Guidelines do not provide any indication concerning the actual meaning of “well-represented” and “under-represented”.
73. Paragraphs 60bis and 61 are treated apart under the section “Limitations to the number of nominations to be examined”.

9. Limitations to the number of nominations to be examined

74. At its 24th session (Cairns, 2000) the Committee established two separate limits on the number of nominations to be examined each year, for different reasons:

- a) A limit of one new nomination per State Party (with exceptions for States Parties without properties on the World Heritage List) was established in an attempt to improve the geographic distribution of new nominations;
- b) An annual limit on the number of new nominations the Committee would review annually (originally set at 30 nominations per year) was established on an interim basis to manage the workload of the World Heritage Committee, Advisory Bodies, and the World Heritage Centre.

75. As shown in the table below, both these limits set up by the "Cairns Decision" have changed several times throughout the years. The latest assessment of the impact of the application of these limitations, including statistical data was presented in Document [WHC/23/45.COM/12](https://whc.unesco.org/en/whc23/45.COM/12).

76. More information concerning the Cairns Decision is available at the following website <https://whc.unesco.org/en/cairns/>.

Table 1: Chronology of the limits on nominations decided by the World Heritage Committee (2000-2023).

Session, Year	Overall limit	Description of the limit	Exemptions	Limit per State Party	Exemptions
24th session, 2000	30	New Nominations	Deferrals, referrals, Extensions and Nominations on an Emergency Basis	1 New Nomination	States Parties with no properties on the List
25th session, 2001	30	New Nominations	Deferrals, referrals, Extensions, Nominations on an Emergency Basis + Transboundary / Transnational Nominations	1 New Nomination	States Parties with no properties on the List
27th session, 2003	40	New Nominations	Deferrals, referrals, Extensions, Nominations on an Emergency Basis + Transboundary / Transnational Nominations	1 New Nomination	States Parties with no properties on the List
28th session, 2004	45	New Nominations, Deferrals, referrals, Extensions + Transboundary / Transnational Nominations	Nominations on an Emergency Basis	2 Nominations	Provided that at least one of the two nominations concerns a natural property
29th session, 2005	45	New Nominations, Deferrals, referrals, Extensions	Nominations on an Emergency Basis	2 Nominations	Provided that at least 1 of the two nominations concerns a natural property Transboundary / Transnational Nominations (count only under 1 country's quota)
31st session, 2007	45(*)	New Nominations, Deferrals, referrals, Extensions	Nominations on an Emergency Basis	2 Nominations	Transboundary / Transnational Nominations (count only under one country's quota)
35th session, 2011	45	New Nominations, Deferrals, referrals, Extensions	Nominations on an Emergency Basis	2 Nominations	Provided that at least 1 of such nominations concerns a natural property or a cultural landscape Transboundary / Transnational Nominations (count only under 1 country's quota)
40th session, 2016	35	New Nominations, Deferrals, referrals, Extensions	Nominations on an Emergency Basis	1 New Nomination	Transboundary / Transnational Nominations (count only under 1 country's quota)

Session, Year	Overall limit	Description of the limit	Exemptions	Limit per State Party	Exemptions
Extended 45th session, 2023	35	New Nominations, Deferrals, referrals, Extensions	Nominations on an Emergency Basis	1 New Nomination (+ 1 Nomination previously referred or deferred)	Transboundary / Transnational Nominations (count only under 1 country's quota)

10. The Budapest Declaration and the 5Cs

77. In 2002, the 5 Strategic Objectives (Paragraph 26 of the Operational Guidelines) and the related Budapest Declaration ([Decision 26 COM 9](#)) were proposed as a way for the World Heritage Committee to: (i) mark and celebrate the 30th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention; (ii) reflect on the successes and limitations of the Convention over the last 30 years; (iii) establish and communicate new strategic objectives; and, (iv) call for new partnerships to foster World Heritage conservation.
78. In the adopted text, the World Heritage Committee promoted the following objectives:
- strengthen the **Credibility** of the World Heritage List, as a representative and geographically balanced testimony of cultural and natural properties of Outstanding Universal Value;
 - ensure the effective **Conservation** of World Heritage properties;
 - promote the development of effective **Capacity-building** measures, including assistance for preparing the nomination of properties to the World Heritage List, for the understanding and implementation of the World Heritage Convention and related instruments;
 - increase public awareness, involvement and support for World Heritage through **Communication**.
79. Originally known as the 4Cs, they became the 5Cs with the addition of **Communities** to enhance their role in the implementation of the Convention.

11. Draft Nominations

80. In 2003, in order to enhance the assistance provided to States Parties in improving their nomination dossiers, the World Heritage Centre proposed to set up a new process of technical review that was incorporated into the Operational Guidelines. The 30 September was set as a deadline for receiving 'draft nominations' so that the World Heritage Centre would have enough time to analyse the files and respond to States Parties in time for improvements to be made by 1 February (Decision [6 EXT.COM 5.1, Annex 3.9](#)).
81. This process which entered into force in 2005 allows the World Heritage Centre to provide technical reviews and comments regarding draft nomination dossiers submitted by States Parties. This technical analysis is not a completeness check, but rather gives guidance for completing and finalising nomination dossiers in view of their official submission.
82. Since its implementation, more than 530 draft nominations have been submitted by 140 States Parties, with an average of 30 draft nominations per year. As evidence of the effectiveness of the process, during the last 19 years, more than 71% of the nomination dossiers considered **incomplete** after their official submission were not previously submitted as draft nominations. On the other hand, over the last 10 years, 70% of the nomination dossiers considered **complete** after their official submission were previously received as draft nominations.

12. The 2011 Audit of the Global Strategy

83. In 2009, at the request of the General Assembly of States Parties, an external auditor was tasked with assessing their priority initiative, the Global Strategy for a Credible, Representative and Balanced World Heritage List" ([Resolution 17 GA 9](#)).
84. In its final report ([WHC-11/35.COM/INF.9A](#)), the external auditor's assessment noted a "very worrying evolution for the credibility of the List" given by "increasing divergences between Committee decisions and the recommendations of the Advisory Bodies. Among other, the external auditor recommended to "ensure respect for the provisions of Article 9, paragraph 3 of the Convention by giving experts a central role in the delegations of the Committee, or otherwise take note of the current evolution and revise the Convention to clearly acknowledge its geopolitical rather than scientific nature". The auditor also noted that "a strong correlation between the countries represented on the World Heritage Committee and the location of the nominated properties can be observed. Thus, from 1977 to 2005, 314 inscriptions, that is 42% of inscriptions had benefited countries with members on the Committee during their term of office." and thus recommended to "revise the Rules of Procedure of the Committee for a better application of the Convention: - prohibit a State Party from submitting a nomination file during its term of office (or at least to postpone its examination by the Committee while the State is present)".
85. The report also noted that ensuring "the strict observance of the criterion of outstanding universal value" is "a guarantee for the credibility of the List".

13. Upstream Process

86. In line with the "system of international cooperation and assistance", as envisaged under the Convention, the new concept of the Upstream Process was introduced in 2010. Until then, the Advisory Bodies did not directly and actively participate in the State Party process of preparing or revising Tentative Lists, in reviewing them, or in the regional harmonisation of the Tentative Lists. With the introduction of the new concept, this radical change was brought in the system, first through an initial phase for testing with pilot cases, then it was officially introduced in the Operational Guidelines in 2015 and in 2017 its procedure was further defined.
87. The Upstream Process is a voluntary process that enables the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre to provide guidance and capacity building directly to States Parties, throughout the whole process leading up to the preparation of a possible World Heritage nomination. To be effective, it should be undertaken from the earliest stage in the nomination process, at the moment of the preparation or revision of the States Parties' Tentative Lists.
88. Since the launch of the Upstream Process, a high number of Upstream Requests has been received by the World Heritage Centre. However, the implementation of the Upstream Process has proven to be challenging especially in terms of calendar and financial resources. The Upstream Process is implemented according to the availability of financial and human resources. The implementation rate of the Upstream processes is therefore determined by the resources available each year, hence causing a backlog of Upstream requests and long waiting times for States Parties. Least Developed Countries, Low-Income and Lower-Middle Income Countries and Small Island Developing States are prioritised to benefit from financial support from the World Heritage Fund to cover the cost of the Upstream Process, but the resources available are extremely limited.
89. To nonetheless address the high demand, ICOMOS has developed, with the support of IUCN, ICCROM and the World Heritage Centre, the Guidance on Developing and Revising World Heritage Tentative Lists (<https://whc.unesco.org/document/184566>), which has been shared with all States Parties having submitted Upstream Requests for Tentative List upon publication. A toolkit has subsequently been developed to streamline the implementation of Upstream Requests for the development or revision of Tentative Lists.

90. Despite these challenges, encouraging results have been achieved through the Upstream Process, including for States Parties from priority regions. African countries, such as Madagascar and Guinea, and some SIDS, such as Saint Kitts and Nevis, Grenada and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, have already benefited from upstream advice for the revision of their Tentative Lists or concerning the potential of specific sites to justify an Outstanding Universal Value.

14. Preliminary Assessment

91. In 2019, convinced that the most appropriate means for enhancing the credibility and balance of the World Heritage List was the development of high-quality nominations for sites which have a strong potential to succeed, the World Heritage Committee decided to endorse the principle of a two-phase nomination process, with the Preliminary Assessment as a first phase of the process ([Decision 43 COM 12](#)).
92. The Preliminary Assessment is a mandatory desk-based process for all sites that may be nominated to the World Heritage List (a transition period for its application was instituted from 2023 to 2027) which provides States Parties with an opportunity for enhanced dialogue and guidance by the Advisory Bodies from a very early stage. This process aims at building the capacity of States Parties to develop satisfactory nominations and establishing the feasibility of a potential nomination, thus avoiding the use of resources in the preparation of nominations that may be unlikely to succeed. The advice provided through Preliminary Assessments will support States Parties in targeting investments into nomination projects in the most efficient way possible avoiding resources being spent on unnecessary preparatory activities.
93. The Preliminary Assessment comes in at an early phase of the preparation of nominations and shall not extend the preparation phase of a nomination. The Preliminary Assessment will contribute to better planning of the work and provide expert guidance and recommendations to the nominating States Parties in a phase of the preparation of nominations during which States Parties have previously been working without Advisory Body support, and also enable significant dialogue and capacity building. The process can also assist States Parties in facilitating communication with stakeholders regarding expectations about pursuing nominations. The Preliminary Assessment results in States Parties being able to focus their investment of resources on nominations with high inscription potential.
94. Moreover, the Preliminary Assessment offers a great potential for positive effects as higher quality, more targeted and mature nominations might imply that fewer nominations with little or no potential for successful inscription go through the evaluation process, as well as fewer nominations requiring further evaluations and follow-up after deferral and referral decisions. Another expected positive effect is that fewer properties would be inscribed with challenges that may lead to state of conservation issues shortly after inscription, avoiding further burden on the World Heritage Fund.
95. The first deadline for submission of Preliminary Assessment requests was on 15 September 2023 and was on a fully voluntary basis. A total of 14 requests coming from all five regions was received by this deadline, including from States Parties that have not submitted nominations for a long time. The Advisory Bodies are currently working on the implementation of these requests.

15. Declaration of principles to promote international solidarity and cooperation to preserve World Heritage

96. The 2017-2018 Ad-hoc Working Group in its analysis of Recommendation no 3 of the Internal Oversight Service (IOS) Comparative Mapping Study, concerning the number of changes of the decisions of the World Heritage Committee from the recommendations of the Advisory Bodies, suggested a Code of Conduct as one possible measure to reduce changes. The 2018-2019 Ad-hoc Working Group has discussed various issues and items which may be relevant

for inclusion in a possible Code of Conduct. Consequently, the General Assembly ([Resolution 22 GA 10](#)) decided to establish an Open-ended working group of States Parties to the Convention, with the mandate to develop a Code of Conduct, or a Statement of Ethical Principles or equivalent text.

97. Bearing in mind the mandate given, the Open-ended Working Group insisted on reiterating that a text related to ethical principles would not be legally binding, and that such a text cannot create additional obligations for concerned stakeholders.
98. The Open-ended Working Group, in its deliberations, highlighted the importance of upholding the credibility of the Convention and of the highest standards of integrity and transparency of working methods of its Governing bodies, including well-informed and scientific-based decision making, which can only rely on recommendations from geographically representative experts and embracing various cultural approaches. The Group reiterated the importance of a balanced and representative World Heritage List in line with the Global Strategy, underlining the fundamental purpose of the Convention, i.e. conservation.
99. The Group observed that after 50 years of the Convention the notion of heritage has considerably broadened and that stakeholders should continue to reflect on it for the sake of the credibility of the World Heritage List, bearing in mind growing aspirations for human rights, gender equality, cultural and natural diversity and sustainable development amongst other major concerns.
100. The *Declaration of principles* is structured around the principal actors concerned providing for ethical guidelines and moral behaviours on main issues relevant in the framework of the Convention. The Declaration states that all parties should be guided by the core principles of integrity, objectivity, impartiality, and respect for cultural diversity.
101. The Provisions specify for:
 - the Committee, among others, to recognise that the Outstanding Universal Value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity; to voluntarily limit their term of office to four years instead of six years; to remain impartial and base their decisions on objective and scientific considerations; to ensure that the credibility, balance and representativity of the World Heritage List are guaranteed, keeping in mind the Operational Guidelines and the priorities which they define, including those that apply to nominations of States Parties former members of the Committee and which consist of avoiding examining their nominations during their mandate on the Committee.
 - the Advisory Bodies, among others, to respect the core principle of transparency of the evaluation process, to consider all information regarding a nomination in consultation and constant dialogue with nominating States Parties and respecting the principle of fair geographical representation involving regional experts familiar with the subject.
 - the Secretariat, to ensure transparent, equal and open processes and strengthened efforts to enhance dialogue and provision of early advice.
 - the States Parties to the Convention, among others, to support the Committee in meeting its responsibility to make impartial decisions based on objective and scientific considerations; to be voluntarily restrictive with new nominations to ensure a more representative and balanced World Heritage List where the State Party is already well represented; to refrain from influencing the Committee's deliberations and decision making through lobbying.
102. The General Assembly in 2021 endorsed the "Declaration of principles to promote international solidarity and cooperation to preserve World Heritage" ([Resolution 23 GA 10](#)).

16. Africa 2009

103. As a result of a survey and needs assessment carried out in 1996, the AFRICA 2009 Programme, a partnership between African cultural heritage organisations, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICCROM and CRATerre-EAG, was introduced in 1998.
104. The main Developmental Objective of the programme was to improve the management and conservation of immovable cultural heritage in Sub-Saharan Africa, while the Immediate Objective of the programme was to increase the capacity of national institutions to better manage and conserve immovable heritage places in sub-Saharan Africa. The objective was further divided into four sub-programme objectives, which were:
 - to increase professional knowledge and skills in the conservation and management of heritage places in Sub-Saharan Africa;
 - to develop a better informed perception of the importance of the immovable cultural heritage and its role in the national development process among (a) professionals, (b) decision makers and (c) local communities;
 - to strengthen the network of African cultural heritage professionals in order to share common approaches (vision and practices) and information;
 - to strengthen the capacities of sub-Saharan training institutions to continue with capacity building for national institutions managing and conserving immovable heritage places.
105. The programme was implemented taking into account a series of guiding principles including involving local communities in planning for and protecting heritage resources within their territory; giving priority to local knowledge systems, human resources, skills, and materials; focusing on prevention and maintenance as a cost effective and sustainable strategy for management and conservation; and ensuring tangible benefits to local communities.
106. The conclusions of its final report ([WHC-10/34.COM/INF.10D](#)) give details of over 350 professionals participating in regional training courses and the involvement of many more in other activities, strongly promoting the recognition of African expertise, thus improving the long-term capacity for conservation in the region. However, the report recognised that the benefits remained somewhat fragile and that there was a need for continued support to the region in order to consolidate the gains achieved, and in particular to continue to strengthen the regional training institutions involved in capacity building for African professionals.

17. Priority Africa

107. The establishment of Priority Africa aimed to translate the commitment of the international community, and that of UNESCO in particular, to accompany and support Africa in its development. Since 1989, at the 25th UNESCO General Conference (25 C/5), several policy and institutional frameworks have been created to underpin Priority Africa, culminating in its formalisation as one of the two global priorities of the Organization.
108. The first Operational Strategy for Priority Africa (2014-2021) identified priority areas for Africa and the challenges facing their implementation. Focusing on youth and gender, that strategy was divided into six flagship programmes. Among them, Flagship Programme 5 proposed a contribution to 'harnessing the power of culture for sustainable development and peace in a context of regional integration'.
109. At its 42nd session (Manama, 2018), and at the request of the African States Parties, the Committee, by [Decision 42 COM 17](#), invited the Secretariat, for the first time, to report on Priority Africa, sustainable development and World Heritage. The report was adopted in 2019 at its 43rd session ([Decision 43 COM 5D](#)). In 2021, by its [Decision 44 COM 5C](#) the Committee further requested the Secretariat to present a progress report on Priority Africa, sustainable development and World Heritage in line with the Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 and Programme and Budget for 2022-2025 at its 46th session.
110. Responding to the calls of African Member States for its furtherance, a new Operational Strategy for Priority Africa 2022-2029 was presented to the UNESCO Executive Board at its

212th session in September 2021, containing five flagship programmes. Pinpointing ‘Cultural renaissance challenges’ as one of its key themes, this document highlighted the expected role of UNESCO in providing “appropriate responses for issues relating to the promotion and preservation of African cultural heritage as well as the prevention of illicit trafficking of cultural assets and their restitution”.

111. In November 2021, the Operational Strategy for Priority Africa 2022-2029 ([41 C/56 Rev.](#)) was adopted during the 41st session of the General Conference following 212 EX/Decision 5.III.B of the Executive Board. Its Flagship Programme 3 (Fostering Cultural Heritage and Capacity development) has two main objectives:
1. Main Objective 1: Supporting the African Member States in World Heritage capacity building, particularly for nominations and the removal of sites from the List of World Heritage in Danger;
 2. Main Objective 2: Supporting the African Member States in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property, return and restitution requests, and the preservation and promotion of collections and museums.
112. As a follow-up to the adoption of the Operational Strategy for Priority Africa (2022-2029) and its key (operational) outputs by UNESCO's General Conference at its 41st session in November 2021, UNESCO launched an internal working group, with a series of consultations with more than 200 participants, including the representatives of civil society, youth, women, local and indigenous peoples, African Ambassadors to UNESCO, and National Commissions for UNESCO to develop a Strategy for World Heritage in Africa, which would in turn inform the implementation of Main Objective 1 of Flagship Programme 3 and contribute to the overall implementation of the 1972 Convention in Africa, notably in supporting nomination, removal of sites from the List of World Heritage in Danger, empowerment and increase of the roster of African experts, engagement of local communities in particular, youth and women, and uses of innovating technology in the conservation, management and promotion of World Heritage sites in Africa.

18. Capacity Building Strategy

113. Capacity Building as one of the Strategic Objectives (or “Five C’s”) identified by the World Heritage Committee (Budapest, 2002 and Christchurch, 2007) is at the core of the sustainable implementation of the Convention (Operational Guidelines, Paragraphs 212 – 214bis).
114. The original [Global Training Strategy](#) was launched in 2001 with three priority areas:
- Improvement of implementation of the Convention;
 - Improvement of on-site management of properties; and
 - Strengthening of technical, scientific, and traditional skills for conservation of heritage.
115. At its 35th session (UNESCO, 2011) the Committee approved the [World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy](#) (WHCBS) which succeeded the Training Strategy, highlighting a shift from training to capacity building for heritage ([Decision 35 COM 9B](#)). The WHCBS was developed by the World Heritage Centre in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies and other capacity-building partners, such as category 2 centres, in various regions of the world. Since its adoption, specific regional strategies to strengthen World Heritage-related capacities in order to protect and manage World Heritage properties, as well as to ensure a representative, credible and balanced World Heritage List, have been implemented at both regional and international levels. Many States Parties have integrated key provisions into national legislations, policies and strategic frameworks including, in some instances, cross-cutting domains of importance for sustainable development.
116. The implementation of the WHCBS and the progress accomplished is annually reviewed by the Committee at its sessions. In 2021 ([Decision 44 COM 6](#)), the Committee requested an independent, results-based evaluation of its 10-year implementation, which was reviewed at

its 45th session. In [Decision 45 COM 6](#), the Committee acknowledged the progress made in implementing the WHCBS by all actors and requested the World Heritage Centre, in cooperation with ICCROM, IUCN and ICOMOS, to develop a new World Heritage Capacity-Building Strategy for the 2025-2035 decade, with clear priorities, strategic objectives, expected outputs and outcomes, relying on the outcomes of the evaluation and its recommendations and guidelines.

D. Other reflections

1. The Future of the Convention

117. At its 32nd session (Quebec City, 2008) the World Heritage Committee considered that the success and growing complexity and diversity of the Convention pose challenges, which need to be responded to for more effective implementation of the Convention in the coming decades. Consequently, it launched a process of reflection on the 'Future of the World Heritage Convention', considering its impending 40th anniversary and the fact that the World Heritage List was close to 1,000 properties.
118. A website (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/futureoftheconvention/>) enabled all States Parties to participate, including through submissions regarding their views and proposals. Such submissions have touched upon many of the issues that were and are still presenting a challenge in the implementation of the Convention. Several of these pertained to the issues of growing numbers and credibility of the World Heritage List; the various imbalances (geographical, types and categories) of the List; the changing standards of applying the concept of Outstanding Universal Value in assessing nominations; and the growing politicisation and polarisation of discussions at World Heritage Committee meetings.
119. In their contributions, (see <https://whc.unesco.org/document/101764>), States Parties have identified the following opportunities to maintain the quality and credibility of the World Heritage List and improve funding resources for the conservation of world heritage in future:
1. Slow the rate of new inscriptions: States Parties are concerned by the detrimental effects of an expanding List on effective conservation of inscribed properties. Measures suggested by States Parties to slow the rate of inscription include:
 - Impose a moratorium on nominations to enable discussion of credibility;
 - Alternate inscription meetings with monitoring/ policy meetings;
 - Impose a time limit between inscriptions from each State Party;
 - Further reduce the number of nominations for inscription each year;
 2. Discuss ways to maintain the credibility of the List: States Parties submissions have noted that discussions of OUV have crystallised around the application of strict criteria vs. the recognition of difference. They noted the importance of the List being perceived as inclusive and linked to the local community. Measures suggested by States Parties to maintain the credibility of the Convention include:
 - Assess the current List to see how OUV is captured;
 - Consider indicative size, regional and site-type balance of an 'ideal' List;
 - Define clearer indicators of OUV, applicable to all regions;
 - Examine ways to ensure Tentative List sites have potential OUV;
 3. Re-examine the Global Strategy: States Parties noted both the significant achievements of the Global Strategy and the continuing challenges. Measures suggested by States Parties to enhance the balance of the List in future include:
 - Evaluate achievements and devise indicators to measure balance;

- Prioritise actions;
 - Apply the Global Strategy to conservation, sustainability and capacity building;
 - Reinforce Advisory Body capacities to continue thematic studies and gap analyses;
4. Address underrepresented categories/properties types: Measures suggested by States Parties to enhance the representation of different categories/properties types on the List in future include:
- Institute a strict priority for nominations from underrepresented categories;
 - Explore the contribution of transnational serial nominations;
 - Rationalise properties that are similar;
5. Address geographical imbalances in the List: While States Parties submissions noted that it is not given that every State Party has a property of potential OUV or has the infrastructure and resources to implement their obligations under the Convention, measures suggested to enhance the representation of different regions on the List in future include:
- Build developing State Party heritage capacity through training, technical assistance, and participation in missions, expert group meetings and Committee sessions;
 - Limit the number of properties from individual States Parties;
 - Increase regional and sub-regional cooperation on Tentative Lists and nominations;
120. States Parties also noted that resources were insufficient for increasing demands. They noted that the financial *status quo* is unsustainable and could jeopardise the ability to execute vital conservation functions under the Convention.
121. A workshop on the Future of the Convention was held in February 2009 at UNESCO Headquarters to identify global strategic issues, key challenges, trends and opportunities facing the Convention. The report of the workshop ([WHC-09/33.COM/14A](#)) was conveyed to both the World Heritage Committee at its 33rd session (Seville, 2009) and the 17th session of the General Assembly. Resolution 17 GA 9 mandated priorities for action and called for a Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention: 2012 – 2022. The progress of the Implementation Plan of the Strategic Action Plan was presented to the 21st session of the General Assembly of States Parties in 2017 ([WHC/17/21.GA/9](#)).

2. The Reform of the Nomination Process

122. At its 41st session in 2017, the World Heritage Committee took note of the Recommendation N°3 of the IOS Comparative Mapping Study of Forms and Models for Use of Advisory Services by International Instruments and Programmes ([WHC/17/41.COM/INF.14.II](#)), which addressed changes between recommendations of the Advisory Bodies and decisions taken by the World Heritage Committee. At its 42nd session, the Committee also took into account the recommendations of the Ad-hoc Working Group ([WHC/18/42.COM/12A](#)), and subsequently decided ([Decision 42 COM 12A](#)) to review the nomination process, Tentative Lists and Upstream Process, bearing in mind the Global Strategy, and to consider other possible measures, such as a Code of conduct of the World Heritage Committee. It also decided to extend the mandate of the Ad-hoc Working Group to examine different possibilities of reforming the nomination process.
123. The Committee considered that this reform would benefit from further reflection from a representative panel of experts drawn from the Ad-hoc Working Group, the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and other experts, to feed into the work of the Ad-hoc Working Group. In this regard, the Committee requested the World Heritage Centre to organise a reflection meeting to examine different possibilities for reforming the nomination and evaluation process and to propose recommendations for consideration by the World Heritage Committee

in view of increasing the balance and credibility of the World Heritage List ([Decision 42 COM 12A](#)). In view of feeding this reflection with the widest possible range of comments and suggestions, the Committee also requested the Secretariat to “consult with States Parties and other relevant stakeholders of the Convention on the matters that should be addressed at the reflection meeting”.

124. In January 2019, the expert meeting on the ‘Reflection on reforming the World Heritage Nomination Process’ took place in Tunis, Tunisia. The group of experts identified a set of overarching principles that they recommended guide the reform of the nomination process. These included respecting the three pillars of Outstanding Universal Value; ensuring independence, collegiality, confidentiality, and consistency within the overall process; maintaining high standards and a scientific based approach throughout the evaluation process; streamlining the nomination files through improving their efficacy in terms of content and length; strengthening the Tentative List processes; and promoting meaningful engagement, consultation and dialogue with all stakeholders. The group also recommended the development of a procedure of Preliminary Assessment that would provide an indication as to whether a site is suitable for nomination and enhance the dialogue between the States Parties and Advisory Bodies at an early stage, resulting in a two-phase nomination process ([WHC/19/43.COM/INF.8](#)).
125. In the same year, the Committee endorsed the principle of a two-phase nomination process and requested the creation of a small expert drafting group to work on the operationalisation of the reform ([Decision 43 COM 12](#)). The objective of the work of the drafting group consisted in discussing and proposing concrete changes to be introduced into the Operational Guidelines in careful alignment with existing processes and ensuring consistency throughout the World Heritage processes.
126. The expert drafting group worked throughout 2020 and presented its report and proposals to the Ad-hoc Working Group in February 2021. Subsequently, the Ad-hoc Working Group worked on the substantial changes proposed to the Operational Guidelines, including the creation of a new Annex 3 containing the request format for a Preliminary Assessment and adjustments in Annex 5 and Annex 6 to accommodate the new process. The Working Group considered that the Preliminary Assessment would build the capacity of States Parties to develop high quality nominations for sites which have a strong potential to succeed, through enhanced dialogue with the Advisory Bodies. It also considered that where the site may have potential to justify Outstanding Universal Value, the Preliminary Assessment should provide States Parties with specific guidance and advice, in the form of recommendations, to aid in the preparation of the nomination dossier. Additionally, the Working Group recommended the institution of a transition period from 2023 to 2027, after which only nominations with a Preliminary Assessment would be examined by the Committee, becoming a mandatory process.
127. In 2021, at its extended 44th session, the Committee endorsed the recommendations of the Ad-hoc Working Group and decided to adopt the reformed nomination process, with the Preliminary Assessment as its first phase and the previous mechanism, the full nomination dossier, as the second phase ([Decision 44 COM 11](#)).

E. Advisory Bodies Recommendations and Committee Decisions (analysis of the period between 2010-2023)

128. This chapter deals with an examination of the changes that intervened between the recommendations of the Advisory Bodies and the related decisions by the World Heritage Committee and should be read in conjunction with Annex 4. For the sake of facilitating data collection, all kind of changes have been counted in the same way. However, it must be stressed that a change from referral to inscription does not have the same impact than one change from non-inscription or deferral to inscription in terms of credibility, as well as, in terms

of costs for the system (i.e. properties included in the State of Conservation process immediately following inscription).

129. In the analysis of the period between 2010-2023 of the World Heritage Committee's decisions regarding nominations to the World Heritage List, out of 419 nominated properties, the Advisory Bodies recommended 223 (53.22%) for inscription, or approval in case of significant boundary modifications, while 196 (46.78%) were either proposed for a referral, deferral, or non-inscription. Of the 419 nominations, 341 (81.38%) were inscribed or approved. Among the 341 inscriptions, decisions concerning 122 properties (35.78%) changed from the Advisory Bodies' recommendation².
130. For properties which were not recommended for inscription or approval by the Advisory Bodies, the Committee changed in 169 cases (86.22%) from the Advisory Body recommendations. Among these, 122 (62.24%) resulted in the inscription of nominations or approval of significant boundary modifications. Out of the 122 properties inscribed or approved through changes, 35 (28.69%) were nominated by a Committee Member.
131. Overall, the factor which measures changes averages 96% for properties nominated by Committee Members and 82.22% for properties nominated by non-Committee Members, with an overall average of 86.22%.
132. In the regional analysis of the given period between 2010-2023, out of 419 nominations, 35 (8.35%) are located in the Latin American and Caribbean region, 179 (42.72%) in the Europe and North America region, 44 (10.50%) in the Africa region, 130 (31.03%) in the Asia and Pacific region, and 31 (7.40%) in the Arab States region.
133. In Latin America and the Caribbean, out of the 35 nominations, in 13 cases (37.14%), the Committee's decision changed from the Advisory Body's recommendation. Of the 35 nominations, 30 (85.71%) were inscribed or approved, among these, 11 (36,67%) nominations were inscribed through changes.
134. In the Europe and North America region, out of the 179 nominations, in 58 cases (32.4%), the Committee's decision changed from the Advisory Body's recommendation. Out of the 179 nominations, 144 (80.45%) were inscribed or approved, and among these, 41 (28,47%) nominations were inscribed through changes.
135. In the Africa region, out of the 44 nominations, in 22 cases (50%) the Committee's decision changed from the Advisory Body's recommendation. Out of the 44 nominations, 34 (77.27%) were inscribed or approved, and among these, 14 (41.18%) nominations were inscribed through changes.
136. In the Asia and Pacific region, out of the 130 nominations, in 55 cases (42.31%), the Committee's decision changed from the Advisory Body's recommendation. Out of the 130 nominations, 108 (83.07%) were inscribed or approved, and among these, 40 (37,04%) nominations were inscribed through changes.
137. In the Arab States region, out of the 31 nominations, in 22 cases (70.96%), the Committee's decision changed from the Advisory Body's recommendation. Out of the 31 nominations, 25 (80.65%) were inscribed or approved, and among these, 16 (64%) nominations were inscribed through changes.

F. In relation to balance of the World Heritage List

138. Despite the fact that, in the context of the Global Strategy, it has been repeatedly recalled that "*balance is not about numbers, but about representativity for bio-geographical regions or events in the history of life*" (Report of the Experts Meeting on Evaluation of general principles and Criteria for Nominations of Natural World Heritage sites (Parc de la Vanoise, France, 22-

² The choice to narrow the focus to nominations recommended for referral, deferral or non-inscription by the Advisory Bodies is due to the exceedingly rare occurrences where the World Heritage Committee does not inscribe nominations which are recommended for 'inscription' or 'approval' by the Advisory Bodies.

24 March 1996); [WHC.96/CONF.201/INF.08](#); Evaluation of the Global Strategy for a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List (1994-2004), [WHC-04/28.COM/13](#)) and that “*balance of the World Heritage List does not mean an equal amount in numbers but equal attention to inscription, management, protection and conservation as well as between the various types, categories, themes, regions, periods of Earth life-geology, bio-geographic provinces, history of life or geocultural groupings with OUV on the List.*” (Analysis of the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List (1994-2020) <https://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/187906>), the question of balance is often referred to as a matter of numbers.

139. Regions that should be considered to form the basis of an objective framework for the analysis of the World Heritage List do not necessarily correspond to political boundaries or UNESCO’s Electoral Groups, but rather to the “cultural” and “natural” values characterising the geography of our planet and its history. Therefore, it may be not possible to aim for a simplistic arithmetical ‘balance’ at State Party or regional level, given intrinsic differences and characteristics that make them not easily comparable.
140. The objective complexity, if not simple impossibility, to bring down to figures the question of the balance is also clear when applied to cultural and natural heritage inscribed on the World Heritage List. This topic of discussion may not find a solution simply because culture and nature are not directly comparable in terms of numbers.
141. In this spirit, Annex 3 contains statistical data that may offer different perspectives and ground for debate.

G. Manuals and Guidance

142. [Guidance on Developing and Revising World Heritage Tentative Lists \(2020\)](#)

Prepared by ICOMOS with support from IUCN, ICCROM, and UNESCO, this guidance document responds to the need for basic guidance during the earliest stages of the World Heritage nomination process. It aligns with the “Upstream Process” and the two-phase nomination process endorsed by the World Heritage Committee. Focusing on Tentative Lists, the document provides widely applicable guidance based on recent examples. It aims to assist States Parties in developing or revising their Tentative Lists, considering their crucial role in the overall nomination process.

143. [Preparing World Heritage Nominations \(2011\)](#)

This manual, jointly developed by UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, and IUCN, focuses on assisting States Parties in achieving good quality World Heritage nominations. It emphasizes the importance of understanding the World Heritage nomination system, highlights key concepts, stresses the role of teamwork, provides information on understanding and preparing the nomination file and helps to clarify the Operational Guidelines. The manual does not prescribe specific methods but outlines basic principles for effective nominations, ensuring the representation and protection of natural and cultural heritage.

144. [Managing Cultural World Heritage \(2013\)](#)

Developed by UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, and IUCN, this manual provides guidance to States Parties and practitioners involved in the care of World Heritage cultural properties. It aims to enhance capacity for effective heritage management, strengthen institutional structures, and establish dynamic relationships between heritage and its context. The manual explains management philosophies, mechanisms, and offers practical guidance through appendices. Its goal is to facilitate sustainable benefits, promote inclusive approaches, and contribute to the societal role of heritage.

145. [Managing Natural World Heritage \(2012\)](#)

Developed by UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, and IUCN, this manual aims to assist State Parties in managing natural values within World Heritage properties, including natural and

mixed sites and cultural landscapes. It aligns with IUCN's management effectiveness framework and identifies stages in the management process. The manual targets a diverse audience, including site managers, protected area staff, local communities, and businesses operating near natural World Heritage properties. It serves as a guide to the literature on evolving conservation strategies.

146. [Managing Disaster Risks for World Heritage \(2010\)](#)

Focused on disaster risk management for cultural and natural World Heritage properties, this manual, produced by UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, and IUCN, aids site managers and management authorities of cultural and natural World Heritage properties in reducing risks from natural and human-made disasters. It outlines principles, methodologies, and processes for disaster risk management, emphasizing the positive role heritage plays in disaster reduction. Targeted at site managers and relevant agencies, the manual aims to integrate disaster risk management plans for heritage properties into national and regional strategies.

147. [Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context \(2022\)](#)

The Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context produced by UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, and IUCN provides a methodology and a set of easy-to-use tools for elaborating impact assessments to the best practice currently existing for World Heritage. It helps to identify and define the values and attributes of the site concerned, whether it is a cultural, natural or mixed cultural-natural site. It explains the process for evaluating potential impacts, and finding appropriate mitigation measures and alternative options.

148. [Enhancing our Heritage Toolkit 2.0 Assessing Management Effectiveness of World Heritage properties and other Heritage Places \(2023\)](#)

Developed by UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN, the Enhancing Our Heritage Toolkit 2.0 (EoH 2.0) provides a globally tested self-assessment methodology to support World Heritage managers and actors to evaluate management effectiveness in a World Heritage property or other heritage place. A management effectiveness assessment is the evaluation of how well a World Heritage property is being managed: primarily on the extent to which the heritage values of the property are being maintained and management objectives are being achieved. The Toolkit supports site managers in identifying ways to improve conservation practices, management processes and resource allocation, particularly if used before reviewing or updating management plans.

H. Some suggestions for possible ways forward

149. This section focuses on possible ways forward. There have certainly been positive developments over the years. However, more can be done to improve the representativity and credibility of the World Heritage List. It is important to note that whilst this section focusses on reducing the gap of the representation of States Parties on the World Heritage List and enhancing its balance, the Convention entails more, namely the protection, conservation and transmission of the world cultural and natural heritage to future generations. Having a property inscribed on the World Heritage List is not the end of the journey, rather the contrary. A high-quality nomination dossier with relevant and well-founded arguments, amongst others, for the Outstanding Universal Value, management and protection, contributes to the conservation of this exceptional heritage of global importance.

150. The World Heritage Convention establishes a system of international co-operation and assistance for the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. It is in the hands of the States Parties and other stakeholders to do this together in the true spirit of the Convention. It needs their active engagement and commitment to implement the Convention in all its aspects, both in an international framework as well as in a national context. The 2021 Declaration of principles to promote international solidarity and cooperation to preserve World Heritage states that the States Parties, World Heritage Committee, Secretariat and Advisory

Bodies have a collective responsibility to uphold credibility, integrity and implementation of the Convention.

1. (Sub)regional relevance for global importance

151. The central theme in this section is the (sub)regional and local relevance for global importance. The Convention needs to be relevant, understood and applicable at all levels and in all the corners of the world for it to be truly credible and representative of its global heritage of Outstanding Universal Value. It is therefore imperative to look at the Convention through (sub)regional and local eyes, including through languages beyond the working languages of the Convention, to see how it translates into their context without losing sight of the global importance.

In what manner(s) can the (sub)regional relevance throughout all the World Heritage processes, from Tentative List to nomination and evaluation, etcetera be addressed on a structural basis?

For example, what does authenticity mean in that particular context and how does the community ensure the relevance and transmission to future generations?

152. It also needs to happen on a structural basis. It is equally important for the Advisory Bodies to further strengthen regional diversity of their experts for advisory, monitoring and evaluation missions and panels, a process that is underway as welcomed in document WHC/23/45.COM/11. Within the ICOMOS Regional Strategy, priority is given to a stronger regional balance of its network through creation of additional National Committees. The 2023 IUCN World Heritage Strategy states IUCN's ambition to integrate World Heritage into IUCN's regional conservation strategies and to ensure alignment with regional priorities and constituencies. IUCN furthermore intends to incubate Regional World Heritage Affirmative Action Plans, targeting tailored action at regional and sub-regional levels.

2. Nominations

153. Decision 43 COM 12 reads that the World Heritage Committee is convinced that "the most appropriate means for restoring and enhancing the credibility and balance of the World Heritage List is the development of high-quality nominations for sites". The participants of the 2023 Youth Forum called upon the States Parties to intensify efforts into bringing more diversity in the inscription of World Heritage properties by mean of continuous exploration of opportunities for underrepresented regions and categories of heritage. In the framework of the reflection on the 'Future of the World Heritage Convention' (2008), States Parties identified the need to address geographical imbalances in the List. They noted that it is not given that every State Party has a property of potential Outstanding Universal Value or has the infrastructure and resources to implement their obligations under the Convention.
154. As pointed out in the earlier sections of this background report, balance should not be defined as a matter of numbers but rather as suggested in the Analysis of the Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List (1994-2020) as equal attention to inscription, management, protection and conservation as well as between the various types, categories, themes, regions, periods of Earth life-geology, bio-geographic provinces, history of life or geo-cultural groupings with Outstanding Universal Value on the List. Furthermore, ICOMOS, for example, noted that balance should refer to how well a particular type of heritage of Outstanding Universal Value is represented on the List (WHC-02/CONF.201/6). Gaps analysis and thematic studies are essential for this.
155. Having said that, the nomination journey can be a daunting one. It takes, amongst others, resources (e.g. time, money and expertise) and a clear understanding of what is required. Efforts should be made to make this as relevant and simple as possible in order to remove unnecessary barriers that stand in the way of a high-quality nomination and ultimately a well-managed World Heritage property.

156. Once a nomination dossier has been submitted to the World Heritage Centre, it will be evaluated by the Advisory Bodies. They present their evaluation to the World Heritage Committee who subsequently decides to either inscribe, defer, refer or not to inscribe the nomination. The 2011 Audit of the Global Strategy and the PACT Initiative (WHC-11/35.COM/INF.9A) already noted a link between States Parties represented on the World Heritage Committee and the location of the nominated properties. The audit stated that “the countries most present on the Committee have nearly four times as many properties inscribed than the average country” at the time. Annex 4 to this document provides an insight into inscribed property situated on the territory of Committee Members of the period between 2010-2023: of the 341 properties inscribed, 82 (24,05%) of those were situated on the territory of Committee Members (who only represent 10,77% of the States Parties). Furthermore, 35 (10,26%) of the earlier mentioned inscribed properties were inscribed through changes between recommendations and decisions. The Audit made an observation in this respect and called the differences between Committee decisions and the recommendations of the Advisory Bodies “a very worrying evolution for the credibility of the List”. Annex 4 demonstrates that over the period 2010-2023, 169 recommendations were changed out of the 196 nominations not recommended for inscription or approval by the Advisory Bodies, which equals 86,22%. The regional analysis concerning inscriptions through changes between 2010-2023 shows that in the Arab States region 64% of the properties were inscribed or approved through changes, in the Asia and Pacific region 37,04%, in the Africa Region 41,18%, in the Europe and North America region 28,47% and in the Latin America and the Caribbean region 36,67%.

3. Gap analysis and thematic studies

157. The importance of Gap analysis and thematic studies cannot be highlighted enough. In 1999, the General Assembly **invited the Advisory Bodies** to pursue programmes of thematic studies and classification of themes. This was reiterated in relation to natural heritage in Decision 45 COM 8 which encourages States Parties to consult the relevant gap analysis and to make full and effective use of IUCN’s global, regional and thematic studies (see Annex 7 for a list of studies). Given the fact that they are 20 years old, consideration could be given to have a reflection with an appraisal of the way they were used in order to revisit them. There are several successful examples where sites from under-represented types of heritage and regions have been nominated and inscribed within short timeframes following the publication of IUCN and ICOMOS thematic studies.

158. The 2023 IUCN World Heritage Strategy states the ambition to update and promote its advice on the remaining gaps on the World Heritage List for sites of potential Outstanding Universal Value for biodiversity, geodiversity and the most superlative natural phenomena. The urgency of this cannot be stressed enough as they are pivotal for bringing forward high-quality nomination dossiers. They provide essential information, crucial to making the argument of why a site should be on the World Heritage List. It should also reduce the resources needed for all stakeholders involved (like States Parties, Advisory Bodies and the Secretariat) as it should contribute to high quality nomination dossiers and increase the representativity and credibility of the World Heritage List.

How can the preparation and update of thematic and comparative studies for under-represented regions and underrepresented types of heritage be moved along? Would it require the identification of a budget by the World Heritage Committee?

159. When it comes to States Parties to the World Heritage Convention and properties inscribed on the World Heritage List, Annex 3 presents statistical data that provide interesting insights. For example, when comparing table N°2 (Number of World Heritage Properties/surface by Geographical Region) with table N°3 (Number of World Heritage Properties/surface by World Heritage Convention Region) substantial differences can be noted. When looking at the number of World Heritage properties/surface by World Heritage Convention Region, Europe and North America account for more than 12%, Asia/Pacific over 8%, Arab States more than 7%, Latin America and the Caribbean over 7% and Africa just under 5%. However, when

looking at the number of World Heritage properties/surface by geographical region, Europe accounts for nearly 7% of the global surface, North America over 16%, Asia over 30% and Africa over 20%. This data appears to support the idea that concerning balance we should not reason only in terms of figures.

4. Full Stakeholder and Rights-holder involvement

160. As stressed during the 50th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention (2022), the role of local communities and indigenous peoples as stakeholders and right-holders in identifying, nominating, managing, protecting and presenting World Heritage should be in line with the [Policy Document for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention](#), UNDRIP and other international standards. As such, there should be an effective and inclusive participation in the nomination and management process of local communities, indigenous peoples, governmental, non-governmental, civil society, private organizations and other stakeholders in order to ensure the inclusion of traditional and indigenous knowledge. Furthermore, where Indigenous peoples' lands and territories are concerned, States Parties shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent. This community engagement should resonate throughout all World Heritage processes and tools, be it the Operational Guidelines, the nomination format or the Periodic Reporting Cycle. Since 2011, the ICOMOS Our Common Dignity-Rights Based Approach initiative encourages exploration of rights issues in World Heritage and heritage management in general and has launched a pilot project on the screening of nominations for the inclusion of a rights-based approach in 2022. The 2023 IUCN World Heritage Strategy advocates for improved integration of rights-based approaches and strengthen collaborations with the international Human Rights constituency and Indigenous peoples' Organisations in the realisation of rights and equitable benefit sharing in World Heritage properties. This also emphasizes yet again the relevance of looking at heritage with (sub)regional eyes.

Even though the necessity is identified, the question remains how to ensure full stakeholder involvement in both nomination and management processes. In what manner(s) can this be achieved and resourced?

5. Updating nomination format

161. Another way forward could be the streamlining and shortening of the current nomination format in order to make it less resource-intensive, more accessible and digestible. It is currently a complex document which takes time to understand in order to be able to apply it as intended. Consideration could be given to set a word maximum per section, and thus a limit of the overall number of pages which was also identified during the Tunis Meeting. The new format adopted in 2021 has already a set word limit for section 2.a and 2.b; can this be extended to other sections of the nomination format? The current nominations are often too big and costly; they take up a lot of resources like time, money and knowledge. There are recent examples of relatively thin nomination dossiers that were indicated as being exemplary.

How to ensure the simplification of the nomination format without losing the relevant information needed to ensure long-term management and protection is a question the working group might consider addressing. Furthermore, would it be possible to introduce word limits in other sections of the format (it is currently set for sections 2.a and 2.b)?

162. When working on the simplification of the nomination format, thought could be given on how to make best use of available new technologies in a way that is fair and equitable for all States Parties, as discussed at the Tunis Meeting. This should be a dynamic concept, done on a regular basis given the speed of developments. These technologies could be applied for various aspects, such as digital maps using GIS or documenting authenticity in a different way.

New technologies can furthermore play a crucial role in language accessibility. Language is at the basis of understanding all the documents and requirements, though it is not a given that everyone can understand or express themselves perfectly in one of the six official languages or in the two working languages. This leads on to the next point, namely the fact that the current nomination format is rather text heavy. To make it more accessible for all, it is recommended to focus on other means of making the argument besides using words. New technologies can also be applied in this respect. This also provides yet another reason to include the younger generation as they clearly indicated themselves during the 2023 Youth Forum where they demanded a voice in the discussions on cultural and natural heritage as the future decision makers of heritage. This also resonates with the IUCN Youth Strategy 2022-2030 (<https://www.iucn.org/resources/grey-literature/iucn-youth-strategy-2022-2030>). The 2023 Youth Forum stated that their perspective and new approaches are indispensable to modern planning and management of heritage, as well as to navigating a world of evolving technology.

In what manner can new technologies be used so that it is available and accessible to all? Can the Youth Forum play a role in the further exploration of, amongst others, this topic?

163. Additionally, it is recommended to use the tools that are already in place, such as the technical review. The World Heritage Centre provides technical review and related comments regarding draft nomination dossiers submitted by States Parties. If a dossier is not complete it means it will not be taken into consideration that year, which in turn means a delay of at least a year. This background document recalled earlier that 71% of the nomination dossiers considered incomplete after their official submission had not undergone the technical review. Therefore, this tool provides an invaluable service. It is unfortunately not used by everyone whilst it could prevent an unnecessary delay.

6. International Cooperation

164. As stated in Annex 3, both the limit to one nomination per State Party per session and the overall annual limit of 35 nominations are appropriate measures to address the imbalance of the World Heritage List, to limit further the pressure on the sustainability of the World Heritage Fund and to limit the overall workload of the Committee, the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre. Yet more actions are needed to address issues of representativity and balance of the World Heritage List (see, amongst others, Paragraphs 59-61 of the Operational Guidelines regarding other measures). Already in 1999, the General Assembly invited States Parties with a substantial representation of properties on the World Heritage List to space voluntarily their future nominations. This voluntary restriction with new nominations was reiterated in the Declaration of principles to promote international solidarity and cooperation to preserve World Heritage (2021).
165. Establishing international cooperation should be encouraged at all levels. As stated at the outset of this section, the Convention is a tool of international cooperation. This cooperation can happen in various shapes and forms. There are the Funds in Trust/cooperation agreements between States Parties and UNESCO, or it could be the linking of nominations and the initiation of regional partnerships based on the exchange of technical expertise. There is also the twinning of World Heritage properties, thus the properties themselves working together, to establish a mutually beneficial cooperation in order to learn from each other and to ensure the effective management and conservation of the properties. Twinning could also be between a site working on a nomination dossier and a World Heritage property, or between educational institutions, such as universities, which in turn can be very beneficial for the development of thematic and comparative studies. Then there is the cooperation between Category 2 Centres that are regionally based and the States Parties in that region regarding for example nominations and management.

Given the diverse nature of international cooperation, are there any initiatives that could be explored (preferably in a relative short timespan) in order to work towards a more representative and credible World Heritage List as was also underlined in the Declaration of principles?

7. Tentative Lists

166. As noted on previous occasions, Tentative Lists are crucial for a number of reasons. The 1996 Vanoise Report recognised Tentative Lists and their regional harmonization as a tool to better manage the List. This was reiterated by the so-called Cairns Decision (2000) which identified it as a planning tool with a view to reducing any imbalances in the World Heritage List. Decision 45 COM 8 underlines the possible role of the upstream advice for the development or revision of Tentative Lists. It also stresses the importance of the process of revision and updating of Tentative Lists as a tool towards regional harmonisation of the World Heritage List and long-term planning.
167. The outcomes of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting so far, emphasise the need to identify and update national inventories and Tentative Lists to reflect the diversity of heritage and contribute to increasing typological representation and balance. They also highlight the necessity of thematic studies and gap analysis, once again underlining their importance. Furthermore, the importance of national inventories deserves more attention as they give recognition to national heritage, demonstrate its importance, as it does not all need to be about World Heritage.
168. It is therefore recommended that States Parties periodically update their Tentative List and harmonise them at the regional and thematic levels. Nevertheless, as stated in this background document, regional harmonization of Tentative Lists has happened only very sporadically and did not become part of the Tentative List procedure.
169. Regional meetings are crucial for the identification of types of properties for potential nominations in a given region, and those for possible inclusion as transnational and transboundary properties. As a matter of example, ICOMOS published in 2021, with the cooperation of ARC-WH and through expert meetings, a survey on *Exploring cultural heritage of the Arab region: potential offered for a more balanced World Heritage List*, whose aim was to analyse some of the challenges facing the Arab countries and provide an assessment of the promising themes and typologies that could be considered by the Arab States Parties as a basis to identify the sites with potential for future World Heritage nomination proposals. This should facilitate more diverse nomination dossiers thus contributing to a more credible, balanced and representative World Heritage List (outcome of the Special Expert Meeting of the “World Heritage Convention: The Concept of Outstanding Universal Value” in Kazan, 2005). One of the outcomes of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting is the action to promote integration of regional characteristics into Tentative Lists, especially focused on the recognition, inclusion and prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples’ heritage.

Given the fact that Tentative Lists are an important planning tool in the nomination process, how can harmonization of the Tentative Lists be encouraged? And how can it be ensured that this is made a priority?

8. Capacity building

170. Capacity building is crucial to the Convention. The 2021 report of the World Heritage Centre to the Committee (WHC/21/44.COM/5A) noted that there is a constant need for capacity building regarding all aspects of World Heritage in order to ensure better management of World Heritage properties, including traditional knowledge, and to support the preparation of nomination dossiers. As the Convention entails the protection, conservation and transmission of the world cultural and natural heritage to future generations, capacity building is crucial in sustaining the credibility and quality of the World Heritage Convention. This situation is also

reflected in the outcomes of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting so far, which unanimously underlined the importance of capacity building at all levels. This is reflected in the regional action plans for the coming decade.

171. The Operational Guidelines note that the World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy (WHCBS) provides “a framework of action, and orients actors at the international, regional, or national levels to create regional and national capacity building strategies in addition to individual capacity building activities” with the aim to ensure the development of the necessary skills for better implementation of the Convention. Consequently, regional strategies to strengthen World Heritage related capacities have been developed. However, as mentioned in the Evaluation of the World Heritage Capacity-Building Strategy (2023) by the E.C.O. Institut für Ökologie, in the period from 2010 to 2021, there was virtually no funding available for implementing the WHCBS. It further states that one of the main key outcomes of the WHCBS is the World Heritage Leadership Programme, implemented by IUCN and ICCROM and funded mainly by the Norwegian and Swiss governments. The evaluation recommended to establish a global task force led by the Centre with ICCROM and to establish regional working groups led by regional Units of the Centre “to identify priority themes and needs based on the 3rd Periodic Reporting Cycle as well as regional stakeholder validation”.
172. The Ad-hoc Working Group also agreed on the need of enhancing capacity-building activities, specifically targeting experts from underrepresented regions and countries, as a crucial way to reach the objective of improving geographical balance efforts should be made by all stakeholders, with particular emphasis on engaging indigenous peoples and rights holders. (WHC/23/45.COM/11.Rev).
173. The criticality of training was also highlighted in the 50 minds dialogue where it was noted that young people are the future. Awareness raising activities at schools help to understand the value of heritage and the need of its protection. It also brought forward that civil society, private actors, international communities and government should work together to create this awareness and support preservation work.
174. Capacity Building needs to be continued and systematic rather than incidental if it is to consolidate the achievements and ensure continuity. The AFRICA 2009 Programme was mentioned in this document as an example for the need to consolidate the achievements and continue to strengthen the regional training institutions involved in capacity building for African professionals. Knowledge of World Heritage is needed at national level in order to ensure a sustainable future of this exceptional heritage. The drainage of this knowledge is detrimental in this respect. It is therefore recommended to establish a structural capacity building mechanism in order to ensure continuous World Heritage expertise on the ground. The World Heritage Leadership Programme delivered by ICCROM and IUCN operates on thematic modules covering Effective Management, Impact Assessment, Resilience and Learning Networks that are systematically providing structured knowledge and practice to site management staff, on the basis of the content built in the World Heritage Resource Manuals.
175. Mentorship is a way of capacity building, of transferring knowledge. The outcomes of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting underline its importance. In 2022 the UNESCO World Heritage Centre launched the Mentorship Programme for African World Heritage Professionals with the aim to better capacitate African World Heritage professionals through mentorship. As with twinning, mentorship can take place at various levels, for example also within the Advisory Bodies when they are working on strengthening the regional diversity within their organisations.

What are possible ways forward to enhance capacity-building activities, especially in underrepresented regions and countries? What are the capacity gaps? What steps are needed to structurally work towards well-trained heritage practitioners (in the field) who understand the issues from a local/(sub)regional perspective?

9. Resources

176. In 2013 the General Assembly recommended States Parties to make unrestricted supplementary voluntary contributions and discussed the importance of reiterating the call to States Parties to voluntarily double their assessed contributions, and to contribute to the sub-account on the evaluation of nominations, based on the cost-sharing mechanism and to settle any pending assessed contributions (Resolution 19 GA 8). The 2003 General Assembly recommended that additional financial resources be allocated to the World Heritage Centre for programmes to strengthen capacity in the States Parties and regions under-represented on the World Heritage List. It also recommends the Secretariat to consider the possibility of organizing a Partners' Forum annually in dialogue with States Parties and ensuring appropriate follow up and implementation of the outcomes.
177. Additionally, it is important to realise that resources encompass more than finances, and attention should be directed on also ensuring the allocation of time and expertise.

What could be concrete steps towards ensuring that more resources become available to the World Heritage Fund in order to address the representativity of the World Heritage List?

PART II – PROPOSE SOLUTIONS TO THE TECHNICAL EVALUATION REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING IMPROVING CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

A. Advisory Bodies

178. It should first be noted that the gap of the representation of State Parties on the World Heritage List is not a matter of imbalance of Advisory Body recommendations and inscriptions, but a matter of imbalance of the nominations that are submitted. Therefore, the imbalance of the World Heritage List is a direct consequence of the imbalance of nominations as the following figures clearly illustrate: as regards nominations submitted on the basis of cultural or mixed criteria, for instance, only 20 out of 341 nominations dossiers transmitted to ICOMOS for evaluation over the past 10 years were from Africa, ie less than 6%. On the other hand, 180 were from Europe, ie more than 52% - whereas the 'rate of inscription' (ratio of inscribed to submitted properties) was slightly lower for Europe (59%) than for the 4 other regions together (68%).
179. With this in mind, the approaches ICOMOS and IUCN propose – and which have already been mentioned as part of the ad-hoc working group's reflections and discussions – are mainly based on the following approaches:
- Consolidation of thematic and regional gap studies for natural and cultural heritage, paired with appropriately resourced follow-up action that enables States Parties to prepare high-quality nomination dossiers, building on successful examples of swift nomination processes following the publication of thematic studies.
 - Development of Upstream activities targeted to underrepresented countries/regions, mainly through workshops for the elaboration or the revision of Tentative Lists. Five workshops of this type have been organized by IUCN and ICOMOS since 2021, in coordination with the World heritage Centre. Upstream advice on individual sites can also be very useful for preparing a nomination dossier and ICOMOS has carried out this individual upstream work for 10 State Parties since 2021, at the request of the World Heritage Centre. However, it is perhaps regrettable that requests for advice also come from countries that are already very well represented, whereas this service should perhaps primarily benefit underrepresented State Parties.

- Production of pre-nominating guidelines on underrepresented categories of cultural heritage (such as the Rock Art pre-nomination guidelines published by ICOMOS in 2011 which have proved very useful in encouraging the preparation of nomination files for such sites).
- Development of training activities aimed at providing technical advice for the preparation of nomination files. A workshop of this kind, focused on the technical requirements of the Preliminary Assessment is being organized by ARC-WH in May for African and Arab experts. Advisory Bodies would be available to organize other similar workshops.
- Extending Capacity building activities (such as those organized with the support of AWHF or ARC-WH) by giving young and mid-career experts from underrepresented regions the opportunity to take part in the evaluation process, including in missions and Panel sessions. ICOMOS has begun to do this in 2023, but on a scale that is still too limited due to financial constraints. In line with IUCN's Youth Strategy 2022-2030, IUCN is actively expanding its expert network in this regard.

B. Capacity building

180. Capacity Building as one of the Strategic Objectives (or “Five C’s”) identified by the World Heritage Committee (Budapest, 2002 and Christchurch, 2007) is at the core of the sustainable implementation of the Convention (Operational Guidelines, Paragraphs 212 – 214bis). Reinforcement of capacity building is a priority and aims to equip States Parties with the relevant expertise to protect and manage their properties.
181. At its 35th session (UNESCO, 2011) the Committee approved the [World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy](#) (WHCBS) which succeeded the Training Strategy, launched in 2001, highlighting a shift from training to capacity building for heritage (Decision **35 COM 9B**). The WHCBS was developed by the World Heritage Centre in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies and other capacity-building partners, such as category 2 centres, in various regions of the world. Since its adoption, specific regional strategies to strengthen World Heritage-related capacities in order to protect and manage World Heritage properties, as well as to ensure a representative, credible and balanced World Heritage List, have been implemented at both regional and international levels. Trainings and workshops to strengthen the capacity of States Parties, particularly in relation to effective management, conservation and development of nomination dossiers as well as the removal of properties from the List of World Heritage in Danger are regularly organised, especially in priority regions, also focusing on priority groups. The trainings also focus on improving the management effectiveness of World Heritage properties and harnessing good practices for promoting socio-economic development and heritage conservation.
182. Numerous tools and resources for capacity building such as manuals, guidance books and toolkits have been prepared on core topics in order to assist States Parties with the implementation of the Convention. Upstream Process and the Preliminary Assessment processes have been also designed to assist States Parties with preparation of Tentative Lists, nominations and the overall understanding of the concept of Outstanding Universal Value with appropriate management and conservation mechanisms established for the properties.
183. Furthermore, the World Heritage Leadership Programme launched by ICCROM and IUCN enhances the skills of practitioners working through the Convention and considers the full range of conservation practices, so that ‘World Heritage’ can provide leadership to achieve innovation and excellence within the conservation sector. Core and long-term activities include the revision of the World Heritage management manuals and the creation of a web-based learning platform.
184. The implementation of the WHCBS, the progress accomplished, and the regional capacity-building strategies and activities are annually reviewed by the Committee at its sessions.

185. In 2021 (Decision **44 COM 6**), the Committee has requested an independent, results-based evaluation of its 10-year implementation, which was reviewed at its extended 45th session (Document [WHC/23/45.COM/6](#)). In Decision **45 COM 6**, the Committee acknowledged the progress made in implementing the WHCBS by all actors and requested the World Heritage Centre, in cooperation with ICCROM, IUCN and ICOMOS, to develop a new World Heritage Capacity-Building Strategy for the 2025-2035 decade, with clear priorities, strategic objectives, expected outputs and outcomes, relying on the outcomes of the evaluation and its recommendations and guidelines. However, it is important to note that the capacity building as well as the development of the WHCBS relies mainly on the availability of extrabudgetary funds, therefore States Parties are invited to financially contribute to this end.

PART III – EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF USING ADDITIONAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

186. The elements below have been presented to the Ad-Hoc Working Group 2022-2023, which recommended that discussions should be pursued on this topic.

A. Background

187. In line with IOS's "Comparative Mapping Study of Forms and Models for use of Advisory Services by International Instruments and Programmes" (Document [WHC/17/41.COM/INF.14.II](#)), submitted to the Committee at its 41st session (Krakow, 2017), 'advisory services' consist of the following:

- the evaluation of nominations to the World Heritage List,
- reactive monitoring missions and technical reviews in relation to §172-174 of the Operational Guidelines (including reviews of Heritage Impact Assessments or Environmental Impact Assessments), and

188. the assessment of international assistance requests. Upon recommendation by IOS, the matter of additional advisory services was brought to the attention of the Ad-Hoc working groups between 2017 and 2019. In 2018, a legal opinion was issued regarding such a possibility (see Document [WHC/18/42.COM/12A](#), p. 7, and Annex 8 of this document), which concluded that "*neither the Convention nor the Operational Guidelines compel the Committee to use only ICCROM, IUCN and ICOMOS to provide advisory services*".

189. Nonetheless, most of the Ad-Hoc Working Group members in 2017-2018 considered that the central role of ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN was to be preserved and that the use of other entities should come in addition to the current system, rather than as a replacement for the current practices, based on the well-functioning of the current system with a high quality of service for the past 40 years.

190. Consequently, the Ad-Hoc Working Group in 2018-2019 concluded that "*there was no need to change the current practice. Furthermore, it was agreed that the introduction of any new modality for the use of additional advisory services would not contribute to solving the financial problems, but rather would even further complicate the situation*" (see [Document WHC/19/43.COM/12 §68-69](#)). Consequently, the Ad-Hoc Working Group recommended "*to retain the status-quo regarding the involvement of additional advisory services*" (Recommendation 14), which the Committee endorsed (Decision [43 COM 12](#)), explicitly "*retain[ing] the status-quo regarding the involvement of additional advisory services and also encourages the Advisory Bodies to sustain consultations with UNESCO's scientific programmes and bodies under other UNESCO conventions*".

191. Nevertheless, in 2021 the Committee, by [Decision 44 COM 14 §21](#), entrusted the Ad-Hoc Working Group with:

- a) *Mapping of current and potential additional advisory service providers, with a view to improving geographical balance,*
- b) *The possibility of exploring the criteria and governance under which the Committee may cooperate with international and non-governmental organizations in accordance with articles 13.7 and 14.2 of the Convention (...);”*

192. The following categories of potential advisory services providers were presented to the Ad-hoc working group in order to prepare a preliminary and indicative mapping of potential additional advisory service providers.

1. Organisations contracted by UNESCO in recent years in support of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, operating at the global, regional or sub-regional level and with experience working on World Heritage in more than one country;
2. Organisations associated with the implementation of the World Heritage Convention through the UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme;
3. Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO associated with the implementation of the World Heritage Convention;
4. Non-governmental organisations and foundations in official partnership with UNESCO and with relevant mandate and expertise in the work of the World Heritage Convention;
5. Registered organisations to the Committee sessions in the past 5 years with a regional or global mission with direct relevance to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention;
6. UN bodies or other intergovernmental organisations with expertise relevant to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.
7. Other organizations of potential interest.

(Note: it should be kept in mind that entities could belong to more than one category at a time, depending on their purpose, scope and relationship with UNESCO. For UNESCO Chairs, their location in a country did not imply automatically that their activity was not global. Some more refined classification would be required.)

193. The preliminary mapping which was presented to the Ad-hoc Working Group included 271 entities falling within the six categories above-mentioned. However, assessing the relevance of entities included in the preliminary mapping would entail contacting them, whereas no formal decision on whether the Committee wants to use additional service providers nor on the use of the criteria developed by the Secretariat have been taken yet.

194. Such possible criteria for selecting suitable advisory service providers were based on the selection criteria and practices used for other UNESCO Conventions, notably the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*:

- A. The entity **has proven competence, expertise and experience** with the identification and/or conservation of World Heritage or with a specific area of competence relevant to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention;
 - This largely overlaps with the mapping categories but remains an essential prerequisite to ensuring the quality of the advice provided.
- B. The entity is of **sub-regional, regional or global scope/nature**;
 - For other Conventions, a proven global/regional scope is a selection criterion for advisory services, and this should fully apply to the Committee’s Advisory Bodies (as identified in Article 14 of the 1972 Convention). However, an organisation tasked with providing specific advice on a case-by-case basis may require more localised knowledge and experience, and might therefore be of more limited geographical scope. It should nonetheless be noted that a local entity with such capacity is very likely to have been involved in the nomination and/or conservation processes and may therefore not be able to provide an impartial assessment. Therefore, it is

suggested to consider sub-regional structures, provided that they have no conflict of interest concerning the matter at hand, in line with criterion G (see below). It should also be recalled here that the established practice at UNESCO and within the current Advisory Bodies is to avoid using the services of national experts for missions in their own country.

- C. The **objectives** of the entity **align with the spirit and letter of the 1972 Convention**;
- The entity must fully comply with the letter of the Convention, its *Operational Guidelines*, and follow the spirit of non-binding guidance texts, such as the *Declaration of principles to promote international solidarity and cooperation to preserve World Heritage* (2021) or the *Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective* (2015).
 - If the objectives of the entity include gender equality aspects, or specific attention to Africa, indigenous stakeholders or young people, these would be also an asset.
- D. The entity has a proven, **established domicile and legal personality** compatible with the relevant domestic law(s) **for at least 5 years**;
- This helps to ensure that the potential service provider has sufficient experience and legitimacy to provide the requested advice.
- E. The entity possesses the **operational and staffing capacities** to carry out advisory services, considering the diversity of expertise views based on professional, geographical and cultural perspectives;
- Projects already undertaken by the entity give some indications on its operational capacities, while the number of its staff (and members where relevant) is also a good indicator of its actual possibilities to provide the required services.
 - The provision of independent and objective advice, in the spirit of UNESCO, requires international cooperation and the joint work of experts with different points of view (e.g. to address geographical balance, gender balance, consultation with and/or representation of specific interest groups, and any other aspect pertinent to the specific case on which advice is sought).
- F. The entity has the capacity to fully comply with the current **UNESCO rules and regulations on procurement**, since all services provided under the World Heritage Fund are contracted under UNESCO rules and regulations;
- Compatibility with this criterion would have to be reassessed with every revision of the UNESCO Administrative Manual, especially as concerns procurement processes. UNESCO procurement is based on the following principles: (a) best value for money; (b) fairness, integrity and transparency; (c) economy and effectiveness; and (d) interest of UNESCO.
 - Any potential advisory service provider shall fully comply with all UNESCO rules and regulations not outlined in the criteria above. In case of conflict between the advisory service selection criteria and the rules laid out in the UNESCO Administrative Manual, the latter shall always prevail since they are the ones under which the funds will be obligated and disbursed.
- G. The entity **does not have any conflict of interest** concerning the provision of specific advice sought by the Committee;
- The entity should have no direct ties that would prevent it from providing an objective, external assessment. In cases where previous advice has been sought, or where the entity has been involved in some matters concerning the site under discussion, the entity should be able to demonstrate that it does not have a direct conflict of interest and to provide a statement to that effect, if required.
 - In line with the *Declaration of principles to promote international solidarity and cooperation to preserve World Heritage* (2021), advisory service providers should

abide by the principles of integrity, objectivity, impartiality and respect for cultural diversity. Advisory service providers should comply with all requirements that apply to the current Advisory Bodies in that regard.

195. In its report to the Committee in 2023, the Ad-hoc Working Group “*agreed that this preliminary mapping, as well as the list of possible criteria to select potential additional service providers, cannot be considered as exhaustive and finalized, but that further debate on this matter would be needed. Additional discussion would be particularly necessary with reference to the criteria to be used, as well as to the type of services that such organizations could be asked to provide in the context of the Convention*” (see Document [WHC/23/45.COM/11, §35](#)).

B. Possible options for additional service providers presented to the 2022/2023 Ad-hoc working group

196. Four options were presented by the Secretariat to the Ad-hoc working group. They are summarized in the table below:

	Option 1 Accreditation of additional service providers + services budgeted in advance	Option 2 Accreditation of additional service providers + services budgeted in advance for the current service providers and on an ad-hoc basis for the additional ones	Option 3 Accreditation of additional service providers + services budgeted on an ad-hoc basis	Option 4 No accreditation of additional service providers + contracting on an ad-hoc basis
Accreditation system	To be put in place by Committee	To be put in place by Committee	To be put in place by Committee	None
Budget estimates prior to Committee session	Yes, from all accredited service providers	Only from the current 3 Advisory Bodies for specific advisory services	No	No
Budget decision	Specifies which amount goes to which service provider and for which type of services	Specifies which amount goes to each of the current 3 Advisory Bodies and which amount goes to “Other accredited service providers”	Provides a global amount for advisory services	Provides a global amount for advisory services
Bidding process	N.A.	N.A. for the current 3 Advisory Bodies Bidding for the other advisory services among the accredited service providers	Bidding for each advisory service among the accredited service providers	Bidding for each advisory services In addition to “value for money” principle, the Secretariat will use the selection criteria defined and approved by the Committee
Contractual arrangements	Intergovernmental Body Allocation Contract for each service provider (can be established for the biennium)	Intergovernmental Body Allocation Contract for the current 3 Advisory Bodies (can be established for the biennium) Ad-hoc contracting for the others	Ad-hoc contracting for all advisory services	Ad-hoc contracting for all advisory services

	Option 1 Accreditation of additional service providers + services budgeted in advance	Option 2 Accreditation of additional service providers + services budgeted in advance for the current service providers and on an ad-hoc basis for the additional ones	Option 3 Accreditation of additional service providers + services budgeted on an ad-hoc basis	Option 4 No accreditation of additional service providers + contracting on an ad-hoc basis
Feasibility	It is the easiest option to implement from an administrative point of view	The ease with which this option can be implemented will largely depend on the type of advisory services requested from the additional service providers. For timing reasons, it would be simpler if such services cover reactive monitoring or technical reviews	This option would be quite heavy to implement in terms of administrative procedures and could significantly impact on the delivery of services (especially on the evaluation of nominations which has a strict calendar)	This option would be quite heavy to implement in terms of administrative procedures and could significantly impact on the delivery of services (especially on the evaluation of nominations which has a strict calendar)

197. Here are a few additional explanations / remarks:

- a. The “accreditation system” may be inspired by what is already in place under the 2003 Convention and would allow for the issuance of a list of “accredited” advisory services providers, which might not all be not-for-profit organizations;
- b. Under Option 4, the service providers could be also individual experts;
- c. For Option 1, an unknown factor is whether the additional service providers would be able to build an anticipated budget for nominations, keeping in mind that the number of nominations and related typologies of sites to be evaluated in the 2 following years cannot be known at the time of approval of the biennial budget;
- d. The “Intergovernmental Body Allocation Contract” (mentioned under Option 2 and 3) is possible only with not-for-profit organizations;
- e. The potential advisory service providers may represent a great variety of specialty areas, as well as a great variability in structure, size, and capacity to undertake work in addition to their core mandate. Therefore, it may well be that a given advisory service provider identified on an ad-hoc basis for its specific expertise would be unable to provide the advice under the required conditions (e.g. timeline, honorarium). In such a case, aside from the administrative delays caused by these consultations, it might not be possible to find a suitable replacement among other advisory service providers;
- f. Bidding processes for each and every service needed can have significant impacts on the timeline for delivery, as identifying, contacting and obtaining quotes or bids from several entities requires a certain amount of time (this concerns Options 2, 3 and 4);
- g. Accredited organizations can be included in UNESCO roster time ahead (this concerns Options 1, 2 and 3). But in the case the bidding process is fully open (under Option 4), administrative processes to add new contractors to the UNESCO roster are to be taken into account, because currently they are very strict and time-consuming, mostly because of tightened controls to reduce the risk of fraud. The current process to add or update a contractor’s data, and especially banking data, takes between a few weeks and several months, which could also significantly impact the timeline for delivery when the service provider is selected on an ad-hoc basis.
- h. For Option 4, the determination of the criteria for selection of additional service providers would have to be finalized and agreed upon by the Committee;

- i. It should be noted that if other advisory service providers should be added under whatever option, this would not automatically require amending the Operational Guidelines, but it would modify the usual wording of some decisions (such as the ones requesting a reactive monitoring mission, which are currently specifically mentioning the name of the Advisory Body involved).

PART IV – PROPOSE SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS TO THE FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE NOMINATION PROCESS TO IMPLEMENT THE ABOVE INCLUDING THE PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

A. Background

198. In 2016, *“in view of optimisation of the use of the resources of the Fund”*, the Committee *“emphasizes the importance of securing value for money in the commissioning of advisory services and requests the Secretariat to prepare, if funding available, a comparative mapping of forms and models for use of advisory services (such as evaluation, technical services, etc.) by other international instruments and programmes as a means of benchmarking the price of services, including but not limited to UNESCO site-based conventions and programmes, for consideration by the ad-hoc Working Group at the earliest opportunity and examination by the Committee at its 41st session”* (Decision [40 COM 15, §21](#)).
199. Therefore, in 2017 IOS presented a “Comparative Mapping Study of Forms and Models for use of Advisory Services by International Instruments and Programmes” (document [WHC/17/41.COM/INF.14.II](#)), by which it noted that *“Current Advisory Bodies’ practices for assessing nominations to the World Heritage List are heavy and costly”* and recommended its recommendation n°3 was *“(…) that World Heritage Committee identify the root cause(s) for Committee decisions deviating from Advisory Bodies advice, procured at a significant cost to the World Heritage Fund, and take action to address them.”*
200. With a view to reduce costs, to enhance the quality of nomination files, and hence to reduce changes between the Advisory Bodies advice and Committee decisions the new “Preliminary Assessment” process was introduced as a first phase of the nomination process in 2021. As a desk-based process without field missions, Preliminary Assessments only generate a low level of costs for States Parties and support them in their decision-making on potential nomination projects, with a view to avoiding investments into nomination projects that have little or no chances to succeed. Estimated total costs by the Advisory Bodies for Preliminary Assessments amount to approximately US\$ 1,000,000 per biennium in case the maximum number of Preliminary Assessment files is received. This amount does not include the World Heritage Centre’s costs. The Committee by [Decision 44 COM 14 §13-14](#) (Fuzhou/on line, 2021) considered *“that the integration of the Preliminary Assessment in the framework of the nomination process as a first phase should lead to reduced costs in the second phase”* and *“Recognizes that further clarification is needed about the overall cost of the nomination process”*. The Committee also acknowledged the fact that sustainable funding for the new “Preliminary Assessment” mechanism had to be identified as from the 2024-2025 budget.
201. Following the recommendations made by the Ad-Hoc Working Group in this regard, the Committee at its extended 45th session decided to *“use up to 100% of the amount in the sub-account dedicated to the Evaluations of nominations to contribute to the financing of the nomination process, particularly the Preliminary Assessment requests to be processed by the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and IUCN, as from September 2023, and further decides to complement, if necessary, the financing needs related to the Preliminary Assessment, including those of the World Heritage Centre, with funds from the operating reserve”* – see [Decision 45 COM 15 §8](#) (Riyadh, 2023). This short to medium-term solution has enabled the implementation of the first cycle of Preliminary Assessments.

B. Cost of the evaluation of nominations

202. In view of the sustainability of the World Heritage Fund, a proposal to set the annual limit of the number of nominations examined by the Committee to 25 was presented to the Committee at its 39th session in Document [WHC-15/COM.39/11](#) (Bonn, 2015) as “*most realistic and practical solution to face the heavy budget constraints and the likely continued decline in financial resources for the next biennium.*”. The Committee did not retain this solution, but decided in 2016 to limit to 35 nominations to be examined by the Committee each year (see part I above).
203. A direct consequence of the limit of one file per State Party was that the number of complete nominations examined by the Committee never reached the overall limit of 35 and decreased from 54 for 2019 to 22 for 2020, 17 for 2021, 24 for 2022, 26 for 2023 and 34 for 2024. This decrease, coupled with savings made on missions undertaken by the Advisory Bodies thanks to contributing States Parties, allowed for the percentage of funding allocated to the Advisory Bodies under the World Heritage Fund biennial budget to go down from 77% in 2014-2015 to 60% in 2024-2025. Hence, any increase in the number of nominations examined yearly would have immediate budgetary consequences.

1. Costs of evaluations: Preliminary assessment

204. As indicated in 2023 in the budget document [WHC/23/45.COM/15](#), §67, the cost of the Preliminary Assessment for the Advisory Bodies was evaluated by them in 2021 at **US\$ 15,732 per file in case the maximum number of 35 files for Preliminary Assessment is received**. In 2023, costs were estimated at US\$ 21,161 on the basis of 8 files received and at US\$ 15,556 for 35 Preliminary Assessment files. For the costs on the Secretariat’s side, the amount per file ranges from US\$ 1,875 (if 8 files or less) to US\$ 1,143 (if 35 files). Details are provided in Annex IX of Document [WHC/23/45.COM/15](#).
205. During the ad-hoc working group, it was noted that the large savings from Preliminary Assessment relate to the very large budgets that States Parties frequently invest to prepare nominations, and which are higher than the costs of the evaluation process. . These will not be savings for the World Heritage Fund. The Advisory Bodies explained that one of the objectives and expected benefits of the reform is precisely that it will allow the reworking and redesigning of a nomination dossier in a more cost-efficient way during the pre-preparation phase rather than the current situation where files can proceed to the end of the evaluation process with little chance of success. As such, it must be stressed that the second step of the evaluation process should not be considered purely as a formal validation of the Preliminary Assessment.
206. In terms of the costs of the evaluation process covered by the World Heritage Fund, there is limited scope to reduce costs of the second phase of the evaluation process as the main items of expenditures (the field evaluations, panels and desk reviews) are not compensated for (desk reviews being volunteered and panellists and field evaluators being honorary commitments with negligible compensation). As these costs are largely volunteered, a reduction in the length of the panel or in the number of desk reviews would not translate into significant financial savings for the World Heritage Fund, although there might be small economies regarding the lengths of Panel meetings.

2. Costs of evaluations by the Advisory Bodies: second phase

207. According to the information provided by ICOMOS and IUCN to the ad-hoc working group in 2022-2023, the average individual cost of evaluating a nomination in the second phase of the evaluation process (which follows the submission of a complete nomination by 1 February each year) can be estimated around **US\$ 25,000 per file**. This can clearly vary according to the specifics of the file (in particular, whether the nomination comprises a single or serial site) but variations from this average are limited and mostly in the costs of the evaluation missions,

which are already to a large extent covered by the nominating States Parties. Thus, there is hardly any further scope for savings, given the already low costs of the process.

208. The cost structure by expenditure category of the Advisory Bodies is as follows:

- a. desk reviews (pro bono advice) – no costs
- b. evaluation mission (travel – international and national –, visa costs, incidentals, and symbolic honoraria to experts, to ensure their costs are covered) – costs are to a large extent covered by nominating States Parties, per diems are not paid, approximately 80% of the professional costs, or more, are volunteered by mission experts, international travel costs depend on actual fares.
- c. panels costs (travel, incidentals, expert fees) – costs consist mainly of travel costs whilst per diems are not paid; approximately 80%, or more, of the professional costs are volunteered by Panel members.
- d. production costs (translation of evaluations) – costs consist mainly of translation fees, printing. Mailing costs have not been incurred in recent years, and printed documents are no longer produced.
- e. staff time (scientific coordination, administrative coordination, dialogue with States Parties) – ICOMOS and IUCN continue to provide direct support to the staff costs to enable continued delivery, in addition to the volunteered costs of experts.
- f. participation in the Committee (travel expenses for staff and experts) – participation has been reduced to a minimum and is supplemented through additional external funding sources. Expert fees are not paid, hence depend on a high degree of volunteer work.
- g. overheads – These are charged at rates below ICOMOS and IUCN policy in the framework of an exception and represent a further in-kind contribution of ICOMOS and IUCN.

209. As indicated above, it should hence be noted that the Advisory Bodies are indirectly and directly financing (i.e. subsidising) an important part of the evaluation process.

C. Summary of the solutions envisaged for increasing the level of the World Heritage Fund and their outcomes (as of end 2023)

210. The funding of the nomination process has remained a burning issue for years. Since 2013, the Governing Bodies of the World Heritage Convention explored different paths to try increasing the level of the World Heritage Fund. These various solutions and their outcomes are summarized in the table below.

Solutions envisaged	Outcomes (as of end 2023)
Resolution 19 GA 8 §7 (General Assembly, 2013): options for providing unrestricted supplementary voluntary contributions *	
<u>Option 1</u> : Increasing the standard percentage used in the calculation of the contributions to the World Heritage Fund from 1% to 2%	5 States Parties out of 195 have voluntarily doubled / increased their 2023 annual compulsory contributions.
<u>Option 3.1</u> : Increasing the contributions by a flat rate of US\$3,300 per property inscribed	This option has been used by 1 State Party in 2022-2023.
<u>Option 3.2</u> : Increasing the contributions by an additional 4% of the current assessed contribution per property inscribed	This option has not been used to date, except once in 2014 by 1 State Party

Solutions envisaged	Outcomes (as of end 2023)
<u>Option 3.3:</u> Increasing the contributions by an additional amount per property inscribed, according to a percentage increasing with the number of properties inscribed	This option has not been used to date.
<u>Option 3.4:</u> Increasing the contributions by an additional amount per property inscribed, according to a percentage decreasing with the number of properties inscribed	This option has not been used to date.
<u>Option 4:</u> Increasing the contributions on the basis of the number of tourists arrivals at World Heritage Sites	This option has not been used to date.
<u>Option 5:</u> Contributing per activity	This option has not been used to date. <i>When they contribute by activity, donors prefer to provide contributions to the sub-account for specific activities.</i>
<u>Audit of the Working Methods of Cultural Conventions</u> (Internal Oversight Services, 2013) ³	
<u>Recommendation 1 a):</u> Supplement the current funding structure with General Trust funds formed out of contributions from the Contracting (States) Parties on compulsory or voluntary basis to cover the ordinary expenditures of the Secretariats, including staffing, administrative costs, preparation and translation of documents.	In 2013, the General Assembly established a sub-account within the World Heritage Fund, to be funded from Voluntary Contributions and to be used exclusively for enhancing the human capacities of the Secretariat (Resolution 19 GA 8, §8).
<u>Recommendation 1 b):</u> Prioritize the current workload of the Convention Secretariats to align it with available resources	Such an alignment has not been made to date.
<u>Recommendation 1 c):</u> Reduce the frequency, when feasible, duration and agenda of the meetings of States Parties and that of the Intergovernmental Committees and synchronize the meetings of the State Parties to the Conventions, when efficiencies can be achieved.	At its 40th session (Istanbul/UNESCO, 2016), the Committee decided that the frequency of its meetings was adequate (Decision 40 COM 15 §22)
<u>Recommendation 1 e):</u> Modify the financial rules and regulations if necessary to allow application of cost recovery policy	In 2013, the General Assembly decided to apply the cost recovery policy for the staff time spent in managing the World Heritage Fund within the limit of the funds made available under the newly established sub-account for enhancing the human capacities of the Secretariat (Resolution 19 GA 8, §8).

³ Only recommendations applicable to the World Heritage Fund are presented; two of them concerned the Regular Programme (Recommendation 1d) on translation/interpretation and Recommendation 3 on logistics).

Solutions envisaged	Outcomes (as of end 2023)
<p>Recommendation 2: Convention Secretariats, where applicable, to explore more efficient ways of the obtaining advisory services and consider potential chargeback mechanisms to the nominating State Parties and/or earmarked fund and formulate proposals to the respective Governing Bodies for possible economies and financial sustainability in the advisory service fees.</p>	<p>At its 42nd (Manama, 2018) and 43rd (Baku, 2019) sessions respectively, the Committee decided “to continue to use the services of the current three Advisory Bodies” (Decision 42 COM 14 §20) and to “retain the status-quo regarding the involvement of additional advisory services” (Decision 43 COM 12, §13).</p> <p>At its 43rd session (Baku, 2019), the Committee established a sub-account on the evaluation of nominations (Decision 43 COM 14 §13) as a mechanism for funding evaluation of nominations by the Advisory Bodies and a measure towards ensuring the sustainability of the World Heritage Fund and shifting resources to conservation activities. This sub-account now serves only for funding the evaluation process, especially the Preliminary Assessment (Decision 45 COM 15 §8).</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: CLT Sector to formulate, in consultation with BSP/CFS, a coordinated fund-raising strategy for all Conventions Secretariats and form a common resource mobilization team</p>	<p>In line with the house-wide UNESCO resource mobilization strategy for 2016-2017, an overall Resources Mobilisation Framework (RMF) was developed for the Culture Sector including a coordinated fund-raising strategy for all Conventions Secretariats. Staff resources were also mutualized for common partnerships development within a dedicated central unit in the Culture Sector.</p>
<p>Roadmap for the sustainability of the World Heritage Fund (Committee, 2017)</p>	
<p>Short-term measures (2018-2021)</p> <p><i>NB. Reporting on the outcomes of the short-term measures of the Roadmap (2018-2021) is also available in more details in budget document WHC/21/44.COM/14 (p.15 onwards).</i></p>	
<p>Holding of side-events during Committee sessions on “Marketplace” webpage, as basis for further developing Forum of Partners</p>	<p>A side-event publicized on the “Marketplace” webpage took place during the 41st session (Krakow, 2017) and a benefit concert / fundraising event was also organized during the 42nd session (Manama, 2018).</p> <p>Since 2017, 11 projects publicized on the “Marketplace” have been funded for a total of US\$ 2,707,999.</p>
<p>Continuation of voluntary fundraising measures endorsed by the Committee, with target of several (10 or more) States Parties doubling their annual contributions (see also Option 1 above)</p>	<p>5 States Parties out of 195 have voluntarily increased/doubled their 2023 annual compulsory contributions.</p>
<p>Voluntary annual contributions from some sites</p> <p>See also Decision 40 COM 15, §16 (Istanbul/Paris, 2016) by which the Committee decided “to initiate a consultation process on a possible annual</p>	<p>Funds received from 7 States Parties during the period 2018-2023: US\$ 25,460</p> <p>Two online consultation surveys were carried out in 2017 and 2018 respectively. Positive responses came from only 8.6% of the properties appearing in the World Heritage List in 2018. Since then, the Committee has also invited States Parties which</p>

Solutions envisaged	Outcomes (as of end 2023)
<i>fee for World Heritage listed properties on a voluntary basis</i>	had not responded to the survey to continue consultations with their respective local administrations, to no avail.
Links on listed properties' websites for donations to the Fund	The assessment regarding this measure, which concerns the 1,199 sites inscribed on the World Heritage List, is still ongoing.
Support for increasing capacities of the World Heritage Centre, including for fundraising	The Committee encouraged all States Parties to assist the Secretariat in fundraising activities (Decision 42 COM 14, §17). A circular letter was sent to the States Parties to that effect in 2019. No State Party has responded to this appeal. Such request was also made by the Committee in 2023 (Decision 45 COM 15, §15)
Comprehensive resource mobilization and communication strategy, integrating a revised PACT strategy, adopted by the Committee to expand donor base, including, as appropriate, civil society and multilateral funds and institutions	At its 42nd session (Manama, 2018), the Committee adopted a "Resource mobilization and communication strategy" (Decision 42 COM 14 §16). The Strategy was established for the period 2018-2025 (8 years), setting a target and timeline for the first 4-year period. After review of the results in 4 years, targets have been adjusted for the second quadrennial period. A report on its implementation was provided in budget document WHC/23/45.COM/15 (Annex X) .
Enhanced engagement of Category 2 Centres (C2C), field offices and local actors	C2C intend to prepare a communication strategy focused on the direct and indirect effects of fund raising on World Heritage. Some Field Offices, often with backstopping from the World Heritage Centre, have raised funds for several projects related to World Heritage, mostly in the Arab States and in Asia.
Informal Core Group on resource mobilization	The Ad-Hoc Working Group which met in 2017-2018 did not recommend creating a formal group. It suggested instead having a State Party "focal point" from each electoral group which could liaise and coordinate between the Secretariat and the States Parties from their respective groups, in assisting the Secretariat in its fund-raising efforts. Such "focal points" have not been designated to date.
Prioritization of conservation through action plans for sites on Danger List and those in need, with linkages to international assistance and Forum of Partners	For the time being, no International Assistance request has been submitted to support the preparation of a costed action plan.
Mapping study of advisory services implications	The Ad-Hoc working group examined in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 the 4 recommendations made by IOS in its " Comparative Mapping Study of Forms and Models for use of Advisory Services by International Instruments and Programmes " (2017).

Solutions envisaged	Outcomes (as of end 2023)
Medium-term measures (2021-2025)	
Launch of Forum of Partners (as high-level or stand-alone event) with wider scope of donors and projects for greater impact and visibility	A Forum of Partners was held in Riyadh in September 2023, in the sidelines of the Committee session.
If substantial progress not achieved, feasibility of Optional Protocol for States Parties that agree to increase assessed percentage of annual contributions submitted to General Conference for decision	Measure for the period 2021-2025. <i>NB. It should be recalled that any revision of the Convention would bind only those States who would ratify it.</i>
Assessment of the implementation of paragraph 61 of the Operational Guidelines	Done in 2023 (see Document WHC/23/45.COM/12). For the time being, the budgetary impact is positive but could be cancelled if the number of yearly files reaches the limit of 35.
Consider setting quota/ percentage for conservation activities	Measure for the period 2021-2025.
Long-term measure (beyond 2025)	
Possible Optional Protocol to raise 1% ceiling for assessed contributions to the World Heritage Fund	Measure beyond 2025. <i>NB. It should be recalled that any revision of the Convention would bind only those States who would ratify it.</i>
Recommendations in the “Comparative Mapping Study of Forms and Models for use of Advisory Services by International Instruments and Programmes” (Internal Oversight Services, 2017)	
Recommendation 1: World Heritage Committee to review the overhead costs (project administration and contingency fund costs) charged by the Advisory Bodies with the view to eliminate them from the budget, since these charges are not supported by direct costs associated with the work performed by the Advisory Bodies.	The 2017-2018 Ad-Hoc Working Group concluded that the overhead costs were a part of the normal financial work cycle, and that the amount involved would not result in a meaningful saving in the World Heritage Fund. At its 42nd session (Manama, 2018), the Committee decided to keep the current practice of overhead costs in the contracts of the Advisory Bodies (Decision 42 COM 14 §19).
Recommendation 2: WHC Secretariat to obtain legal advice on sourcing advisory services, i.e., definitive legal opinion on whether the Committee is compelled to use only ICCROM, IUCN and ICOMOS to provide advisory services.	The opinion provided by the Office of International Standards and Legal Affairs in 2018 concluded that “... <i>neither the Convention, nor the Operational Guidelines compel the Committee to use only ICCROM, IUCN and ICOMOS to provide advisory services</i> ”. The Committee therefore decided at its 42nd session (Manama, 2018) “ <i>to continue to use the services of the current three Advisory Bodies and to further discuss through the Ad-Hoc Working Group the modalities for the possible use of services of other entities with suitable experience and knowledge, in line with UNESCO’s rules and regulations</i> ” (Decision 42 COM 14 §20).

Solutions envisaged	Outcomes (as of end 2023)
	By Decision 43 COM 12, §13 , the Committee at its 43rd session (Baku, 2019) decided to “ <i>retain the status-quo regarding the involvement of additional advisory services</i> ”.
<p><u>Recommendation 3</u>: World Heritage Committee to identify the root cause(s) for Committee decisions deviating from Advisory Bodies advice, procured at a significant cost to the World Heritage Fund, and take action to address them</p>	<p>By Decision 42 COM 12A §4, the Committee at its 42nd session (Manama, 2018) decided review the nomination process in order to address the changes noted by IOS. The work of the Ad-Hoc working group on this matter in 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 resulted in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the creation by the Committee at its 43rd session (Baku, 2019) of the sub-account on the evaluation of nominations (Decision 43 COM 14 §13) as a mechanism for funding evaluation of nominations by the Advisory Bodies and a measure towards ensuring the sustainability of the World Heritage Fund and shifting resources to conservation activities; 2) the adoption by the Committee at its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/online, 2021) of a reform of the nomination process now composed of 2 phases, i.e. a “Preliminary Assessment” as a first phase, and the current mechanism (as described in paragraph 128 of the Operational Guidelines) as a second phase (Decision 44 COM 11 §6). Introducing a “preliminary assessment” as a first phase of the nomination process was conceived as a way to ensure better quality nomination files, and therefore to reduce divergences between the Advisory Bodies advice and Committee decisions.
<p><u>Recommendation 4</u>: World Heritage Committee to take the opportunity to envisage changing working methods and incorporate practices of other international instruments / programmes to generate efficiencies</p>	<p>By Decision 45 COM 11 §6c, the Committee at its extended 45th session (Riyadh, 2023) decided to pursue the discussions to “<i>explore the possibility of using additional service providers</i>”.</p> <p>By Decision 43 COM 11A, paragraph 3 and Annex (part C)) the Committee at its 43rd session (Baku, 2019) adopted a change in the evaluation process for International Assistance, by reintroducing a ceiling for the comments by the Advisory Bodies (mandatory only above US\$ 30,000 to alleviate their workload).</p> <p>The nomination process also underwent a reform (see above under Recommendation 3).</p>

* An option (called Option 2) had not been retained by the Committee for submission to the General Assembly in 2013. This option consisted in determining a minimum level of contributions (US\$ 5,000 per year) for the 143 States Parties whose annual assessed contribution was below US\$ 5,000. This option was not considered as sustainable, because after the initial increase the revenue of the World Heritage Fund would become stable again, unless the minimum level is periodically adjusted.

211. Globally, **over 10 years these various measures yielded very limited results**: a third of the projects publicised on the “MarketPlace” have found donors; half of the target of 10 States Parties doubling their assessed contributions has been reached with only 5 regular contributors; a very small amount has been provided by World Heritage sites. No additional human resources have been made available for fundraising; no State Party has provided in-kind/pro-bono consultancy, communication advice, etc.
212. The ad-hoc working group which met in 2022-2023 made several recommendations in relation to finances. Among them, there was the continuation of “*discussions in view to find sustainable solutions for financing the nomination process including the Preliminary Assessment*” (Recommendation n°7). The ad-hoc working group was also in favour of the development of a fund-raising strategy for “*on the financial sustainability of the Convention*” and “*including for the nomination process*” to be elaborated by the Bureau of Strategic Planning and the World Heritage Centre (Recommendations n°3 & 8). The Committee referred to none of these recommendations in its Decision when examining the report of the ad-hoc working group.