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**CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF
THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION
OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**Forty-sixth session
New Delhi, India
21 – 31 July 2024**

**Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda:
State of conservation of World Heritage properties**

Summary

This document presents a global and analytical overview of Item 7 on the state of conservation of the World Heritage properties.

The document is composed of three main parts. After an Introduction (Part I), it presents progress achieved in a number of statutory matters related to Reactive Monitoring (Part II) and a focus on other conservation issues (Part III), which might have strategic or policy implications.

Draft Decision: 46 COM 7, see point IV

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. World Heritage properties reported on at the 46th session

1. As part of the Reactive Monitoring process¹, the World Heritage Committee will examine, at its 46th session, the reports on the state of conservation of **123** World Heritage properties (Agenda items 7A and 7B), including the 56 properties inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger (Agenda item 7A). In addition, as decided by the Committee during previous sessions, **one** general decision, concerning the World Heritage properties of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, will also be examined under Agenda item 7A.
2. The properties reported upon are selected, among all those inscribed on the World Heritage List, according to the following considerations:
 - **56** properties inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger (Agenda item 7A) and for which reports have to be reviewed annually by the Committee, in conformity with Paragraph 190 of the Operational Guidelines,
 - **59** properties inscribed on the World Heritage List for which state of conservation reports were requested by the World Heritage Committee at its previous sessions (Agenda item 7B),
 - **8** additional properties that have also come under threat since the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee in 2023 (Agenda item 7B),
 - For **4** properties out of the 67 under Agenda Item 7B, a follow-up was requested by the World Heritage Committee upon their inscription on the World Heritage List.
3. The 123 properties for examination are distributed as follows:

Agenda item 7A	NAT	CLT	Total
AFR	11	3	14
ARB	0	23	23
APA	2	4	6
EUR/NA	1	6	7
LAC	2	4	6
Total	16	40	56

Agenda item 7B	NAT	MIX	CLT	Total
AFR	5	2	4	11
ARB	1	1	6	8
APA	6	0	13	19
EUR/NA	5	2	18	22
LAC	1	1	2	4
Total	18	6	43	67

¹For further details on this process, please visit the dedicated page on the World Heritage Centre's online State of conservation Information System at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/reactive-monitoring>.

B. Threats affecting the World Heritage properties reported on at the 46th session

4. The 123 properties for which a state of conservation report is presented are facing a number of factors, which negatively impact, or may impact, their Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). Rather than any single factor, the properties are impacted by several different factors. On average, 5 different factors (5.2) affect each of these properties, which emphasizes once more the cumulative impact of threats on the OUV.
5. However, factors affecting the World Heritage properties vary according to the category of heritage considered. The most reported factors affecting respectively natural and cultural properties, as identified in the state of conservation reports presented at the 46th session, as well as more detailed statistics, will be available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc> (click “Advanced search”; enter “from 2024”; click “Search”; then “Views”, and “Statistics”).
6. The following sections of the document present insights on specific factors, such as conflicts, reconstruction, infrastructure development, or urban pressures.

C. Information on the state of conservation reports submitted by States Parties

7. A substantial number of reports were not received within the statutory deadlines of 1 December 2023 and 1 February 2024. For this 46th session, **55%** of all the reports requested by the World Heritage Committee were received by the statutory deadline of 1 February 2024 and **70%** by the end of February 2024. At the time of writing this document, 85% of all reports due have been received. It should however be noted with appreciation that this year again, most of the States Parties reports followed the statutory format included as Annex 13 of the Operational Guidelines. The respect of the format greatly improves the treatment of the information and facilitates the monitoring of the implementation of previous Committee decisions.
8. It should be noted however that delayed submission of the reports and/or late submission of additional information by the States Parties and in some cases the absence of reports, (in 2024, **45%** of all reports requested by the Committee were not submitted to the World Heritage Centre by the statutory deadline) inevitably leads to less time available for dialogue between the States Parties, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies on the issues at stake. Furthermore, late submissions lead to an increasing number of state of conservation (SOC) reports being included in the Addenda documents, thus reducing the time available for Committee members to review these reports before the Committee session.
9. Although the sharing of information on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties is crucial, States Parties should be reminded about Decision **35 COM 12B**, Paragraph 16, by which they were requested by the Committee to consider **refraining from providing additional information regarding State of conservation issues after the deadlines** indicated in the Operational Guidelines, as this information cannot be reviewed in due course.
10. The World Heritage Centre would also like to acknowledge that out of all reports received, 69% have been made fully accessible to the public at http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/46com/documents/#state_of_conservation_reports with the agreement of the States Parties concerned. The online availability of such an important number of complete state of conservation reports greatly contributes to the transparency of the Reactive Monitoring process and States Parties should be commended for allowing such online publication.

D. Selection of the World Heritage properties to be proposed for discussion

11. In 2003, the World Heritage Committee requested (Decision **27 COM 7B.106.3**) that the state of conservation (SOC) reports should be presented to the Committee according to the two following categories:
 - Reports with recommended decisions which, in the judgment of the World Heritage Centre in consultation with the Advisory Bodies, require discussion by the World Heritage Committee,
 - Reports which, in the judgment of the World Heritage Centre, in consultation with the Advisory Bodies, can be noted without discussion.
12. Since the adoption of this decision, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies had been refining the selection process taking into account the procedures and statutory deadlines as set out in the *Operational Guidelines*, the different monitoring tools at the disposal of the World Heritage Committee, the ever-growing number of properties to report on at each Committee session, as well as the recommendation of the evaluation of the Reactive Monitoring process (see Chapter I.C. of Document [WHC/19/43.COM/7](#)) that the SOC reports presented to the Committee, “including those “opened” for discussion, should be based on clear and objective criteria, including the level and urgency of the threat to the property, and also whether or not the site is on the Danger List, rather than being based on geographic representativeness.”
13. As a result, the World Heritage Committee, at its 43rd session (Baku, 2019), supported the proposal by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to only propose for discussion the following SOC reports, as well as the current practice allowing Committee members to add to this list the reports they wish to discuss (Decision **43 COM 7.1**):
 - If removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger is proposed,
 - If inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger is proposed,
 - If deletion of the property from the World Heritage List is proposed.
14. Therefore, the process for the selection of SOC reports for discussion at any given Committee session shall preferably be as follows:
 - a) **Four weeks** prior to the opening of the Committee session, if possible, the list of the SOC reports proposed for discussion by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies (as per criteria detailed in the above paragraph) will be shared with all States Parties to the *Convention*;
 - b) **Sufficient time** in advance of the Committee session, Committee members –and **only Committee members**²– may add to this list the reports they also wish to discuss, providing that, in line with Decision **43 COM 7.1**:
 - i) A written request is made to the Chairperson of the Committee, through the World Heritage Centre,
 - ii) The reason why the additional report needs to be opened for discussion is clearly indicated in the request;
 - c) **At least 10 days** prior to the opening of the Committee session, the list of SOC reports to be discussed shall be closed and immediately made available to all States Parties;

² Requests emanating from States Parties non-members of the Committee will not be taken into account.

- d) During the Committee session, the Chairperson shall directly give the floor to the Committee member, which requested a specific SOC report to be discussed, to explain the reason why it wished to discuss the report.

II. STATUTORY MATTERS RELATED TO REACTIVE MONITORING

A. Improving the perception of the List of World Heritage in Danger

Note: This Section should be read in conjunction with the results of the independent Study entitled “New Visions for the List of World Heritage in Danger (2022)”, available at the following web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/danger>.

15. In 2016, the Committee decided to formally address the negative perception that had been affecting the List of World Heritage in Danger (LWHD) for many years, and called for a “*better understanding of the implications and benefits of properties being inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger [...]*” (Decision **40 COM 7**).
16. As indicated in Section II.A of Document [WHC/23/45.COM/7](http://whc.unesco.org/en/danger), the World Heritage Centre subsequently commissioned a contractor with expertise in strategic marketing, branding and communication (“Beyond Borders Media”) to conduct an independent study investigating the reasons why a negative perception overshadows the LWHD and suggesting ways forward to change the mindset towards the LWHD into a more positive way. This activity has benefitted from the generous support of the State Party of Norway (see page <http://whc.unesco.org/en/partners/381/>).
17. The results of this Study presented to the World Heritage Committee at its extended 45th session (Riyadh, 2023) echo the many voices and multiple perspectives that have been considered throughout the research process, and reflect their impressions, difficulties, and hopes for the future of the LWHD. The Study concludes with a series of five recommendations addressed to all stakeholders on communication approaches to raise the profile of the LWHD as a positive tool, crucial for the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value. These recommendations call for fresh perspectives on dealing with endangered heritage and emphasize that the LWHD can be a powerful lever of change, spurring action, starting a conversation, inspiring cooperation and opening up channels of resources and mutual support. The World Heritage Committee took note with appreciation of this thorough Study and of the recommendations formulated therein and requested all stakeholders of the Convention to take them on-board and implement them at their level as soon as possible (Decision **45 COM 7.1**).
18. In order to assist in the best possible way all stakeholders of the Convention to implement these recommendations, and in line with Decision **40 COM 7** in which the Committee requested the development of “*appropriate information material [...] with a view to overcome the negative perceptions of the List of World Heritage in Danger*”, the World Heritage Centre prepared a publication entitled “Implementing new visions: a guidebook for action on the List of World Heritage in Danger (2024)”, with the generous support of the State Party of Norway. This guidebook presents the aforementioned recommendations in a visual and reader-friendly format to sensitize – as well as to be utilized by – all stakeholders of the Convention, such as States Parties, Committee members, Site Managers, UNESCO Secretariat, Advisory Bodies, youth, civil society, indigenous peoples, local communities, academics, general public and media.
19. It is anticipated that the guidebook will make the Study’s recommendations more accessible to a broad range of audiences and will provide them with concrete ideas on how to turn the recommendations into practice, especially thanks to the accompanying examples, photos and links to concrete examples. The guidebook is available online in both English and French at the following web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/danger/>.

and States Parties are encouraged to ensure the translation of this publication in as many languages as possible and its widespread distribution.

III. CONSERVATION ISSUES

A. Emergency situations resulting from conflicts

20. Conflicts (including armed conflict and civil unrest) continue to represent a major threat to many World Heritage properties. Approximately half of the 56 properties currently on List of World Heritage in Danger were inscribed for reasons related to the potential or ascertained impacts of conflicts. The vulnerability of these properties to inadequate safeguarding measures became even more concerning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
21. In several countries of the Arab States Region, heritage has continued to be vulnerable due to various conflicts. In Sudan, the conflict that erupted in April 2023 has continued to impact communities and all sectors of society, putting heritage at risk of damage, looting and neglect, including in relation to World Heritage properties and some Tentative List sites.
22. The impact of the conflict on cultural heritage in the Gaza Strip remains concerning. In cooperation with UNITAR/UNOSAT, as of 10 June 2024, UNESCO has verified damage to 50 sites since 7 October 2023 – 11 religious sites, 28 buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, 2 depositories of movable cultural property, 4 monuments, 1 museum and 4 archaeological sites, including at the archaeological site 'Anthedon Harbour', included on the Tentative List.
23. In Iraq, Libya, and Syria, corrective measures and the definition of the Desired state of conservation for the removal of properties from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) have been elaborated for some properties, through remote collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS.
24. In the Africa Region, several natural World Heritage properties continue to be affected by the direct and indirect impacts of armed conflicts and civil unrest. The security situation is deteriorating again in eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), specifically Virunga National Park where a large part of the park is situated in areas controlled by armed groups. On-going conflict has tragically resulted in further deaths and has impacted the management capacity, with a large part of the park no longer in control of the park authority. In follow up to an earlier grant to the UNESCO Rapid Response Facility (RRF) and with support from Norway, the World Heritage Centre continued to provide USD 40,000 emergency support to maintain a community driven emergency programme to protect the park's mountain gorillas.
25. The presence of armed groups operating in the W-Arly-Pendjari Complex (Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger) affects the Burkina Faso and Niger components of the property, resulting in the evacuation of management staff, while further attacks on park staff and army personnel stationed in the Benin component of the property have been reported. This has resulted in loss of life and the rise of poaching and other illegal activities seriously hampering management activities. In follow up to two emergency grants from the UNESCO RRF, the World Heritage Centre is developing a project to provide direct support to maintain some law enforcement operations in Niger in an effort to curb poaching.
26. In Mali, UNESCO has partnered with the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas (ALIPH) with a view to strengthening the protection of the mixed property Cliff of Bandiagara (Land of the Dogons). This has enabled local communities to reconstruct and rehabilitate over 140 houses and granaries, and to

undertake an assessment of damage suffered by movable heritage within the property. UNESCO is also implementing the activities for the collective reparations under the International Criminal Court (ICC) Trust Fund for Victims for the “Rehabilitation and enhancement of protected buildings in Timbuktu”, allowing notably to undertake measures for the better protection of cemeteries hosting mausoleums, as well as enhanced valorisation of protected edifices within the property.

27. In the Asia and the Pacific Region, the situation in Afghanistan with its two properties inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, remains a great concern in terms of conservation. After the period of halting the field operations following the political change that occurred in August 2021, the field projects for the stabilisation of the two Buddha niches at Bamiyan and works at the component site of Shahr-i Ghulghulah were resumed in early 2023 in agreement with major involved donors. UNESCO, through its Office in Kabul, monitors closely the field situation, including the uncontrolled excavations, inappropriate use of the area in archaeologically sensitive zones and urban development. Work with ALIPH is being carried out at the Archaeological Remains of Jam.
28. Furthermore, in terms of the vulnerability of properties to potential looting and illicit trafficking of cultural objects, UNESCO, notably through the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the 1970 Convention and the 1954 Convention and its two Protocols, continues to pursue its follow-up to the implementation of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions related to cultural heritage protection, humanitarian and security considerations, in particular Resolutions 2199, 2253 and 2347.
29. In the Europe and North America Region, the war in Ukraine significantly raised the level of threat to Ukraine’s World Heritage properties, especially those located in Kyiv, L’viv and Odesa. All three cities, that were inscribed on the List of the World Heritage in Danger after 24 February 2022, have suffered physical damage in the buffer zone of inscribed property, while in Odesa, buildings of significant cultural importance within the perimeter of the property have also been affected. The cities of Chernihiv and Kharkiv, which contain properties on Ukraine’s Tentative List, have also suffered significant destruction. Kharkiv in particular has been systematically shelled since March 2024.
30. Within the framework of *UNESCO’s actions and emergency assistance programme for Ukraine*³, the World Heritage Centre, in close cooperation with ICOMOS and ICCROM, is strengthening Ukraine’s capacity to undertake urgent protection and recovery of cultural heritage, in particular through the development of emergency preparedness and risk mitigation plans for World Heritage properties and sites on Ukraine’s Tentative List (also see Documents WHC/24/46.COM/5A and WHC/24/46.COM/INF.5A).
31. UNESCO continues its efforts to support the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy (MCIP) of Ukraine in coordinating international initiatives, including for the urgent protection and stabilisation of immovable cultural heritage. In addition to leading the Culture chapter assessments of the second and third cycle of the Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, conducted jointly by the Government of Ukraine, the World Bank, the United Nations and the European Union, UNESCO has continued to coordinate thematic working groups based on the six priority lines of actions, identified by the MCIP and UNESCO. These working groups included the participation of the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee and resulted in the elaboration of a joint Action Plan for Culture in Ukraine⁴, endorsed by more than 40 Member States and international and

³ Latest report to the UNESCO Executive Board available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388761.locale=en> .

⁴ An Action plan coordinated by UNESCO with the participation of more than 40 national and international partners to address key challenges and needs, and to prepare and plan short, medium and long-term interventions for the recovery of the cultural sector.

national organizations at the International Conference “Towards the recovery of the Culture Sector in Ukraine”, organized by the Government of Lithuania, in collaboration with Ukraine and in partnership with UNESCO, on 6 and 7 June 2024 in Vilnius, Lithuania. The International Conference aimed to take stock of the impact of the war on the culture sector, coordinate efforts and initiatives to consolidate the position of culture within the larger recovery planning for Ukraine, which was discussed at the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2024 in Berlin, Germany, organized on 10 and 11 June 2024.

32. Based on the findings from the joint mission to Ukraine conducted in July 2022, ICCROM developed a web and mobile-based application, that can be used both online and offline, to systematically gather damage and risk data post-emergencies. The app has been used for conducting post-event damage and risk assessments at over 50 heritage sites in Ukraine, and many more across Libya, the Philippines and Pakistan.

B. Recovery and Reconstruction

33. In Decision **45 COM 7.2**, the World Heritage Committee, recalling that reconstruction is justifiable only in exceptional circumstances, requested States Parties to ensure the integrity of the OUV of World Heritage properties and that all recovery and reconstruction projects be guided by thorough and comprehensive recovery proposals, including plans and drawings, integrated and aligned with the needs of local communities and subject to rigorous impact assessments.
34. The conflict in Yemen, the fragile state of its historic structures, heavy rainfall events, poor economic conditions, and ongoing lack of maintenance continue to threaten the OUV of three inscribed properties in Yemen, the Historic City of Sana’a, the Old Walled City of Shibam and the Historic Town of Zabid. The challenges in recovery and reconstruction of historic urban areas in the Yemeni properties are complex, owing to the need to balance orderly repair and reconstruction with pressing social needs. The second phase of the UNESCO/European Union Cash for Work Project (2022-2026), (USD 22.5 million) is now proceeding in cooperation with local and international partners. Within the framework of this second phase, 100 buildings have been selected in each of these historical cities and works have proceeded, including survey, technical studies and rehabilitation. Through the project funded by Japan "Building Climate-resilient Communities in Historic Cities in Yemen through Strengthened Disaster Risk Management and Awareness" (USD 925,925), for the Old City of Sana’a and the Old Walled City of Shibam, flood early warning systems have been installed.
35. The World Heritage properties in the Syrian Arab Republic continue to face conflict/post-conflict challenges, including the additional damage impact arising from the February 2023 earthquake (see also Document WHC/24/46COM/7A). Regarding the Ancient City of Aleppo, the UNESCO Regional office in Beirut undertook a mission to the property in July 2023 to identify seven monuments to be studied for urgent intervention and/or consolidation purposes. In addition, the State Party has reported on progress made with restoration and rehabilitation of additional sections in the *suq*, including physical works and financial support to shop owners and the restoration of numerous historical buildings and mosques. At the Ancient City of Bosra, emergency consolidation and restoration has occurred to monuments that presented structural instability. In the Ancient City of Damascus, the State Party is pursuing the adopted set of corrective measures aimed at removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger. In addition, an integrated plan for preservation and development in the property will be undertaken which is likely to become a major instrument for the preservation of the property. At Crac des Chevaliers, restoration and major reconstruction were undertaken.
36. In Libya, the State Party has progressed in the execution of corrective measures at the Old Town of Ghadamès through the recovery of houses impacted by torrential rain, with the aim at achieving the Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property

from the List of World Heritage in Danger. In addition, following the devastating storm that hit northeastern Libya on 10 September 2023, UNESCO organized two missions with support from the Heritage Emergency Fund, aimed at carrying out a rapid post-disaster assessment of selected cultural properties. The World Heritage property 'Archaeological Site of Cyrene' was among the assessed sites, for which priorities for short and medium-term interventions have been identified (see also Document WHC/24/46COM/7A).

37. In Iraq as well, the State Party has been pro-active in pursuing measures to support the removal of Hatra from the List of World Heritage in Danger, in the framework of the project, supported by ALIPH. Focus has been on assessing risks at monuments indirectly impacted by the conflict and undertaking urgent stabilization work. At Samarra Archaeological City, a staged process is proposed, to establish the current post-conflict condition of the property through surveys and documentation studies, which will inform a comprehensive Conservation Plan that guides future repair and construction activities. The proposed processes illustrate the importance of implementing long-term recovery programmes on well-resolved conservation plans that are customised and responsive to the attributes of each property, and its specific circumstances.
38. Following the launch of the flagship initiative "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" in February 2018, UNESCO has pursued its actions towards the rehabilitation and recovery of the Old City of Mosul, included on Iraq's Tentative List. Since its inception, a number of UNESCO key partner countries and international organizations have contributed to the initiative, including the European Union (EU), Canada, Croatia, France (through ALIPH and Convention France-UNESCO), the Government of Flanders, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Korea (through KOICA), Lithuania, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Qatar (through EAA), Sweden (through SIDA), the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as well as UNESCO's Heritage Emergency Fund.
39. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of cultural heritage in the Old City of Mosul has been carried out in particular through two major projects: "Reviving the Spirit of Mosul" by rebuilding its historic landmarks namely the Al-Nouri Mosque and its Al-Hadba Minaret, as well as the Al-Tahera Church and Al-Saa'a Church, funded by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and a project funded by the European Union (EU) through three different phases on "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities".
40. Rehabilitation and reconstruction work at Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Hadba Minaret have advanced towards their completion in 2024, with the consolidation and stabilization of existing original elements, and the reconstruction of lost elements. The rehabilitation of the Convent of Al-Saa'a has been finalized, while the reconstruction of Al-Tahera Church, which had been almost entirely destroyed, is scheduled to be completed in July 2024. Furthermore, on 23 June 2024, six large-scale explosive devices were found hidden in the southern wall of the prayer hall of the Al-Nouri Mosque. Thanks to the efforts of the Iraqi Armed Forces and their effective action in securing and removing unexploded ordnances, the area has been secured and reconstruction work has resumed.
41. As for the EU-funded project "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities", the restoration and reconstruction of 124 historic houses, including seven historic houses in the Al-Nouri Mosque complex, part of the two first phases of the project (2019-2023), has been completed and the houses have been returned to their owners. Interventions have also included the upgrading of the electric network, septic tanks, drainage, road surfacing and public lighting. In addition, two palatial houses have been rehabilitated (Suliman Al Sayegh House and Zyada House) followed by the third phase of the project (2024-2027), focused on fostering youth employment and enhancing the capacities on heritage conservation and management of institutions in the Old cities of Mosul and Basra, has effectively started.

42. Within the framework of the initiative, UNESCO in partnership with ALIPH, and with generous financial support from the Government of France, has completed the rehabilitation of the “House of Prayer” adjacent to the Convent of Al-Saa’a, as a multipurpose educational and cultural center, with aim of fostering social cohesion, resilience and livelihood.
43. The UAE funded project also entailed training activities targeting young professionals from Mosul in cooperation with ICCROM. Following successful efforts in 2022-2023, ICCROM has launched an international training course on post conflict recovery (PCR) starting in September 2023 with the generous support of ALIPH. A second edition is foreseen for October 2024.
44. In Uganda, a fire that destroyed the Muzibu Azaala Mpanga, the main tomb of the Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi in 2010, prompted the inscription of the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger the same year (Decision **34 COM 7B.53**) and concerted mobilization, notably of the government of Uganda and the Baganda Kingdom. A major effort of the international community allowed for its reconstruction, as well as the restoration of the Bujjabukala (gate house) which was also gutted by fire in 2020. Thanks to the support from the Governments of Japan and Norway for the installation of firefighting equipment and on-site training in disasters and risk prevention, and for the development of Guidelines for the buffer zone through the application of the 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) which lead finally to the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2023 (**45 COM 8C.3**). The reconstruction in Uganda has also benefitted from specific experience of involving communities and traditional knowledge, as the main significance of the Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi lies in its intangible values of belief, spirituality, continuity and identity. The World Heritage Centre uses the successful work at Kasubi to influence the ongoing reconstruction work in the Stone Town of Zanzibar following the partial collapse of the House of Wonder, the emblematic building in the property. The two cases at Kasubi and the Stone town of Zanzibar would be good examples of reconstruction in Africa.
45. Progress continues in the Kathmandu Valley (Nepal) with recovery, restoration and reconstruction following the 2015 Gorkha earthquake, despite ongoing challenges arising from lack of resources and capacity. The majority of conservation and restoration work to earthquake-damaged monuments within the Protected Monument Zones of the property has been completed. The impacts of the earthquake and some aspects of the response, particularly the introduction of new materials and reconstruction of some buildings based on conjecture, have threatened the property’s integrity, authenticity and other attributes that support its OUV. The sequence of repair and reconstruction work undertaken since 2015 illustrates how and why restoring authentic urban fabric should be preferred option over demolition and reconstruction. The establishment of an International Scientific Committee for Kathmandu Valley (ISC-KV), Kathmandu is already providing beneficial in guiding the remaining stages of the recovery process and ongoing conservation and management of the property.
46. Following the damage caused by the fire of 31 October 2019 to Shuri-jô of the Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu in Japan, the State Party has been undertaking significant recovery works, starting with the reconstruction of the main hall.
47. The State Party of Pakistan continues to respond to the impacts of the major monsoons in August 2022, which deluged much of the country, causing widespread social and economic impacts and severely damaging both the terrain and individual elements of Historical Monuments at Makli, Thatta, and the Archaeological Ruins of Moenjodaro. Following UNESCO emergency missions in 2022 and 2023, a comprehensive analytical report has informed proactive and reactive conservation responses. The Committee has encouraged the State Party to develop short, medium and long-term action plans

including financial and technical requirements and to further develop its Disaster Risk Response Plan for both sites, and these actions are under implementation.

48. For Afghanistan, the operational projects and capacity building activities have been implemented for the two World Heritage sites, namely, Minaret and Archaeological Remains of Jam and the Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley, both inscribed simultaneously on the List of World Heritage in Danger. After slowing and halting due to the COVID-19, field security issues and the political change that occurred in August 2021, these operational activities, covering a number of actions relating to physical conservation and improvement of management mechanism, continue contributing to fulfil the conditions of their removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger.
49. In Ukraine, UNESCO is supporting preliminary reconstruction work in response to the destruction of cultural heritage as a result of the war. As part of the project signed between UNESCO and the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development on 7 February 2024, UNESCO is contributing to the installation of a protective roof on the Transfiguration Cathedral in Odesa, located within the World Heritage property which was damaged by a missile attack on 23 July 2023. UNESCO has presented the results of the structural research to the local stakeholders in Odesa on 24 May 2024.
50. As part of the UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trust project 'Preserving cultural heritage in Ukraine: Reinforcing monitoring, emergency response and preparedness at damaged cultural and natural heritage sites in Ukraine, including the World Heritage property 'The Historic Centre of Odesa', signed on 7 February 2024, UNESCO is conducting the development of studies and technical documentation in preparation for urgent interventions and reconstruction works to reactivate the residential functions of the Historic Complex for Teachers of the Polytechnic in L'viv, located in the buffer zone of the World Heritage property of 'L'viv – the Ensemble of the Historic Centre', a building that was severely hit by a missile on 6 July 2023, damaging 14 of the 17 units of the housing complex and causing injuries and loss of life.
51. Following the fire at Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, a component of the World Heritage property 'Paris, Banks of the Seine', on 15 April 2019, restoration work has progressed. The work includes the reconstruction and consolidation of the vaults, the restoration of the gable walls, the balustrade and the hurdy-gurdies, the restoration of the great roof and its oak framework, the restoration of the belfries, the restoration of the Viollet-le-Duc spire and its lead roof as well as the decontamination and reinstallation of the great organ and the complete replacement of the choir organ.
52. The joint ICOMOS-ICCROM publication, "Guidance on Post-Disaster and Post-Conflict Recovery and Reconstruction for Heritage Places of Cultural Significance and World Heritage Cultural Properties", provides a framework through which the recovery of heritage places can support and be harnessed in coming to terms with and overcoming the trauma associated with destruction and loss.
53. Paragraph 86 of the Operational Guidelines recognises that recovery and reconstruction activities are important to the conservation of attributes that support the OUV of World Heritage properties that have endured damage from extreme circumstances such as conflict, or natural disaster. In such situations, recovery and reconstruction may also be essential to sustaining the social and economic livelihoods of associated communities. However, it is critical for the integrity of World Heritage properties that reconstruction only occur in such exceptional circumstances and be based on thorough documentation, guided by conservation plans and policies that support the OUV. Recovery Plans should be customised and responsive to the attributes of the property, its specific circumstances, and the affected communities. As outlined in Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines, Recovery Plans and major works proposals should be evaluated through

impact assessment, which should be prepared in conformity with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in the World Heritage Context.

C. Development Pressures and the need for Management Effectiveness

54. The state of conservation reports examined in the current Committee session illustrate that development pressures continue to be a critical factor threatening World Heritage properties. A wide range of development pressures adversely affect World Heritage properties, from small scale housing projects to larger scale infrastructure development, including roads and dams, urban development and expansion, mining and extraction, and the building of border barriers, to the development of tourism infrastructure within World Heritage properties or in their wider setting. Responses to such development pressures require strong governance and legislation as well as respect for the OUV of the property, its authenticity and integrity to ensure that the proposed development is compatible with the World Heritage property.
55. Robust management systems and well-articulated management plans are essential to ensure that new development in and around World Heritage properties continue to protect their OUV. In some instances, implementing development projects may also include changing plans and policies on land-use and zoning regulations that allow for, or even encourage development that is incompatible with the OUV of the properties. Thus, development pressures and their impact on World Heritage properties may be exacerbated by weak planning and decision-making. For example, development plans and projects have been initiated at World Heritage properties without regard for the provisions of management systems, or some Management Plans for World Heritage properties are ineffective or outdated, not formally adopted or not operational, and are therefore not resilient and effective in the face of development pressures.
56. Planning mechanisms that are not connected to World Heritage management systems or Management Plans may undermine management effectiveness without adequate coordination and consideration for World Heritage protection including of attributes which support OUV within regional, local and urban development plans and processes. For example, transportation and/or infrastructure projects have the potential to impact World Heritage properties, including ancient cities or protected tropical forests; or multiple development projects for tourism and residential urban development along the coastline of marine and natural heritage properties. Management systems for World Heritage properties should therefore be integrated into wider urban and regional and local planning as well as into specific development plans, so that the coherent and coordinated identification and protection of the values and attributes which support convey OUV is given appropriate priority by all levels of government.
57. The Committee has previously called on States Parties to implement the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape ([HUL Recommendation](#)) in urban World Heritage properties (Decisions [38 COM 5E](#), [37 COM 12.II](#), [39 COM 10B.3](#), [41 COM 7](#), [44 COM 7.2](#) and [45 COM 7.2](#)) as a tool to better manage pressures arising from development within the properties and their wider settings. The integration of management plans with the plans and processes for urban development (for example, in master plans) as well as the establishment of building guidelines in line with the HUL Recommendation should be encouraged for World Heritage properties in urban contexts including with the implementation of the [UNESCO Urban Heritage Atlas](#) that is a digital tool for cultural mapping launched earlier this year. Accompanying guidance for managing urban heritage to support the implementation of the HUL Recommendation is being developed by the Centre and the Advisory Bodies.
58. It is important to evaluate the management system of World Heritage properties on a regular basis to ensure that management is effective, and to plan any necessary changes. Such assessments should be incorporated as part of the management cycle

and repeated at regular intervals that can feed into the periodic update of the management plan as well as in other types of plans with responsibilities in relation to a World Heritage property. The [Enhancing Our Heritage Toolkit 2.0](#) (2023) (hereafter EOH 2.0) published jointly by UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN, offers a self-assessment methodology for World Heritage properties or other heritage places to evaluate how well a property is being managed, primarily on addressing the extent to which the Outstanding Universal Value of the property is being maintained and management objectives are being achieved.

59. The IUCN Green List is a benchmark for quality performance of protected area management. Thus, the Green List Standard, which aligns with the EOH 2.0, the IUCN World Heritage Outlook and other Protected Areas Management Effectiveness (PAME) tools, can also be applied to World Heritage property management, including to monitor conservation actions and to address management challenges.
60. Effective management systems should ensure that proposed development projects in a property, in its buffer zone(s) and /or within its wider setting, are adequately assessed for their potential impact on the OUV of a property in line with the provisions of the Operational Guidelines and the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context (2022). In some instances, development projects in neighboring countries could negatively impact the properties' OUV as in the case of properties around a major lake or a wildlife sanctuary. In several instances, projects were implemented prior to carrying out impact assessments which now threaten the OUV including in the historic centre of cities, around forts and castles, in a cultural landscape of a wine region, around ancient temples, at game reserves, or around a cathedral. Pressures on properties may also result from the cumulative impact of multiple developments undertaken in the absence of broader strategic planning and the potential effects of developments that are individually or cumulatively out-of-scale with small and vulnerable properties. Effective transboundary collaboration following good practices as in the case of Qhapaq Ñan, Andean Road System, managed by six diverse States Parties (Argentina/Bolivia (Plurinational State of)/Chile/Colombia/Ecuador/Peru) is also a component of effective management systems.
61. Consideration of progressive impacts through processes such as Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) is increasingly important and has been required for sites such as the Wadden Sea (Denmark/Germany/Netherlands (Kingdom of the)) and Lake Turkana National Parks (Kenya). Effective management systems should ensure that planning processes allow for a decision not to proceed with the proposed project if it has been assessed to result in an unacceptable impact on the OUV of a property. If a project is not cancelled or adequately modified despite the outcomes of an HIA, the consequence could be a significant threat to the OUV of the property.
62. Infrastructure developments and activities that may impact the OUV of the property include the extractive industries as well as renewable energy projects. A specialised Guidance for Wind Energy Projects in a World Heritage Context includes guidance for assessing the impacts of wind energy projects on the OUV of World Heritage properties and highlights potential proactive actions. Subsequent works on providing similar guidance to solar energy development projects is currently under development by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies with the support from the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In November 2023 UNESCO, IUCN and the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) signed an agreement to reinforce capacity building and quality assurance for SEAs and ESAs for World Heritage properties and its implementation has started in 2024, including the first SEA coaching for the Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai Forest Complex (Thailand) in March 2024.
63. The World Heritage Centre, with the support of the Flanders/UNESCO Trust Fund, has launched an online Geographic Information System (GIS) monitoring tool for World

Heritage linked to existing UNESCO databases, displaying georeferenced boundaries of World Heritage sites and their buffer zones with the first phase currently including World Heritage properties located in Europe and North America, based on the data provided by the States Parties in connection with the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting in the region. The platform seeks to contribute to the monitoring and management of World Heritage properties by clarifying their boundaries and their buffer zones.

64. Diverse case studies that promote integrated and inclusive management practices in different World Heritage properties are continuously being updated on both the UNESCO [World Heritage Canopy](#) platform coordinated by the World Heritage Centre and the Nature-Culture Community of [PANORAMA Solutions for a healthy planet Platform](#) coordinated by IUCN, ICCROM and ICOMOS.

D. Local Communities, Indigenous Peoples, and Human-Rights

65. Within the framework of the World Heritage Convention, States Parties hold the primary responsibility to ensure respect for the rights and welfare of communities in their actions to protect World Heritage properties on their territories. Rights-based approaches to the conservation and management of World Heritage provide an important foundation for implementation of these responsibilities, consistent with the 2015 [Policy on Integrating a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention](#), [UNESCO's Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples](#), as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the applicable international human rights norms and standards. It is also increasingly clear that the credibility of the World Heritage Convention and of individual World Heritage properties relies on the implementation of rights-based approaches.
66. UNESCO, as a specialised agency of the United Nations system, promotes respect for and full implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), in accordance with its Article 42. Although there is no single authoritative definition of Indigenous Peoples in international law and policy, the UN has developed an understanding of the term that does not limit it to historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies, but also refers to strong ties to territories and surrounding natural resources and, most importantly, to self-identification as Indigenous Peoples at the individual level and acceptance by the community as its members. Thus, according to the UN, the most fruitful approach is to identify rather than define indigenous peoples, based on the fundamental criterion of self-identification as underlined in several human rights documents.
67. The Reactive Monitoring process, which may be triggered by information received from sources other than the State Party concerned (Paragraph 174 of the Operational Guidelines), continues to highlight concerns and allegations of human rights violations, including regarding abuse against Indigenous Peoples and/or local communities in and around World Heritage properties through the state of conservation reports examined by the Committee.
68. The World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies followed up on reports from the third parties of imminent planned and potentially forced relocation of the local communities living in some natural World Heritage properties, including allegations of serious human rights violations – in some instances against indigenous peoples. In each of these instances, the World Heritage Centre has contacted the State Party to request further information on these allegations. In other instances, authorities have embarked on a programme to relocate people that they consider illegal settlers from the protected areas. This prompted third parties to raise concerns about the criteria used to determine the rights of people to reside within the property and the conditions at the relocation sites. In such instances, state of conservation reports have been brought to the Committee to facilitate a better understanding of the proposed programmes or clarify regarding

allegations of forced evictions. Where a mining project was proposed near an area inhabited by indigenous peoples, the UN Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, expressed concerns regarding the indigenous people and their lands and to the environmental impact it would have on the UNESCO World Heritage property. In such instances, the Committee has in recent decisions requested the Reactive Monitoring process. In light of the above, it is recommended that States Parties to the Convention be requested to strengthen their efforts to adopt a rights-based approach and fully implement the World Heritage and Sustainable Development Policy 2015 and comply with the Operational Guidelines in accordance with international human rights standards, as also defined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

69. It is further recommended that the Committee encourage States Parties to actively investigate and provide full documentation and clarification on any information, issues or allegations related to human rights violations against Indigenous Peoples and local communities in and around World Heritage properties in their respective territories. In this context, an International Expert Workshop on Recognising and Respecting Indigenous Peoples' Heritage Values in World Heritage Sites was convened in Geneva, Switzerland, in January 2024, organised by the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on World Heritage (see Decision **45 COM 5D**), and the World Heritage Centre participated in its discussions together with the Advisory Bodies. The World Heritage Centre also provided logistical assistance to enable contributions from a diverse range of participants to the event. The workshop brought together a range of contributions and discussed the issues and actions required under the World Heritage Convention to ensure a human rights-based approach in all its processes. It is hoped that it will provide a basis for defining cooperation, exploring possible solutions and their implementation to bring about change both at the international level and on the ground.
70. The ICOMOS 21st General Assembly and Scientific Symposium in 2023 included an extensive Indigenous programme focusing on the rights, roles and responsibilities of Traditional Custodians and [adopted resolutions](#) supporting a human rights-based approach through the systematic screening of rights issues in heritage management in general. It also recognised that many World Heritage properties are located wholly or partly within the traditional lands and territories of Indigenous Peoples. It further acknowledged that for some World Heritage properties, the OUV has been defined without the meaningful participation of the Indigenous Peoples concerned and may not take into account their perspectives, context, relationship with the land and the interconnectedness of nature and culture; and that this may have significant negative impacts on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as practices, traditions, livelihoods and heritage of concerned Indigenous Peoples.
71. UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN continue to collaborate to develop more integrated approaches and practices to natural and cultural heritage, recognising the Indigenous Peoples' values and the interconnections between nature and culture, and how these might relate to the OUV of World Heritage properties. In this context, an International Conference on Participatory Approaches to World Heritage was held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in March 2024 to discuss ways to improve the various working methods of the World Heritage Convention by promoting participatory approaches with the support of the Republic of Korea.

E. Climate Change

72. Climate change remains one of the most significant threats to World Heritage properties, impacting their OUV, as well as the economic and social development and quality of life

of communities connected with World Heritage properties. These threats are part of the growing spread of climate impacts on cultural and natural heritage, illustrated, for instance in the recent confirmation of the fourth global coral bleaching event). This illustrates both that impacts to World Heritage properties are part of a larger global phenomenon, and that it is likely that a wider range of properties than are currently considered by the Committee are facing threats that may need to be addressed through the Convention. Similar patterns are highly likely to be apparent in relation to other systemic impacts of climate change to different ecosystems, regions and types of heritage sites, as indicated also by the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, which notes that ‘Climate change has caused substantial damages, and increasingly irreversible losses, in terrestrial, freshwater, cryospheric, and coastal and open ocean ecosystems’ (IPCC AR6 SYR SPM, A.2.3).

73. Furthermore, extreme weather events, such as intense and frequent rainfall resulting in flooding in the World Heritage properties in Yemen, including Historic Town of Zabid, Old Walled City of Shibam and Old City of Sana’a are becoming increasingly common across all regions. Torrential rains in Pakistan damaged the Archaeological Ruins of Moenjodaro and the Historical Monuments at Makli, Thatta in 2022, and the severe flooding at the Minaret and Archaeological Remains of Jam in Afghanistan in 2024. Desertification is becoming a pressing conservation issue at sites such as Timbuktu, creating new challenges for working with traditional materials. Storm Daniel, which hit the northeastern part of Libya in September 2023, had several impacts on the Archaeological Site of Cyrene. These growing impacts highlighting the need for disaster risk management planning and mitigation measures.
74. The Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage adopted by the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention at its 24th session in November 2023, outlines World Heritage Climate Action Goals, namely, climate risk assessment, climate adaptation, climate mitigation and knowledge sharing, capacity building and awareness, as well as guidelines for implementing the action goals in terms of enabling conditions, and at the various levels of the World Heritage Committee, States Parties and World Heritage property-level implementation (see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/climatechange>).
75. In this context the Committee may wish to call on States Parties, the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and World Heritage-related Category 2 Centres to disseminate widely the Policy Document through appropriate means to the World Heritage community and the broader public including in local languages.
76. In adopting the Policy document, the General Assembly also recalled the World Heritage Committee’s request to the World Heritage Centre to develop, together with the Advisory Bodies, a “Guidance Document to facilitate effective implementation of, and support for, the actions, goals and targets of this Policy Document”. The World Heritage Centre aims to move forward on this request in the coming months with available funds.
77. To promote the implementation of the Policy Document, and as an education and capacity-building initiative, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, are developing a draft toolkit on Climate Action for World Heritage, comprising a diverse set of tools to support States Parties, site managers and other heritage practitioners to achieving the Action Goals of the Policy Document including through building their capacities. The draft toolkit will be finalised by the end of 2024 through the coordination of the World Heritage Leadership programme after which the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies propose further actions to support the development of the toolkit including enabling training and capacity building to assist in its application across a broad spectrum of World Heritage properties globally.

78. The Committee may wish to reiterate the General Assembly's call on States Parties to support activities related to the development of both the Guidance Document and education and capacity-building initiatives, through extrabudgetary contributions.
79. UNESCO is leveraging the experiences and case studies of the impacts of climate change at World Heritage properties, in addition those on cultural heritage more broadly, to inform processes contributing to the UN General Assembly's 'High-level meeting on existential threats posed by sea-level rise' as well as the report of the UNFCCC Expert Group on Non-Economic Losses led by the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage that for the first time includes cultural heritage in a significant way. Together these efforts aim to advance in UN processes and policies, both a recognition of the nature of non-economic loss of cultural heritage as well as the role and contribution of culture to enhance resilience and develop adaptation, mitigation, and safeguarding strategies that are culturally adapted and engage local communities and indigenous peoples. UNESCO is also leveraging the experiences and case studies of the impacts of climate change on World Heritage cities in the Mediterranean region together with data from Earth Observation in a paper under development with the Group on Earth Observation (GEO) and the Greek GEO Office as well as the Academy of Athens.
80. The Advisory Bodies are actively addressing the climate crisis. IUCN's Climate Crisis Commission is recruiting members to develop effective and just solutions for World Heritage properties. ICCROM, through the World Heritage Leadership programme, is updating the World Heritage Resource Manual to include climate change impacts. ICOMOS' Climate Action Working Group published a Climate Change Adaptation Guide. In 2023, ICOMOS held a symposium on climate change and cultural heritage, passing a resolution on its impact on Indigenous heritage.
81. The Advisory Bodies are also actively addressing the climate crisis. IUCN's Climate Crisis Commission is recruiting members to develop effective and just solutions for World Heritage properties. ICCROM, through the World Heritage Leadership programme, is updating the World Heritage Resource Manual to include climate change impacts. ICOMOS' Climate Action Working Group published a Climate Change Adaptation Guide. In 2023, ICOMOS held a symposium on climate change and cultural heritage, passing a resolution on its impact on Indigenous heritage.

F. World Heritage contribution to biodiversity conservation

82. World Heritage properties are some of the most outstanding places on the planet and are at the core of the global protected area system, critical for conservation of ecosystem integrity and biodiversity. This was also evidenced in the study published by UNESCO and IUCN in 2023, which reported that while World Heritage properties make up less than 1% of the Earth's surface, they harbour more than 1/5 of mapped global species richness. Furthermore, the study recalled that areas of high cultural diversity are often areas of high biological diversity. For example, around 20% of cultural World Heritage properties (over 160 properties) are in Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs). The study underlined how safeguarding World Heritage properties is crucial to achieving global biodiversity conservation targets and offered guidance on integrating World Heritage into National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).
83. As is reflected in the state of conservation reports presented in documents WHC/24/46.COM/7A and WHC/24/46.COM/7B and their addenda, the ongoing global biodiversity crisis continues to be evident in World Heritage properties around the world. Biodiversity that represents important attributes of OUV of a range of listed sites continues to face pressure from threats such as: development infrastructure (e.g., tourism developments, roads and railways, encroachment, or border barriers (fences/walls) impacting ecological connectivity); extractive activities; unsustainable

resource use (e.g. deforestation, poaching and overfishing); and climate change (see also the above section on Climate Change). With World Heritage properties representing some of the last remaining havens for critically endangered species, such as the Vaquita in the Islands and Protected Areas of the Gulf of California (Mexico), it is critical that States Parties, in collaboration with civil society, implement strong measures to halt biodiversity loss and protect and conserve biodiversity.

84. The World Heritage Centre and IUCN, with the other Advisory Bodies and other partners, are therefore striving to highlight the importance of World Heritage properties for global biodiversity targets and financing, while leveraging tools available under the World Heritage Convention, other international biodiversity frameworks, and UNESCO and IUCN programmes at large to safeguard and restore biodiversity in World Heritage properties (see also documents [WHC/24/46.COM/5A](#) and [WHC/24/46.COM/5B](#)). To develop ideas for increased collaboration, in January 2024, World Heritage experts from South Africa, India, Belgium, Mexico and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the World Heritage Centre and IUCN participated in the Bern III Conference which brought together representatives of parties and secretariats of 16 Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), including the seven biodiversity-related Conventions. More information and highlights of the meeting are available at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2663>, and at <https://www.unep.org/events/conference/bern-iii-conference-cooperation-among-biodiversity-related-conventions>. The outcomes of the conference and practical actions proposed will be promoted at the SBI-4 and SBSTTA 26 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in May 2024. There are a range of tangible priorities regarding synergies between the World Heritage Convention and other relevant Conventions, that are being pursued, as further noted below.
85. In its Decision **45 COM 7.2**, the Committee requested the States Parties to fully harness the World Heritage Convention in supporting the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) adopted in 2022, including through effective collaboration among convention focal points, and by integrating World Heritage-related objectives within their NBSAPs. This is important also to ensure that World Heritage properties are eligible for dedicated international funding mechanisms, including to implement corrective measures and other decisions of the Committee to improve the state of conservation of properties.
86. At the time of preparing this report, only few of the NBSAPs are available on the [website](#) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) integrate World Heritage. At the same time, several ongoing initiatives support countries to align their national strategies and action plans with the GBF, such as the Global Biodiversity Framework Early Action Support (GBF-EAS) funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), or the NBSAP Accelerator Partnership (of which IUCN is an institutional member). World Heritage focal points should fully engage in these processes, recalling also that the GBF has a dedicated target on urban planning and green spaces, which opens opportunities for cultural World Heritage properties to support reaching global biodiversity targets. World Heritage properties have also been included as a complementary indicator for Target 3 and goal of the monitoring framework for the GBF.
87. In its Decision **45 COM 7.2**, the Committee also requested the World Heritage Centre, in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies, to develop specific guidance on how the World Heritage Convention might contribute to the GBF and the aims of the Joint Programme of Work on the Links between Biological and Cultural Diversity, and to report to the Committee under the item on Sustainable Development. The States Parties of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Germany have generously offered to support an expert meeting on this topic, planned for the second half of 2024.
88. In 2023, IUCN launched a new initiative to promote the sustainability of multiple internationally designated areas (MIDAs) (including World Heritage, Biosphere

Reserves, Geoparks and Ramsar Sites), supported by/in partnership with the Jeju Special Self-Governing Province (Republic of Korea). The initiative will focus on cooperation and support for research, training and capacity building in collaboration with the category 2 centre Global Research and Training Centre for Internationally Designated Areas (GCIDA) and provides a tangible means to respond to conservation issues identified in those World Heritage properties that benefit from other forms of international designation.

89. During its COP14 in February 2024, the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) launched the first ever State of the World's Migratory Species report (<https://www.cms.int/en/publication/state-worlds-migratory-species-report>). The report, which refers to data from World Heritage properties, revealed a decline in populations for many migratory species, and outlined strategies such as connectivity conservation to address related threats. Through its Species Programmes and Species Survival Commissions, IUCN and CMS will continue to support species conservation in World Heritage properties.

The CMS scientific task force on avian influenza and wild birds released a statement in July 2023, pointing to avian influenza outbreaks in World Heritage properties, and sharing guidance on how to respond. Several World Heritage properties have been affected in 2023 and 2024, including Galapagos Islands (Ecuador) and Peninsula Valdes (Argentina). In April and May 2024, the World Heritage Centre organized a series of webinars with IUCN, CMS, FAO and Ramsar to increase awareness of site management authorities on the impacts of avian influenza on wildlife and appropriate management responses (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/events/1779/>) (see also see document WHC/23/46.COM/5A). To improve preparedness to respond to avian influenza, which could potentially cause mass mortality of wild birds and mammals, all properties which are important for protection of migratory species should develop appropriate management strategies in line with international standards and good practice.

IV. DRAFT DECISION

Draft Decision: 46 COM 7

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC/24/46.COM/7,*
2. *Recalling Decisions **42 COM 7, 43 COM 7.2, 44 COM 7.2, 45 COM 7.1 and 45 COM 7.2**, adopted at its 42nd (Manama, 2018) and 43rd (Baku, 2019) sessions, and its extended 44th (Fuzhou/online, 2021) and 45th (Riyadh, 2023) sessions respectively,*
3. *Also recalling that all proposed major interventions in and around World Heritage properties should be subject to rigorous impact assessments, as outlined in Paragraph 118bis of the Operational Guidelines, in line with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessment in a World Heritage Context, and that both the proposals and the impact assessment-related documentation be submitted, in accordance with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines, to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies, before any interventions for new construction, demolition, modification, recovery or reconstruction commences or decisions made that cannot be reversed;*

Improving the perception of the List of World Heritage in Danger

4. Reaffirms that the inscription of a property on the List of World Heritage in Danger aims to mobilize international support to help States Parties to effectively address the challenges faced by the properties concerned,
5. Also reaffirms the need to promote a better understanding of the implications and benefits of properties being inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, welcomes the Secretariat's information material entitled "Implementing New Visions: a Guidebook for action on the List of World Heritage in Danger (2024)" and thanks the State Party of Norway for its financial support to this end;
6. Encourages the States Parties, the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage-related Category 2 Centres to disseminate widely this guidebook through appropriate means, including in local languages, to the World Heritage community at large and the broader public, with a view to contributing to a more positive perception of the List of World Heritage in Danger;

Emergency situations resulting from conflicts

7. Expresses utmost concern that conflicts (including armed conflict and civil unrest) continue to represent a major threat to World Heritage properties and remain one of the major reasons for the inscription of properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger;
8. Regrets the loss of human life and the degradation of humanitarian conditions resulting from the prevailing conflict situations, including threats to the personnel and local communities in and around World Heritage properties;
9. Welcomes protection and conservation efforts being undertaken by the concerned States Parties at World Heritage properties in current and former conflict zones and that some States Parties are progressively proceeding with the development of corrective measures and the definition of the Desired state of conservation for the removal of properties from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) for some cultural properties in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS;
10. Urges again all parties associated with conflicts to ensure the protection of cultural and natural heritage, including to avoid their use for military purposes and also reiterates its utmost concern at the increase in illicit trafficking of cultural objects, resulting from armed conflicts, and appeals to all States Parties to cooperate in the fight against these threats, and for cultural heritage protection in general, including through the ratification of the 1970 Convention and the 1954 Convention and its two Protocols, as well as the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2199 (2015), 2253 (2015) and 2347 (2017), and the implementation of the UNESCO Recommendations on Museums and Collections (2015);
11. Welcomes the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies' continued actions in responding to emergencies and conflicts threatening cultural and natural heritage, including the Outstanding Universal Value, including through the Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF) and the Rapid Response Facility (RRF), UNESCO's actions and emergency assistance programme and the First Aid and Resilience for Cultural Heritage of ICCROM;
12. Reiterates its call upon the international community to further support the safeguarding of the cultural and natural heritage of countries affected by conflict, through earmarked funds or through contributions to the UNESCO World Heritage Fund, HEF and RRF;

Recovery and Reconstruction

13. Recalls that reconstruction is justifiable only in exceptional circumstances, and should be based on thorough documentation, guided by conservation plans and policies that

support the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), and as outlined in Paragraph 86 of the Operational Guidelines;

14. Takes note of the programmes initiated and implemented by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies and other international partners to respond to the destruction of heritage through documentation, emergency response, recovery and reconstruction;
15. Welcomes the continued efforts by States Parties in responding to post-conflict and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction, as well as their positive social and community interlinkages and thanks UNESCO, the Advisory Bodies, and all the partners for their generous support of the initiatives and efforts;
16. Reiterates its previous encouragement to all State Parties to prepare comprehensive risk preparedness strategies and emergency response plans for World Heritage properties that are exposed to risk from natural disasters;
17. Reminds State Parties that Recovery Plans and on major reconstruction projects, which extend beyond emergency repair and stabilisation works should be subject to Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) prepared in accordance with the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in the World Heritage Context and that detailed project documentation including HIAs should be submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before making any decision that would be difficult to reverse, in conformity with Paragraph 172 of the Operational Guidelines.

Development pressures and the need for management effectiveness

18. Notes with concern the continued and increasing pressures on World Heritage arising from a wide range of development pressures from small scale housing projects to large scale infrastructure development, including for transport and energy, urban development and expansion, mining and extraction, and the building of border barriers, to the development of tourism infrastructure within World Heritage properties or in their wider setting, resulting in significant potential and ascertained threats to the OUV of these properties;
19. Notes the importance of clearly established governance and legislation protecting the OUV of the property and that effective management systems for World Heritage properties must be integrated into urban, local and regional development plans and processes so that the coherent and coordinated protection of OUV is implemented by all levels of government;
20. Welcomes the launch of the UNESCO Urban Heritage Atlas digital tool that also supports the implementation of the 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape and encourages States Parties to implement the Atlas for managing World Heritage properties in urban contexts;
21. Invites States Parties to regularly evaluate their World Heritage management systems to ensure that management is effective, and to inform adaptive management approaches by utilizing the 2023 Enhancing Our Heritage Toolkit 2.0 to ensure that the OUV is conserved and management objectives are achieved;
22. Reminds States Parties that in order to effectively plan, manage and inform decision-making, that they ensure that the potential impacts of developments on the OUV are appropriately assessed, in line with Paragraph 3 above and that no developments proceed that would negatively impact the OUV;
23. Notes furthermore the support of sound information systems for effective management systems, such as the World Heritage Online Map Platform and the UNESCO Urban Heritage Atlas, as well as the importance of sharing management practices through the UNESCO World Heritage Canopy platform and the IUCN-ICCROM-ICOMOS Nature-

Culture Community of PANORAMA and invites States Parties to continue to contribute to their information and practices;

24. Also welcomes the agreement signed between UNESCO, IUCN and the Kingdom of the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment (NCEA) to reinforce capacity building and quality assurance for Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) and Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) for World Heritage properties;

Local Communities, Indigenous Peoples, and Human-Rights

25. Recalling Article 5 of the Convention that each State Party shall adopt for their territory a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community, and the integration of the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programmes as a means of ensuring effective protection, conservation and presentation of cultural and natural heritage;
26. Also recalling the obligations of States Parties to ensure that the management of their World Heritage properties should follow a human rights-based approach in line with international human rights standards and norms, including the expectations set out in the 2015 Policy on the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective in World Heritage Processes, and the UNESCO Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples in order to ensure the full participation of all right-holders and stakeholders and in particular Indigenous peoples including through the provision of free, prior and informed consent on issues related to World Heritage properties that affect Indigenous Peoples;
27. Further recalling the provisions of the Operational Guidelines that call upon States Parties to adopt a human rights-based approach and to ensure the participation of local communities and/or Indigenous Peoples in the implementation of the Convention;
28. Acknowledges that historically for some World Heritage properties, OUV has been defined without the meaningful or sufficient participation of the Indigenous Peoples concerned and may not have taken into account their perspectives, including their relationship with the land and the interconnectedness of nature and culture and that this may have significant negative impacts on the rights, practices, traditions, livelihoods and heritage of concerned Indigenous Peoples;
29. Expresses its utmost concern and strongly condemns all forms of human rights violations against Indigenous Peoples and local communities, including forced evictions, and reiterates that such violations are unacceptable within the framework of the World Heritage Convention, urges the States Parties concerned to urgently investigate allegations where such violations have been reported, and calls upon States Parties to ensure equitable, inclusive and participatory governance mechanisms ensuring full respect of human rights, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples, as an integral part of the management of World Heritage properties;
30. Takes note that an international expert workshop on 'Recognising and Respecting Indigenous Peoples' Heritage Values in World Heritage Sites' was organised by the International Indigenous Peoples Forum on World Heritage (IIPFWH) in January 2024 with the participation of the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre, and invites the IIPFWH to make available the outcome document at the earliest opportunity;
31. Also takes note that the 21st General Assembly and Scientific Symposium of ICOMOS addressed the question of human rights-based approach to heritage management;

Climate Change

32. Notes with concern the increasing impacts of Climate Change on cultural and natural World Heritage properties;

33. *Welcomes the adoption of the Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage (Policy Document) by the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention at its 24th session (UNESCO, 2023), urges States Parties to implement it and encourages States Parties, the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and World Heritage-related Category 2 Centres to disseminate it widely through appropriate means;*
34. *Takes note of the initiatives taken by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to advance work to support implementation of the Policy Document, including on the development of a draft climate action for World Heritage toolkit and through the ongoing revision of the Resource Manual on Managing Disaster Risks for World Heritage, as well as the upcoming activities for a Guidance Document and encourages States Parties to support these initiatives through extrabudgetary contributions;*
35. *Also takes note of the ICOMOS Climate Change Adaptation Guide, proposed online and the pro-active engagement with the threats posed by climate change to Indigenous heritage;*

World Heritage contribution to Biodiversity Conventions

36. *Reiterates its request to States Parties to fully harness the World Heritage Convention in supporting the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including through effective collaboration among convention focal points, and by integrating World Heritage-related objectives within their updated National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), to ensure synergies between World Heritage and other biodiversity-related Conventions, and that World Heritage properties fully benefit from international biodiversity financing such as the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund;*
37. *Thanks the States Parties of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Germany for their offer to support the expert meeting on World Heritage and the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, with a view to elaborating specific guidance on how the World Heritage Convention could be better harnessed to contribute to the Global Biodiversity Framework and the aims of the Joint Programme of Work on the Links between Biological and Cultural Diversity, and requests that the outcomes and recommendations of the expert meeting be reported to the Committee at its 47th session;*
38. *Noting the growing concern over the impacts of avian influenza on wildlife in World Heritage properties, encourages management authorities to develop appropriate management strategies in line with international standards and good practice.*