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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 9 of the Provisional Agenda: Global Strategy for a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List**

**9A. Upstream Process**

**SUMMARY**

Further to Decision **45 COM 9A**, this document presents a report on the implementation of the Upstream Process requests, since the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee (Riyadh, 2023). It also includes the Upstream Process requests received by the 31 March 2024 deadline.

**Draft Decision: 46 COM 9A, see point IV**

## I. BACKGROUND

1. At its 32nd session (Quebec City, 2008), the World Heritage Committee launched a process of reflection on the future of the World Heritage Convention. In this framework, the Committee, aware of the challenges that exist in the process for nominating a site to the World Heritage List, proposed an initiative entitled Upstream Processes. The aim was to find options for improving and strengthening the nomination process.
2. In 2010, by Decision **34 COM 12**, the World Heritage Committee requested the World Heritage Centre “in cooperation with the Advisory Bodies and other relevant organizations, to invite one or two States Parties from each of the UNESCO regional groups to undertake, on an experimental basis, voluntary pilot projects related to identifying options and preparing dossiers for nomination”. The following year, by Decision **35 COM 12C**, the Committee took note of the 10 pilot projects that had been chosen to implement this experimental approach. The pilot projects evolved in different ways. Some resulted in the inscription of the site on the World Heritage List and others led to the termination of the nomination project, following the advice from the Advisory Bodies. The last pilot project was phased out by the Committee at its extended 45th session in 2023 (Decision **45 COM 9A**).
3. In 2015, at its 39th session, the World Heritage Committee included the Upstream Process in the Operational Guidelines, thereby recognizing that the Upstream Process has extended far beyond the pilot projects and has become a mainstream process considered beneficial to many States Parties.
4. At its 41st session (Krakow, 2017), the Committee adopted Decision **41 COM 9A**, which could be considered as a turning point in the establishment of the Upstream Process in the Operational Guidelines. Through this decision, the Committee addressed several fundamental issues from a procedural point of view, including the adoption of the Upstream Process request format and a timeline for submission of requests for upstream advice, with two deadlines per year. In the same decision, the Committee decided to give priority to requests for the preparation or revision of Tentative Lists to Least Developed Countries, Low-Income and Lower-Middle Income Countries and Small Island Developing States, followed by the mechanism of Paragraph 61.c) of the Operational Guidelines.
5. In 2018, the Committee, by Decision **42 COM 9A**, approved a revised definition of the Upstream Process proposed by the Ad-Hoc Working Group, and at its 43rd session (Baku, 2019), the Upstream Process request format was included in the Operational Guidelines, becoming the new Annex 15 (Decision **43 COM 11A**).
6. In 2020, the “Guidance on Developing and Revising World Heritage Tentative Lists” (<https://whc.unesco.org/en/documents/184566/>) was prepared by ICOMOS, with UNESCO, IUCN and ICCROM, as a first step to address the Upstream Process requests regarding the creation or revision of Tentative Lists. Subsequently, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies have operationalized this guidance through a toolkit for States Parties and resource persons. The toolkit is used for workshops conducted by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and IUCN on the development and revision of Tentative Lists and contributes to a streamlined and consistent implementation of all Upstream Process requests concerning Tentative Lists.
7. At its extended 44th session (Fuzhou/online, 2021), the Committee, by Decision **44 COM 9A**, limited to one the number of requests per State Party that can be addressed in each cycle. In the same Decision, the Committee decided to remove the 31 October deadline for submission of Upstream Process requests, retaining only the 31 March annual deadline. By Decision **44 COM 12**, this annual deadline was included in Paragraph 121 of the Operational Guidelines.

8. On a related note, the Preliminary Assessment has been introduced as the first phase of the now two-phase nomination process. Developed based on the experience of the Upstream Process, the Preliminary Assessment builds the capacities of States Parties in developing high-quality nominations and establishing the feasibility of a potential nomination. Whilst the Upstream Process is voluntary and may include a visit to the site, the Preliminary Assessment will become a mandatory desk-based process following a transition period. The Upstream Process may provide general advice, in relation to revision of a Tentative List, while the Preliminary Assessment is undertaken on a specific site already included on the Tentative List. While in general the costs of Upstream Process requests are borne by the requesting State(s) Party(ies), the costs of Preliminary Assessments are included in the related evaluation process (see Paragraph 122.i) of the Operational Guidelines).
9. Both processes provide guidance at an early stage, prior to the preparation of a nomination. Therefore, in order to avoid an unnecessary redundancy in the nomination process, it is proposed to exempt from the Preliminary Assessment procedure nominations of sites having been subject to an Upstream Process concerning a specific site (see Document WHC/24/46.COM/8).
10. It is important to emphasize that the application of the Upstream Process approach does not imply that a site would ultimately be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The main aim of the Upstream Process is to reduce the number of sites that experience significant problems during the nomination process, and to avoid significant investment in financial and human resources where the proposed sites do not demonstrate potential for justifying Outstanding Universal Value.

## **II. PROGRESS MADE ON THE UPSTREAM PROCESS REQUESTS**

11. Since the launch of the Upstream Process, a high number of Upstream Process requests has been received by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. However, the implementation of the Upstream Process has proven to be challenging especially in terms of calendar and financial resources, as it is undertaken according to the availability of financial and human resources. The implementation rate of the Upstream Process requests is therefore determined by the resources available each year, hence causing a backlog of requests and long waiting times for States Parties.

### **A. Requests received by the annual deadlines from 2018 to 2021**

12. From the 60 Upstream Process requests received by the annual deadlines between 2018 and 2021, eight concerning the potential future nomination of specific sites are still not finalised. Five out of these eight requests are currently under implementation. The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies are making every possible effort to complete all requests in the shortest possible time determined by the resources available. From the same cycles, there are 15 pending requests (from which two are currently under implementation) concerning the revision of Tentative Lists of States Parties, which will benefit from the above-mentioned "Toolkit for Preparing /Revising Tentative Lists".

### **B. Requests received by the 2022 and 2023 deadlines**

13. Regarding the Upstream Process requests received by the 2022 and 2023 deadlines, all requests concerned potential future nomination of specific sites. Out of the eight requests received, one is under implementation and three are pending. Two were successfully implemented and two were discontinued for different reasons.

### III. NEW UPSTREAM PROCESS REQUESTS RECEIVED

14. By the 31 March 2024 deadline, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre received six Upstream Process requests. In terms of regional breakdown, two of these requests are from Europe and North America, one from Africa, one from the Asia and the Pacific region and two from one State Party in the Arab States region. As to the criteria of eligibility for receiving financial support, one request is from one Least Developed Country, one from a Lower Middle-Income Country, one from an Upper Middle-Income Country and three from High Income Countries. Furthermore, regarding the object of the advice demanded, all six requests concern the potential future nomination of specific sites.
15. On the basis of the combination of all criteria outlined in Decision **41 COM 9A**, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre established a list of requests received by the 2024 deadline, in order of priority (see Annex I of this Document). As only one request per State Party can be addressed in each cycle (Decision **44 COM 9A**), the State Party that submitted two requests for the 2024 cycle was asked to opt for one of them. The State Party may wish to resubmit the other request in a future cycle.
16. Annex II of this document presents the list of pending Upstream Process requests received from 2018 to 2024. Based on the experience with the formalised Upstream Process, it has to be noted that the timeline to deal with Upstream Process requests depends on various factors, such as the number of requests received, their scope, expectations of the State Party, availability of funding and the prioritisation system. Therefore, while some requests may be dealt with swiftly, others require more time. Accordingly, it is advisable not to expect receiving the outcome of an Upstream Process request within less than, on average, 18 months after the deadline at which it is submitted. The advice to be provided in the framework of each Upstream Process request is reviewed and endorsed by the respective Advisory Bodies' World Heritage Panels. Furthermore, it is worth noting that there is a stark imbalance between requests for natural heritage and cultural heritage, with the vast majority of requests being submitted for cultural sites.

### IV. DRAFT DECISION

#### **Draft Decision: 46 COM 9A**

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. *Having examined Document WHC/24/46.COM/9A,*
2. *Recalling Decision **45 COM 9A**, adopted at its extended 45th session (Riyadh, 2023), and its previous decisions concerning the Upstream Process,*
3. *Also recalling that upstream support should take place at an early stage, preferably at the moment of preparation or revision of States Parties' Tentative Lists, welcomes that States Parties from all regions make use of the Upstream Process;*
4. *Takes note of the progress made regarding the Upstream Process requests received from 2018 to 2023;*
5. *Also welcomes the submission of the Upstream Process requests received by the 31 March 2024 deadline, and the efforts by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to process all requests received in the timeliest manner possible within the resources available;*

6. *Invites the States Parties to contribute extra-budgetary resources for the overall coordination and capacity building support of the Upstream Process;*
7. *Thanks the State Party of Ireland for its financial support to the overall coordination of the Upstream Process;*
8. *Requests the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies, to present a progress report on the support offered to Upstream Process requests received, for consideration at its 47th session.*

**List of Upstream Process requests received by 31 March 2024**

Six Upstream Process requests were received following the requested format and are presented here in the order of priority. The prioritization was made on the basis of Decision **41 COM 9A**, paragraphs 11 and 12.

Region	State Party	Type of economy	C / N	TL / NOM	Request complete as of 31/03/2024	Type of activity / site
AFR	Ethiopia	LDC	C/N	NOM	YES	Lake Tana Island Monasteries and Its Adjacent Wetland ( <i>On TL since 2021</i> )
APA	Viet Nam	LMIC	C	NOM	YES	Con Moong Cave ( <i>On TL since 2006</i> )
EUR/NA	Moldova	UMIC	C	NOM	YES	Underground Wineries of Moldova ( <i>Not on TL</i> )
ARB	Qatar*	HIC	C/N	NOM	YES	People of the Rawda: Desert Life in Qatar from the Dawn of Islam to the 20th c. CE ( <i>Not on TL</i> )
ARB	Qatar*	HIC	C	NOM	YES	People of the Sea: the coastal cultural landscape of Qatar ( <i>Not on TL</i> )
EUR/NA	Norway	HIC	C	NOM	YES	The Monumental Ship Burials ( <i>Not on TL</i> )

C = cultural heritage N = natural heritage TL = Tentative List NOM = nomination file	AFR = Africa APA = Asia-Pacific ARB = Arab States EUR/NA = Europe & North America LAC = Latin America & the Caribbean	LDC = Least Developed Country LIE = Low Income Economy LMIC = Lower Middle Income Country SIDS = Small Island Developing State UMIC = Upper Middle Income Country HIC = High Income Country
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\* As only one request per State Party can be addressed in each cycle (Decision **44 COM 9A**), the State Party was asked to opt for one of the two requests submitted. The "People of the Rawda: Desert Life in Qatar from the Dawn of Islam to the 20th c. CE" was selected for the 2024 cycle.

**List of pending Upstream Process requests received from 2018 to 2024**

This list shows all Upstream Process requests received from 2018 to 2024 and that are not yet finalised (i.e., pending or under implementation). They are divided by year of submission and object of the advice requested (TL or NOM) and presented in alphabetical order by State Party.

Region	State Party	C / N	TL / NOM	Year of Submission	Type of activity / site
AFR	Eswatini	C/N	TL	2018	Revision
AFR	Eritrea	C	NOM	2018	Qoahito Cultural Landscape
AFR	Malawi	C	NOM	2018	Malawi Slave Routes & Dr. David Livingstone Trail
EUR/NA	Ukraine	C	NOM	2018	Archaeological Site "Stone Tomb"
EUR/NA	Armenia	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
LAC	Colombia	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
LAC	Jamaica	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
ARB	Jordan	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
APA	Lao People's Democratic Republic	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
APA	Nepal	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
AFR	Nigeria	C/N	TL	2019	Revision
LAC	Grenada and St. Vincent & The Grenadines	C/N	NOM	2019	Grenadine Island Chain
LAC	Ecuador	C/N	TL	2020	Revision
ARB	Egypt	C/N	TL	2020	Revision
AFR	Ethiopia	C/N	TL	2020	Revision
APA	Kiribati	C/N	TL	2020	Development

Region	State Party	C / N	TL / NOM	Year of Submission	Type of activity / site
LAC	Nicaragua	C/N	TL	2020	Revision
ARB	Saudi Arabia	C/N	TL	2020	Revision
EUR/NA	Belarus	C	NOM	2020	Kalozha Church of Sts. Boris and Gleb in Grodno
EUR/NA	Belgium	C	NOM	2020	Public zoological gardens in the 19th century - a new typology in a rapidly changing world
EUR/NA	Serbia	C	NOM	2020	Archeological site Belo brdo in Vinča
AFR	Zimbabwe	C	NOM	2020	Naletale Cluster of Dzimbabwes
LAC	El Salvador	C/N	TL	2021	Revision
EUR/NA	Finland	C	NOM	2022	The Architectural Works of Alvar Aalto - a Human Dimension to the Modern Movement
ARB	Kuwait	C	NOM	2022	Ahmadi Company Township
EUR/NA	Slovakia	C	NOM	2022	Memorial of Chatam Sófer
EUR/NA	Türkiye	C	NOM	2022	The Historical Port City of Izmir
AFR	Ethiopia	C/N	NOM	2024	Lake Tana Island Monasteries and Its Adjacent Wetland
EUR/NA	Moldova	C	NOM	2024	Underground Wineries of Moldova
EUR/NA	Norway	C	NOM	2024	The Monumental Ship Burials
ARB	Qatar	C/N	NOM	2024	People of the Rawda: Desert Life in Qatar from the Dawn of Islam to the 20th c. CE
APA	Viet Nam	C	NOM	2024	Con Moong Cave

C = cultural heritage N = natural heritage TL = Tentative List NOM = nomination file	AFR = Africa APA = Asia-Pacific ARB = Arab States EUR/NA = Europe & North America LAC = Latin America & the Caribbean
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