

**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 10 of the Provisional Agenda:

**10C. Report on the implementation of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting and
general reflection on Periodic Reporting**

SUMMARY

This document presents the overall process of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting with an analytical report on the implementation of the exercise in all regions, as well as a general reflection on Periodic Reporting building on this process and a proposal for the launch of the Reflection Period as per Decision **41 COM 10A**.

The general web page on Periodic Reporting can be accessed at the following address: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/periodicreporting/>. The texts in blue are hyperlinks to the relevant documents.

Draft Decision: 46 COM 10C, see Point IV

I. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THIRD CYCLE OF PERIODIC REPORTING

A. Background

1. The World Heritage Committee launched the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting by Decision **41 COM 10A** (Krakow, 2017) and decided to maintain the order of regions and the 6-year periodicity of the Periodic Reporting cycles, with one region reporting every year (Arab States, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe and North America) and one year between cycles for a reflection, if necessary.
2. This Third Cycle Periodic Reporting exercise encompassed 193 States Parties to the World Heritage Convention and 1143 World Heritage properties. Similar to the Second Cycle, the Third Cycle reporting process employed an online web-based format for the Periodic Reporting questionnaire, covering both Section I (implementation of the Convention at national level) and Section II (implementation of the Convention at World Heritage property level).
3. The results of each regional exercise and its subsequent regional action plans were adopted in various sessions: the Arab States and Africa regions during the extended 44th session (Fuzhou/Online, 2021) by Decisions **44 COM 10A** and **44 COM 10B**, respectively; the Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean regions during the extended 45th session (Riyadh, 2023) by Decisions **45 COM 10A** and **45 COM 10B**, respectively; and the results of the regional report for Europe and North America region and its draft regional action plan is scheduled for examination and adoption at the 46th session (New Delhi, 2024) with a draft Decision **46 COM 10A** (See document *WHC-24/46.COM/10A*).
4. In its Decision **45 COM 10E** (Riyadh, 2023), the Committee took note of the outcomes of the **MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration** and requested the Secretariat to utilise the Reflection Period following the Third Cycle Reporting to proceed with a feasibility study to consider the practical modalities of enhancing the Periodic Reporting of the Convention in this framework, including, *inter alia*, the possibility of moving from a regional approach to Periodic Reporting to a global approach, examining the implementation of the *Convention* at global level through a succinct analytical report prepared by the Secretariat, and reviewing the analytical framework for Periodic Reporting and its monitoring indicators.
5. Furthermore, by Decision **45 COM 10E**, the Committee requested the UNESCO World Heritage Centre to submit a report on the overall implementation of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting at its 46th session.

B. Introduction

6. Periodic Reporting is a statutory process based on Article 29 of the World Heritage Convention and is further regulated by the *Operational Guidelines* in Chapter V: Periodic Reporting on the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. According to Paragraph 199 of the *Operational Guidelines*, "States Parties are requested to submit reports to the UNESCO General Conference through the World Heritage Committee on the legislative and administrative provisions they have adopted and other actions which they have taken for the application of the Convention, including the state of conservation of the World Heritage properties located on their territories."
7. The main purposes of the Periodic Reporting exercise are defined by Paragraph 201 of the *Operational Guidelines*, namely:

- a) to provide an assessment of the application of the World Heritage Convention by the State Party;
 - b) to provide an assessment as to whether the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List is being maintained over time;
 - c) to provide updated information about the World Heritage properties to record the changing circumstances and state of conservation of the properties;
 - d) to provide a mechanism for regional co-operation and exchange of information and experiences between States Parties concerning the implementation of the Convention and World Heritage conservation.
8. Once submitted, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre ensures its compilations and prepares a synthesis of the results of the Periodic reports and together with the States Parties, site managers and relevant stakeholders of the concerned region prepare a draft regional action plan, which is then examined by the World Heritage Committee. The Committee may provide recommendations or request further actions based on the action plans. The information gathered from Periodic reporting is also used to guide the Committee's decisions and priorities. Furthermore, States Parties are encouraged to use this process to identify and address challenges in implementing the Convention and managing World Heritage properties, as well as appropriate and integrate the adopted regional action plan into their national and regional strategies. This systematic approach ensures consistent monitoring and effective conservation of World Heritage sites worldwide.

C. Overall implementation of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting (2018-2024)

9. Following the Second Cycle of Periodic Reporting, which came to a close at the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee (Bonn, 2015), it was decided to launch a two-year reflection period from 2015 to 2017 (Decision **39 COM 10B.5**). The Secretariat has been tasked to coordinate the preparation of the revision of the format of the questionnaire and to prepare a proposal for improving the process, relevance, analysis and use of data, based notably on the comments and feedback of States Parties and the outcomes of reflection meetings.
10. The outcomes of this Reflection Period were presented to the World Heritage Committee at its 41st session (Krakow, 2017) in Document *WHC/17/41.COM/10A*, and by Decision **41 COM 10A**, the World Heritage Committee welcomed the recommendations and improvements proposed with regard to the format, content, relevance, analysis and use of data in the Periodic Reporting process, as well as the inclusion in the revised questionnaire of questions relating to synergies with other international instruments and programmes on cultural and natural heritage, questions relating to the implementation of the 1972 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Protection at National Level, of the Cultural and Natural Heritage and to the 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, as well as questions assessing the implementation of the World Heritage Policy for integrating a sustainable development perspective into the processes of the *World Heritage Convention*, and of other key policies adopted by the World Heritage Committee.
11. In line with the Committee Decision **41 COM 10A**, the World Heritage Centre developed a set of capacity-building tools including, training core modules, focus modules, a list of key terms, animation videos on Periodic Reporting, a handbook for World Heritage site managers, and Frequently Asked Questions. The translation of the training tools and guidance materials were made available in diverse languages thanks to the initiatives and contributions of the States Parties, UNESCO Category 2 Centres and UN volunteers.

12. An online platform dedicated to the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting was developed. The questionnaire and all the training materials referred to above are available for consultation on the platform through the following link: whc.unesco.org/en/prcycle3.
13. The Bureau of the 44th session of the World Heritage Committee considered that the conditions for a session of the World Heritage Committee in 2020 were not met. Furthermore, by Decision **14 EXT.COM 4** (Online, 2020), the World Heritage Committee decided to hold an extended 44th session in July 2021. Consequently, the regional report of the Arab States region, initially foreseen to be examined in 2020, was examined in 2021. In addition, the extended 45th session of the World Heritage Committee, initially scheduled from 19 to 30 June 2022, was postponed by the Bureau on 21 April 2022. By Decision **18 EXT.COM 3** (UNESCO, 2023), the World Heritage Committee decided to hold its extended 45th session in September 2023. Consequently, the regional report of the Asia and the Pacific region, initially foreseen to be examined in 2022, was examined in 2023.
14. Table 1 below shows the reporting period, year of examination of regional report by the World Heritage Committee, and number of States Parties (at the time of reporting for each region) involved, number of States Parties who participated in the exercise for each region, and the rate of submission of questionnaires at national level (Section I).

Table 1: Reporting period, year of examination, and number of States Parties (at the time of reporting for each region), number of States Parties who completed the reporting exercise, and the rate of submission for the Third Cycle

Region	Reporting period	Year of examination of Regional Report by the World Heritage Committee	N° of States Parties (at the time of reporting for each region)	N° of States Parties that completed reporting questionnaires	Rate of submission of questionnaires at national level
Arab States	2018-2019	2020 2021	19	19	100.0%
Africa	2019-2020	2021	46	46	100.0%
Asia and the Pacific	2020-2021	2022 2023	44	42	95.5%
Latin America and the Caribbean	2021-2022	2023	33	33	100.0%
Europe and North America	2022-2023	2024	51	51	100.0%

In the Third Cycle, 191 States Parties out of 193 completed and submitted their Periodic Reports at national level (Section I). This represents overall a 98.9% completion rate.

It is to be noted that Somalia, who ratified the World Heritage Convention in July 2020, entering in force in October 2020, did not participate in the exercise during the reporting phase in Africa (2019-2020). In addition, Tuvalu ratified the Convention in May 2023, and therefore did not take part in the Periodic Reporting exercise in Asia and the Pacific (2020-2021).

15. In the Third Cycle, 1129 World Heritage properties out of 1139 completed and submitted the Periodic Reports (Section II) at World Heritage property level. This number illustrates that 99.1% of the World Heritage properties that were invited to take part in the Periodic Reporting completed this exercise.
16. Table 2 shows the reporting period, year of examination of regional reports by the World Heritage Committee, number of World Heritage properties invited to complete the reporting exercise, number of World Heritage properties who submitted the reporting exercise, and the rate of submission of questionnaires at property level (Section II). It is to be noted that the reports from two transregional World Heritage

properties shared between Asia and the Pacific and Europe and North America are included in both regions in Table 2.

Table 2: Reporting exercise period, year of examination of Regional Reports and Action Plans by the World Heritage Committee, number of World Heritage properties that were invited to complete the reporting exercise, number of World Heritage properties who completed reporting exercise, and the rate of completion.

Region	Reporting exercise Period	Year of examination of Regional Reports and Action Plans by the World Heritage Committee ¹	N° of World Heritage properties involved (at the time of reporting for each region)	N° of World Heritage properties questionnaires submitted	Rate of submission of questionnaires submitted at World Heritage property level
Arab States	2018-2019	2020 2021	83	82	98.9%
Africa	2019-2020	2021	96	96	100.0%
Asia and the Pacific	2020-2021	2022 2023	268	265	98.9%
Latin America and the Caribbean	2021-2022	2023	146	145	99.3%
Europe and North America	2022-2023	2024	548	543	99.1%

17. The implementation rate of the Third Cycle Periodic Reporting exercise improved in comparison to the Second Cycle. For Section I, this rate increased by 6.1% on average. While only Asia and the Pacific reported a 100% implementation rate for Section I in the Second Cycle, four out of the five regions have a 100% implementation rate in the Third Cycle. Similarly, for Section II, the average implementation rate increased by 3.2%. During the Second Cycle, the implementation rates ranged from 90% to 100%, however, in the Third Cycle, they range between 98% or 100% for all regions.
18. Table 3 presents the implementation rate of the Periodic Reporting exercise in each region between the Second Cycle and the Third Cycle. This data suggests that the Third Cycle Periodic Reporting mechanism was more efficient than the previous cycle.

Table 3: Implementation rate of the Periodic Reporting exercise in each region between the Second Cycle and the Third Cycle

Region	Section I (national level)			Section II (World Heritage property level)		
	Second Cycle	Third Cycle	% point difference	Second Cycle	Third Cycle	% point difference
Arab States	83.3%	100.0%	16.7	90.6%	98.8%	8.2
Africa	93.2%	100.0%	6.8	93.6%	100.0%	6.4
Asia and the Pacific	100.0%	95.5%	-4.5	100.0%	98.9%	-1.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	90.6%	100.0%	9.4	96.1%	99.3%	3.3
Europe and North America	98.0%	100.0%	2.0	99.8%	99.1%	-0.7

19. For some sections, the implementation rates decreased, but these decreases are below 5 percent point difference and cannot be attributed solely to the reporting mechanism. In Asia and the Pacific, which attained a 100% implementation rate for both Sections in the previous Cycle, the implementation rates for Sections I and II decreased by 4.5% and 1.1% respectively. This region conducted its reporting in 2020-

¹ 'The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement' is a transregional World Heritage property shared between seven States Parties, it was agreed between those concerned States Parties that the questionnaire was to be completed by France when the Europe and North America region underwent its reporting period (2022–2023), and is therefore not included in the 268 World Heritage properties of Asia and the Pacific nor in the 146 World Heritage properties of Latin America and the Caribbean.

2021 and in the challenging context of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The in-person training workshops aimed at the national focal points for the Periodic Reporting in this region were postponed, and later conducted in online format only. The decrease in the percentage can also be observed in Section II of Europe and North America. In both regions the correlation could be attributed to the challenges in human resources completing the reporting.

20. The Third Cycle questionnaire was comprised of two sections: Section I focused on the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention* at the national level, while Section II focused on its implementation at each World Heritage property level. The questionnaire had the following structure:

Table 4: Structure of the Third Cycle questionnaire

Section I (national level)	Section II (World Heritage property level)
1. Introduction	1. World Heritage property data
2. Synergies with other conventions and programmes, and recommendations for the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage	2. Other conventions/programmes under which the World Heritage property is protected
3. Tentative List	3. Statement of Outstanding Universal Value
4. Nominations	4. Factors affecting the property
5. General policy development	5. Protection and management of the property
6. Inventories/Lists/Registers of cultural and natural heritage	6. Financial and human resources
7. Status of services for the identification, protection, conservation and presentation of natural and cultural heritage	7. Scientific studies and research projects
8. Financial status and human resources	8. Education, information and awareness building
9. Capacity development	9. Visitor management
10. Policy and resourcing of World Heritage properties	10. Monitoring
11. International cooperation	11. Identification of priority management needs
12. Education, information and awareness building	12. Summary and conclusions
13. Conclusions and recommended actions	13. Impact of World Heritage status
14. Good practice in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention	14. Good practice in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention
15. Assessment of the Periodic Reporting exercise	15. Assessment of the Periodic Reporting exercise

21. In view of the commencement of the reporting exercise in each region, the Secretariat, as recommended by the World Heritage Committee, took a number of measures to facilitate the process. Among others, these included carrying out a full review and update of records and contacts for the States Parties in the World Heritage databases, preparing circular letters to States Parties to identify the national focal points responsible for the implementation of the *Convention* at the national level and World Heritage site managers who were responsible for carrying out the reporting process in the region as well as maintaining a helpdesk, which provided technical and content support during the reporting period.
22. To address any difficulties faced by the States Parties before the final submission, an early review modality of the questionnaire was instituted for Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Europe and North America. Therefore, States Parties who wished to have their questionnaires reviewed by the World Heritage Centre before their final submission have had the possibility to do so, on a voluntary basis.
23. Workshops and capacity trainings were conducted to present an overview of the Periodic Reporting process and an understanding of the content and functions of the Periodic Reporting questionnaire. These workshops and trainings were organised in collaboration with Category 2 Centres and the Advisory Bodies. While these workshops

were held *in presentia* for the Arab States and Africa, the shift to online modalities occurred in response to COVID-19 notably for the Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean regions.

24. The World Heritage Committee by Decisions **41 COM 10A** (Krakow, 2017), **42 COM 10A** (Manama, 2018) and **43 COM 10B** (Baku, 2019) recommended the Secretariat to continue to ensure that a holistic approach is operated across regions. Since the launch of the Third Cycle exercise in 2018, the Secretariat ensured that a global approach is implemented throughout the process and across all regions, while also ensuring the overall coordination of the exercise by a responsible Periodic Reporting coordinator. This continuous support was made possible thanks to the funds made available by the Government of Sweden.
25. Additionally, the Secretariat acknowledges the invaluable contributions of the States Parties that provided financial support in various forms, such as supporting the process and organising workshops, to the Periodic Reporting exercise. This includes Bahrain and Egypt for the Arab States; South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, and Kenya for Africa; the Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Korea for the Asia and the Pacific region; and Germany, Ireland, Italy, and Montenegro for Europe and North America. Their support has been instrumental in ensuring the optimised implementation of the exercise.
26. Furthermore, the Secretariat expresses its sincere appreciation to the Category 2 Centres who supported the exercise. This includes the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH) for the Arab States; African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) for Africa; World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITR-AP, China) and HIST, the Centre on World Natural Heritage Management and Training for Asia and the Pacific Region at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) for the Asia and the Pacific region; the Regional World Heritage Institute in Zacatecas, and the Regional Heritage Management Training Centre 'Lucio Costa' for Latin America and the Caribbean. Their continuous support has significantly contributed of the effective implementation of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting.

D. Results of the Monitoring Indicators for the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting across all regions

27. During the Reflection Period (2015-2017) following the Second Cycle Periodic Reporting exercise, recommendations formulated to develop a set of indicators that will help to monitor the evolution of Periodic Reporting across time, in order to gauge the level of effective implementation by States Parties to the *Convention* and of the 1972 the Recommendation concerning the Protection at National Level, of the Cultural and Natural Heritage. By Decision **41 COM 10A** (Krakow, 2017), the World Heritage Committee welcomed the development of strengthened and comprehensive monitoring indicators to improve follow-up on progress made by States Parties in the implementation of the *Convention* as well as the 1972 Recommendation concerning the Protection at National Level, of the Cultural and Natural Heritage, further to the Recommendation of the Evaluation of UNESCO's Standard-Setting Work of the Culture Sector.
28. Table 5 below presents the Monitoring Indicators for the Third Cycle linked to Periodic Reporting objectives. Based on pre-existing questions and those newly developed for the Third Cycle, the indicators developed are directly linked to the objectives of the Periodic Reporting exercise and are grouped into the six core thematic areas of the Periodic Reports.

Table 5: World Heritage monitoring indicators linked to Periodic Reporting objectives

Thematic areas		Description of indicators	N° of indicators	Periodic Reporting Objectives
I	State of conservation of World Heritage properties	Indicators to assess temporal patterns in the status and trends of the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and factors affecting the property; integrity and authenticity of the site.	5	2 and 3
II	Management	Indicators to measure the effectiveness of site management, and adequacy of financial and human resources and budget.	7	1,2,3 and 4
III	Governance	Indicators to measure the adequacy of the legal framework for heritage protection, nature and level of involvement of key stakeholders (transparency of processes), action plan(s) to promote heritage.	4	1,2,3 and 4
IV	Synergies	Indicators to measure the existence of synergies with other cultural and biodiversity related conventions and normative instruments ² .	5	1 and 4
V	Sustainable development	Indicators to measure whether the application of the Convention is contributing to environmental sustainability, inclusive social development, and inclusive economic development, as well as the fostering of peace and security ³ .	13	1,2 and 3
VI	Capacity development	Indicators to measure the existence and effectiveness of capacity-building strategies and programmes.	8	1 and 4

29. The following results focuses on the analysis of the results of the monitoring indicators of all regions for the Third Cycle, with some references to the previous cycle, where applicable. The result is a comprehensive analysis of the main results, with a particular emphasis on changes in negative and positive evolution at the national and at the World Heritage property levels by comparing data between the cycles of the Periodic Reporting exercises in all regions. This report integrates information from the States Parties through the questionnaires of these Cycles of the Periodic Reporting exercise. This means that the report covers a large period of time that spans from 2008 to 2015 (Second Cycle) and from 2018 to 2024 (Third Cycle). In total, data from 2008 to 2024 provide the information of this report.

Results of the Third Cycle Periodic Reporting Monitoring Indicators

The Third Cycle Periodic Reporting offers critical insights into the current state of conservation, management practices, governance, synergy with UNESCO conventions, sustainable development, and capacity development of these properties. The summary of the Third Cycle Periodic Reporting Monitoring Indicators below provides the key findings and reveals trends in the preservation of OUV, the implementation and effectiveness of management systems, the adequacy of legal frameworks, the promotion of synergies between various UNESCO conventions, and efforts in sustainable development and capacity building. Each section highlights regional variations, challenges, and positive evolutions observed during the reporting period, offering a comprehensive overview of the progress and areas needing improvement in World Heritage site management and protection. For a full analysis, including preliminary observations, refer to the complete report at whc.unesco.org/document/207272.

30. **State of Conservation** trends identify that the OUV (85.9%), integrity (87.2%) and authenticity (81.9%) mostly remain intact or preserved at properties inscribed on the

² . This is a new theme for Periodic Reporting and the Third Cycle will establish the baseline for measuring the extent of these synergies in the future
³ *Ibid.*

World Heritage List. In some regions, a higher number of properties with their OUV seriously impacted has been reported in the last Periodic Reporting Cycle. In addition, the results appear more stable in some regions than others: issues such as political instabilities, conflicts, climate change or the effects of COVID-19 could explain part of the results and evolutions between cycles and differences among regions. Looking into the impact of factors, a more positive evolution is identified in mixed and natural properties in all the regions.

31. **Management** impact is positive at World Heritage properties, with an overwhelming majority having management systems in place. However, they are only implemented effectively in half of the inscribed properties and there is an evident lack of funds and human resources. Management coordination between levels could be improved, although it has a positive evolution. Half of the properties have monitoring systems, even if the indicators still need to be strengthened.
32. **Governance** item in the Periodic Reporting exercise shows that legal frameworks are generally perceived as more positive for the identification than for the protection of States Parties' World Heritage properties. Regarding conservation, all regions identified that the legal frameworks are better oriented when dealing with the protection of natural than cultural heritage. During the analysed period, a deterioration of the adequacy of legal frameworks is identified in the results. Mostly all inscribed properties consider that their management systems have adequate identification of roles and responsibilities. Last, coordination of different stakeholders is evaluated in very diverse ways across the regions, not making it possible to create global trends in this aspect.
33. **Synergies** between the *World Heritage Convention* and other UNESCO Culture Conventions and Programmes are being promoted by States Parties, but communication and coordination could be reinforced, especially regarding those properties under other designations in addition to World Heritage. A most fruitful communication with environment related conventions and programmes is also desirable. Instruments related to Historic Urban Landscapes, reducing risks and climate change have different levels of implementation and could still be more effective.
34. **Sustainable development** related issues seem to be improving during the last years. Most of the properties include a visitor and tourism action plan into their management system and they share tourism benefits with local communities, even though this last variable has been decreasing and should be addressed. Local communities are clearly included in management plans and participate in the process of Tentative List and Nominations. Knowledge on boundaries and buffer zones is improving. Gender balanced participation is increasing along the years but continues to not be as significant in the Tentative List and Nominations processes. A bigger number of management systems comprises a formalised framework for women's participation. Indigenous Peoples' participation dropped during the last years and it is still very low during the entire implementation process of the World Heritage Convention. National and federal governments continue to contribute through the highest public expenditure for heritage, and national policies benefit from the World Heritage inscription in areas such as protection of biological and cultural diversity, quality tourism, entrepreneurship and quality of life.
35. **Capacity development** plans and education programmes are important for the World Heritage properties, but improvement could be done regarding the lack of a specific World Heritage oriented national capacity-building strategy in around 58% of States Parties. The percentage of properties with a property level capacity building plan decreased during last years in all the regions and it is currently at 72.7%. Conservation

and management of heritage sites is a clearly identified capacity building need. Education and awareness programmes are present in 65.9% of properties and are mainly addressed to youth and children.

II. ASSESSMENT OF THE THIRD CYCLE OF PERIODIC REPORTING

A. Evaluation of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting by States Parties across all regions

36. Throughout this cycle of reporting, valuable feedback was received from States Parties, both by national focal points and site managers through the evaluation chapters (Sections I and II) of the questionnaire. This feedback included information on the format, content, and process of the exercise, assessing how well it meets the objectives of Periodic Reporting, how the data is used, and the availability of training and guidance for respondents. Additionally, responses were gathered through direct comments and reactions from various capacity-building trainings organised throughout the exercise in all regions. Therefore, the assessment incorporated feedback from national focal points, site managers, Advisory Bodies, experts, and other stakeholders involved in the process. Questions and comments were raised, and proposals made, regarding the improvement of the exercise for the next cycle, considering both the content and process.

Primary institution responsible for communicating with UNESCO on the World Heritage Convention

37. The primary institutions responsible for completing national reports regarding the World Heritage Convention are predominantly the Ministries of Culture, which account for 40% of the responses. This is followed by National Commissions for UNESCO at 20%, Ministries of Environment/Natural Resources and Ministries of Foreign Affairs both at 15%, and other specialized heritage or tourism institutions at 10%.

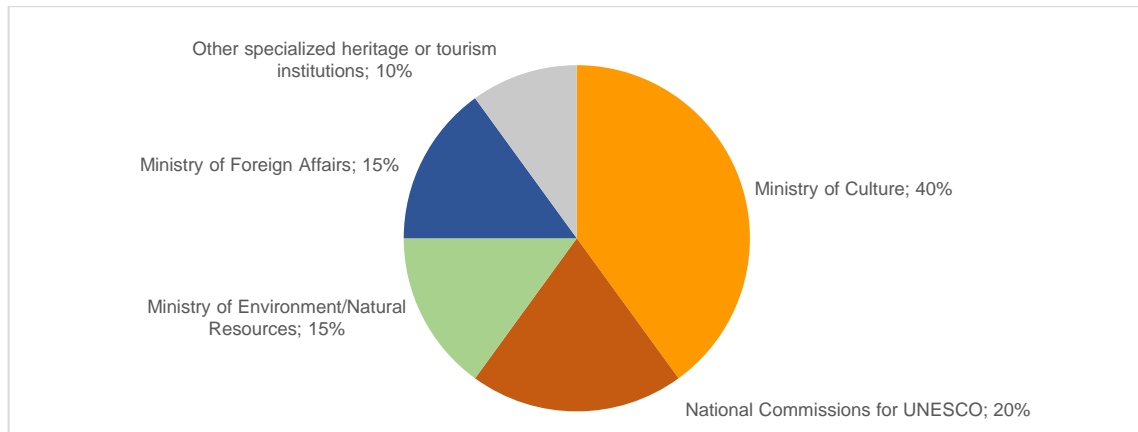


Figure 1: Distribution of the primary institutions responsible for communicating with UNESCO with regards to the World Heritage Convention at national level.

This distribution highlights the central role of culture ministries and UNESCO national commissions in managing and coordinating World Heritage activities. Conversely, site managers of natural World Heritage sites designated by States Parties at the beginning of the cycle mostly work under the Ministries of Culture and Environment, accounting for 15% of the site managers globally.

Relevance and objectives of Periodic Reporting

38. The Periodic Reporting process has significantly improved the understanding of various aspects related to World Heritage across different regions. Globally, the understanding of the *World Heritage Convention* is at 69%, with the concept of Outstanding Universal Value slightly higher at 73%. The understanding of the property's Outstanding Universal Value is 76%, the concept of integrity and/or authenticity is 67%, and the property's integrity and/or authenticity is 69%. Management effectiveness to maintain the Outstanding Universal Value is rated at 87%, and monitoring and reporting at 89%.
39. Regionally, Africa has reported the highest levels of understanding, with results consistently above 90% in all categories, peaking at 98% for the concept of Outstanding Universal Value. The regions of Arab States and Asia and the Pacific also have high levels of understanding, with most categories marking above 85%. A rational explanation of this score is that these two regions have benefitted more from in-person capacity-building training than the rest of the regions. Europe and North America present lower scores, particularly 54% for the World Heritage Convention and 51% for the concept of Integrity and/or Authenticity. These disparities indicate the necessity for targeted interventions to enhance understanding in regions with lower scores, ensuring a more consistent global comprehension of these key concepts, which shall be addressed during the reflection period following the Third Cycle.

Table 7: Has the Periodic Reporting process improved the understanding of the various aspects of World Heritage.

Has the Periodic Reporting process improved the understanding of:	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Latin America and the Caribbean	Europe and North America	Global
The World Heritage Convention	94%	88%	86%	70%	54%	69%
The concept of Outstanding Universal Value	98%	87%	88%	76%	58%	73%
The property's Outstanding Universal Value	94%	83%	91%	77%	65%	76%
The concept of Integrity and/or Authenticity	95%	72%	87%	69%	51%	67%
The property's Integrity and/or Authenticity	91%	72%	86%	71%	56%	69%
Management effectiveness to maintain the Outstanding Universal Value	97%	85%	93%	91%	81%	87%
Monitoring and reporting	97%	89%	95%	84%	87%	89%

40. The global analysis of the ratings provided by respondents on how well the current questionnaire addresses the four objectives of Periodic Reporting reveals a generally positive reception, though with notable variations across regions. Overall, 65% of respondents felt that the questionnaire adequately provides an assessment of the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention*, while 57% believed it sufficiently assesses whether the OUV is being maintained and provides updated information about World Heritage properties. However, only 47% felt that it adequately provides a mechanism for regional cooperation, with 37% rating this objective as only partially addressed, and 16% feeling it was not addressed at all.

Table 8: How well does the current questionnaire address each of the four Objectives of Periodic Reporting?

Rating./Objectives→	Provide an assessment of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention	Provide an assessment as to whether the OUV is being maintained	Provide updated information about World Heritage properties	Provide a mechanism for regional cooperation
Not at all	7%	10%	10%	16%

Partially	28%	33%	33%	37%
Adequately	65%	57%	57%	47%

Regionally, Europe and North America reported the highest levels of satisfaction, with a significant majority rating the questionnaire as adequate across all objectives, particularly in providing updated information and maintaining OUV. In contrast, Latin America and the Caribbean showed the least satisfaction, particularly in the areas of regional cooperation and providing updated information, where a notable portion rated these aspects as only partially or not at all addressed. Africa and the Arab States also reflected concerns, particularly regarding regional cooperation, with 23% and 20% respectively rating this objective as not at all addressed.

Use of data

41. The ways in which States Parties plan to use the data from the periodic reports reveal diverse priorities across different regions. Globally, the most common use of data is for improving site management (93%), followed by revising management plans (91%) and raising awareness (86%). Updating existing data is also significant (79%), whereas fundraising is less frequently prioritised (43%). Regional differences are notable. In Africa, there is a high emphasis on improving site management and raising awareness, with a substantial focus on updating existing data and advocacy. Fundraising is also a priority in Africa, higher than in other regions. The Arab States show the highest priority for raising awareness (100%), for improving the implementation of the *Convention* (98%) and for revising management plans (79%), alongside a strong focus on improving site management and advocacy. Fundraising is similar to the global average. Europe and North America display a unique trend with a markedly lower emphasis on fundraising compared to other regions. Instead, these regions focus more on improving site management and revising management plans, with a balanced approach to raising awareness and updating existing data. Latin America and the Caribbean also shows a strong emphasis on improving site management and revising management plans, along with significant attention to raising awareness and reporting to national authorities. However, fundraising is the least prioritised in this region. Overall, while improving site management and revising management plans are universally high priorities, regions differ in their focus on fundraising and advocacy, reflecting their unique challenges and strategic objectives in managing World Heritage sites.

Table 9: How does your State Party plan to use the data?

Use of Periodic Reporting	Africa	Arab States	Asia and the Pacific	Latin America and the Caribbean	Europe and North America	Global
Revise priorities/strategies/policies for the protection, management and conservation of heritage	87%	95%	93%	94%	88%	91%
Update management plans	85%	79%	81%	67%	80%	79%
Fundraising	74%	42%	64%	24%	12%	44%
Awareness raising	91%	100%	86%	85%	76%	86%
Advocacy	70%	58%	76%	45%	37%	57%
Report for other conventions/conservation mechanisms	76%	37%	67%	52%	41%	57%
Report on implementation of Sustainable Development Goals	72%	63%	71%	70%	41%	62%

Improve the States Party implementation on the <i>Convention</i>	98%	89%	95%	97%	84%	93%
Other	15%	5%	7%	3%	4%	7%

42. States Parties also highlight in the comments sections, the importance for UNESCO to facilitate access to their own data for national statistics. Respondents generally argued that improving the online tool should provide seamless access to both historical and current data. This enhancement would not only streamline data management but also help align national and international reporting standards, thereby fostering more effective heritage management and policymaking at the national level.

Timing and resources

43. The data on the average number of hours worked and people involved in gathering data, consulting stakeholders, and filling in the questionnaire reveal notable regional variations. Globally, respondents reported spending an average of 132 hours on data gathering, 61 hours consulting stakeholders, and 77 hours filling in the questionnaire, with an average involvement of seven people for data gathering, ten for consulting stakeholders, and six for filling in the questionnaire. Africa's figures are higher in stakeholder consultation and questionnaire completion, reflecting significant time engagement efforts, with 84 and 119 hours respectively and a notable involvement of 15 people in the latter. The Arab States report lower averages, with 102 hours for data gathering, 39 for consultation, and 40 for filling in the questionnaire, involving fewer people, particularly in the questionnaire phase. Asia and the Pacific stand out with the highest reported times: 264 hours for data gathering, 110 for consultation, and 117 for filling in the questionnaire. This can be attributed to additional challenges such as the need for translation of tools and guidelines and the implementation of the exercise during the COVID-19 pandemic. Latin America and the Caribbean report the least time spent, with 71 hours on data gathering and 56 on the questionnaire, involving fewer people. Europe and North America show moderate engagement, with 86 hours for data gathering, 43 for consultation, and 53 for the questionnaire, with a consistent involvement of six people in both data gathering and stakeholder consultation.

Table 10: Please estimate the time (working hours) and the number of people involved in completing Section I of the questionnaire.

Region	Average number of hours worked			Average number of people involved		
	Gathering data	Consulting stakeholders	Filling in the questionnaire	Gathering data	Consulting stakeholders	Filling in the questionnaire
Global	132	61	77	7	10	6
Arab States	102	39	40	7	6	2
Africa	136	84	119	10	13	15
Asia and the Pacific	264	110	117	8	19	5
Latin America and the Caribbean	71	28	56	4	5	3
Europe and North America	86	43	53	6	6	3

44. Responses from national focal points and World Heritage site managers regarding the adequacy of time provided for gathering information and completing the Periodic Reporting questionnaire reveals that 77% found the time sufficient, while 23% felt it was inadequate. This overall positive feedback indicates that the timeline is generally

well-received. However, notable regional variations exist. Europe and North America and Asia and the Pacific reported the highest satisfaction, with 92% and 74% respectively of respondents indicating adequate time. Conversely, Latin America and the Caribbean exhibited the highest dissatisfaction, with 45% of respondents stating the time was insufficient, followed by Africa with 31%. One possible explanation for the higher dissatisfaction rates in Latin America and Africa is the relatively higher turnover of national focal points and site managers designated to complete the questionnaire during this reporting phase. This turnover likely disrupted the continuity of the reporting process. Consequently, the frequent changes in the respondents responsible for completing the questionnaire necessitated additional individual capacity-building training, which may not have been adequately accounted for within the given timeline.

Table 11: Were you given adequate time (i.e. roughly ten months) to gather necessary information and to fill in the questionnaire during this cycle of Periodic Reporting?

Region	No	Yes
Global	23%	77%
Arab States	29%	71%
Africa	31%	69%
Asia and the Pacific	26%	74%
Europe and North America	8%	92%
Latin America and the Caribbean	45%	55%

45. Regarding resources mobilisation for the implementation of Periodic Reporting, 73 out of 190 national authorities globally (38%) reported mobilising additional human resources, while 47 (24%) organised consultations. This indicates that overall, the resources were mobilised at a lower percentage. The data also reveals significant regional disparities in resource mobilisation efforts. In the Arab States, 6 out of 18 authorities (33%) both mobilised additional human resources and organised consultations, reflecting a balanced yet moderate level of engagement. Africa demonstrated a higher commitment, with 22 out of 46 authorities (48%) mobilising additional human resources and 14 out of 46 (30%) organising consultations, highlighting a strong effort to support the reporting process. Asia and the Pacific showed the highest level of resource mobilisation, with 21 out of 42 authorities (50%) both mobilising additional human resources and organising consultations, likely influenced by the challenges of translating tools and guidance, coupled with the impacts of COVID-19. Additionally, the region spans approximately 11 time zones, which complicated communication between national focal points with World Heritage Centre, and Advisory Bodies on specific subject. Europe and North America had a lower engagement, with 14 out of 51 authorities (27%) both mobilising additional human resources and organising consultations, suggesting a more streamlined approach or perhaps fewer challenges requiring additional resources. Latin America and the Caribbean reported that 10 out of 33 authorities (30%) both mobilised additional human resources and organised consultations, reflecting a balanced approach but with room for increased support to enhance the reporting process. The variations across regions underscore the diverse challenges and capacities of different States Parties in mobilising resources for effective Periodic Reporting.

Table 12: Did your national authorities mobilise any additional resources to carry out this cycle of Periodic Reporting?

Region	Human resources	Financial resources for organizing consultation meetings/training
--------	-----------------	---

Global	38%	24%
Arab States	33%	16%
Africa	48%	30%
Asia and the Pacific	50%	38%
Europe and North America	27%	21%
Latin America and the Caribbean	30%	6%

Gender balance

46. Site managers and national focal points reported varying levels of gender balance integration across different regions. Globally, 35% of respondents (site managers and national focal points combined) explicitly considered gender balance and have effectively implemented it during the completion of their respective reports. This percentage is higher at World Heritage property level (42%) than at national level level (28%), while 39% explicitly considered gender balance when filling out the questionnaire. An average of 14% of respondents reported that while gender balance had been explicitly considered in the process, there are still deficiencies in the implementation.

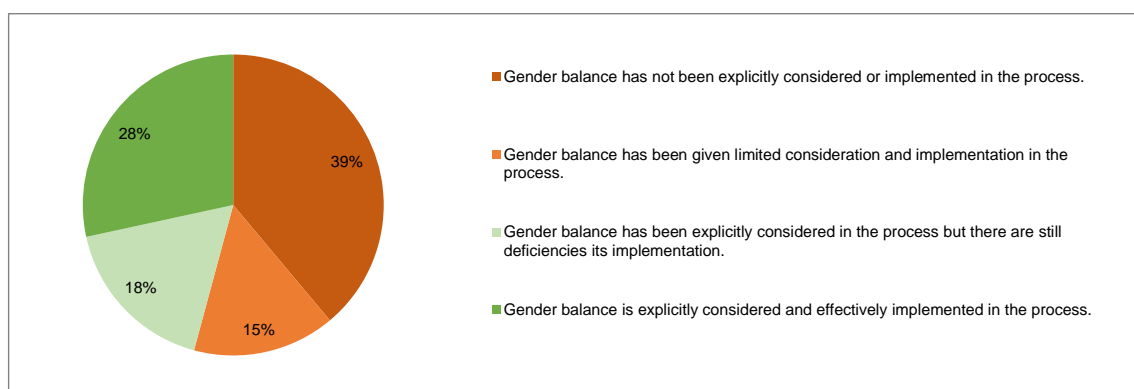


Figure 2: Has a gender balanced contribution and participation been considered in the filling out of this questionnaire Section I at national level?

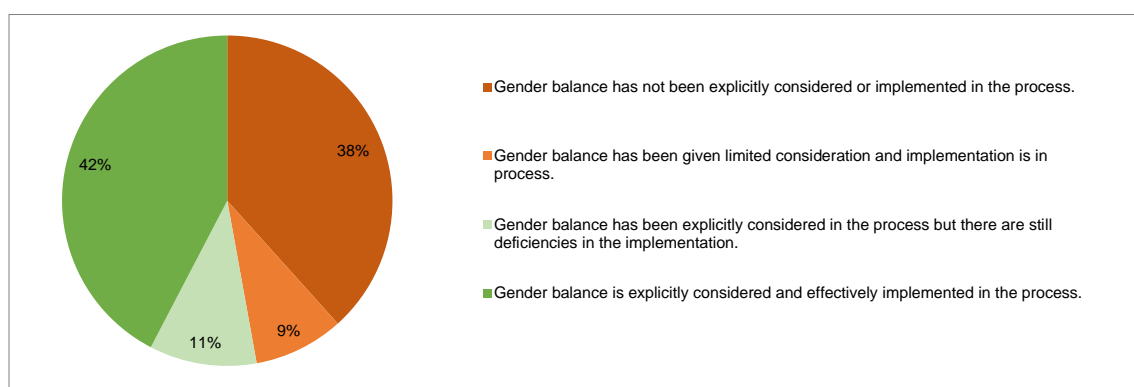


Figure 3: Has a gender balanced contribution and participation been considered in the filling out of this questionnaire Section II at World Heritage property level?

47. At a regional level, Asia and the Pacific lead in explicitly considering gender balance, with 54% of respondents indicating this practice, followed by Europe and North

America at 40%. Conversely, the Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean show low levels of explicit consideration, with 25% and 27%, respectively. In Africa, 36% of respondents did not explicitly consider gender balance, while 23% gave it limited consideration. The Arab States reported 40% not explicitly considering gender balance, with 13% giving it limited consideration. In Asia and the Pacific, 19% did not explicitly consider gender balance, and 9% gave it limited consideration. Europe and North America had the highest percentage of respondents (50%) not explicitly considering gender balance, but only 8% gave it limited consideration. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 46% did not explicitly consider gender balance, while 15% gave it limited consideration.

These results also suggested that while some regions, particularly Asia and the Pacific, have made significant strides in integrating gender balance, other regions may need further emphasis on this aspect to ensure a more balanced and inclusive approach in the reporting process.

Format and content of the Periodic Reports

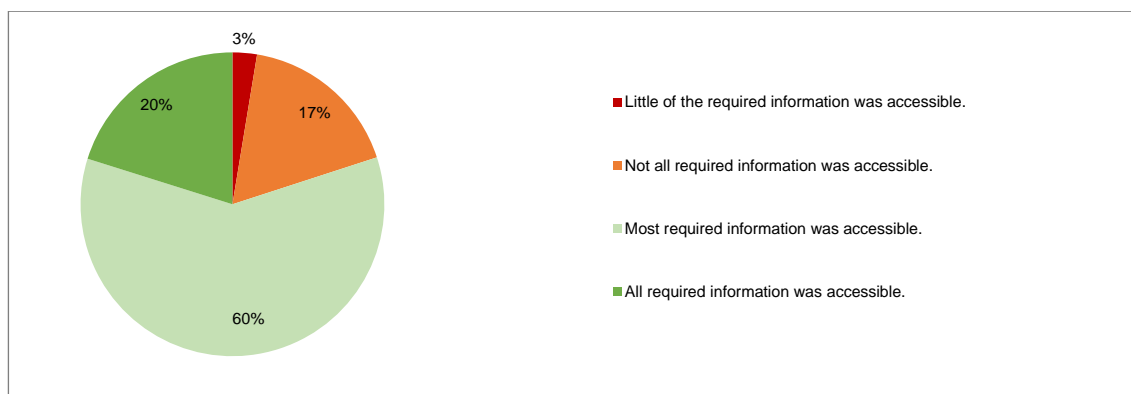


Figure 4: How accessible was the information required to complete the Third Cycle Periodic Reporting questionnaire?

48. This analysis indicates the accessibility of the information required to complete the questionnaire. A significant majority, 60% of national focal points and World Heritage site managers, indicated that most of the required information was accessible. Additionally, 20% reported that all required information was accessible, reflecting a generally very positive experience in obtaining the necessary data. However, 17% faced challenges, stating that not all required information was accessible, and during the exercise, several difficulties were reported to the World Heritage Centre, notably the accessibility to internet connection. Additionally, some data was not readily accessible to the national focal points, such as percentages on expenditure for conservation. A smaller portion, 3%, found that little of the required information was accessible. Overall, the majority of participants reported that the data required for the completion of the questionnaire helped them gain a better understanding of the state of conservation of properties and provided insight into specific management needs.
49. National focal points and World Heritage site managers rated the clarity of the questions at a low median of 2.8, indicating that, on average, respondents found the questions closer to "Easy" but with some experiencing difficulty. The ease of use of the questionnaire received a higher median rating of 3.2. Overall feedback underscores the importance of making the questions clearer to improve the overall user experience further. Some respondents indicated that the questionnaire was too long and that some questions were redundant. Some questions were formulated in such a way that they did not always provide as much useful data as expected. Furthermore, some respondents who also report to other UNESCO Culture Conventions noted the feeling

that similar questions appeared across different reporting exercises, leading to redundancy and reporting fatigue in providing similar answers.

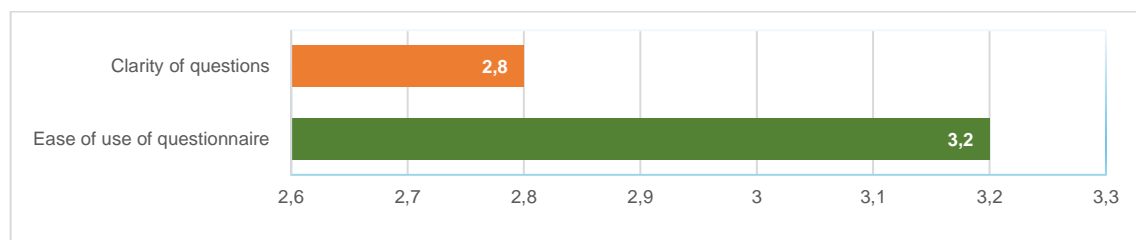


Figure 5: Was the questionnaire easy to use and clear to understand? 1= Very difficult, 2=Difficult, 3= Easy, 4= Very easy.

Capacity-building

50. In terms of training and guidance for completing this questionnaire, the Secretariat received the highest average rating of 3.6 out of 4, indicating that respondents found the support from this entity to be close to "Good." This high rating can be attributed to the close working relationship between the Secretariat and national focal points on a daily basis, ensuring consistent and accessible support. During the overall cycle, a dedicated coordinator was available to provide national focal points and World Heritage site managers targeted technical support and assistance in the completion of the questionnaire, contributing to the high rating. Additionally, the work of the national commissions for UNESCO was considered supportive in providing required information. Many States Parties have reported organising national workshops in the preparation of the report.

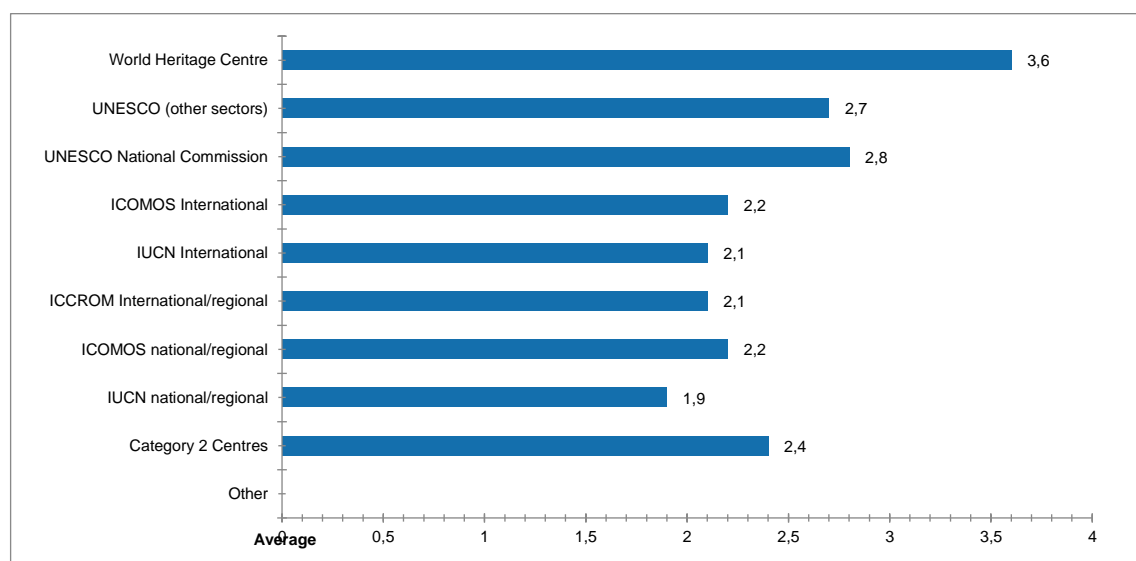


Figure 6: How accessible was the information required to complete this questionnaire? Rating from 0 = Not applicable, 1= None, 2 = Poor, 3 = Fair, 4=Good.

When asked whether the online training resources provided for Periodic Reporting were adequate for completing the online questionnaire, the responses varied between national focal points and site managers. Among national focal points, a substantial majority of 84% indicated that the resources were indeed adequate, while 16% felt they were not. In contrast, among site managers, 66% found the resources adequate, 9% did not find them adequate, and 25% marked the question as not applicable, indicating that these resources were not utilised for completing the questionnaire. These results suggest that while the training resources are largely effective, there is a notable

percentage of site managers who either did not find the resources adequate or did not use them at all, highlighting an area for potential improvement in resource dissemination and training engagement for the next reporting cycle. In comments, many reported that this was due to poor internet connectivity and would welcome these tools being made available in hardcopies. Additionally, many respondents noted that while the tools and guidance provided valuable information, they were often too generic and lacked specific guidance on certain aspects of the questionnaire, such as rating factors impacting the property. These comments were mainly reported by respondents in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, who explicitly commended the training resources but suggested including more practical examples and detailed explanations tailored to their regional contexts.

B. Involvement and workload of stakeholders concerned during the Third Cycle

The Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting required a significant effort from all stakeholders involved, necessitating human and financial resources to cover all relevant aspects of the process. The summary provided below focuses solely on the workload associated directly with the completion and the submission of the questionnaires, excluding the efforts related to other statutory processes like the Retrospective Inventory and the development, processing, and adoption of retrospective Statements of Outstanding Universal Value.

Secretariat, UNESCO field offices and Advisory Bodies

51. To support the smooth running of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting exercise throughout the regions, a holistic approach was adopted by the World Heritage Centre, with the involvement of Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee, and Category 2 Centres where appropriate:
- Coordinated the collection and update of records of the designated national focal points and site managers responsible for the completion of the Periodic Reporting questionnaires;
 - Pre-filled the Section I questionnaires for all States Parties of the Convention at the time of launch for each respective region as well as Section II questionnaires for all World Heritage properties with the available statutory information, prior to releasing those questionnaires to the national focal points and site managers for validation or update of these existing data;
 - Prepared training materials: a handbook for site managers (translated in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian), a list of key terms, Frequently Asked Questions, 2 video tutorials (translated in Arabic, Chinese, English, French and Spanish), 11 training modules (fundamentals of Periodic Reporting, the online questionnaire, synergies with other conventions and programmes, OUV, reactive monitoring, boundary clarifications and modifications, sustainable development, disaster risk reduction, tourism, youth and education). These above-mentioned training materials were available on the Third Cycle's platform: whc.unesco.org/en/prcycle3/;
 - Provided help-desk support throughout the exercise to national focal points and site managers. These included: providing advice and support on all technical issues and questions of content;
 - Co-organised with host countries 8 training workshops dedicated to Periodic Reporting and organised numerous side-events during statutory meetings. In most cases, these meetings served as capacity-building events as they also provided an

opportunity to address World Heritage matters beyond the strict scope of the Periodic Reporting exercise. For the region of Asia and the Pacific, 16 online capacity-training sessions were held due to the exercise being carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic;

- In a number of regions, engaging World Heritage experts in the capacity of mentors/advisors provided support and advice to stakeholders in the region;
 - Analysed a total of 191 Section I questionnaires and 1,143 Section II questionnaires, contracting external World Heritage experts, statisticians, and assistants for the preparation of the regional reports;
 - Initiated and organised consultation workshops with States Parties in each respective region for the preparation of regional action plans: 2 in the Arab States, 8 in Africa, 3 in Asia and the Pacific, 2 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 1 in Europe and North America;
 - Processed, for some regions, the so-called ‘post-filling’, a largely manual process, which includes processing an enormous amount of statutory information (such as legislation and management plans) that should be updated as a follow-up to the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting through the related statutory procedures;
 - Resolved technical issues encountered during the exercise such as questionnaire access, temporary unavailability of the questionnaires, completeness indications, and correct response displays. Feedback collected from the respondents enabled improvements to the web-based questionnaire from an IT perspective. IT support was provided consistently throughout the reporting cycle in all regions. Additionally, the system was consistently maintained and developed to enhance user experience, resolve technical issues promptly, adapt to changing requirements, improve reliability and stability, integrate user feedback, enhance security, optimise performance, support new technologies, ensure scalability and flexibility, and comply with current standards and regulations.
52. Overall, the lessons learnt from the Third Cycle with regard to the involvement and workload of the Secretariat show that the workload associated with Periodic Reporting and following up on the implementation of the regional Action Plans, while lighter in comparison to the Second Cycle, is still a heavy exercise, especially with the current financial and human resources, and not sustainable.

Depending on the size of the region and number of World Heritage properties, a full- or part-time, member of the regional Unit at the Secretariat was always tasked, with the follow-up of the Periodic Reporting exercise and often required the assistance of other staff in the Units, part-time consultants and other temporary staff. Unless additional or extra-budgetary funding is provided specifically for the purposes of Periodic Reporting, the Secretariat will not be able to conduct the exercise in the same manner during future cycles and provide the same level of service and assistance to the States Parties.

States Parties

53. Each State Party undertook the Periodic Reporting exercise in its unique manner. Feedback revealed that this process typically involved:
- Designating national focal point(s) and site manager(s) responsible for completing the questionnaire;
 - Conducting online and/or in-person training national workshops for national site managers, stakeholders on the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting;
 - Completing the questionnaires, which ranged from 1 to 50 per State Party;

- Providing ongoing technical assistance by national focal points, addressing queries from site managers directly or in coordination with the World Heritage Centre;
 - Translating the questionnaire into the national language, where necessary, to ensure that all site managers fully understood the English/French version of the online questionnaire;
 - Coordinating with the World Heritage Centre regarding the content and technical aspects of the questionnaire and feedback;
 - In several States Parties, implementing follow-up activities at the national level in alignment with their own visions and priorities.
54. Overall, the Periodic Reporting exercise was both resource- and time-intensive for the States Parties, national focal points, and site managers, underscoring the importance of adequate resourcing and early planning. It is noteworthy, however, that many States Parties reported a lack of clear objectives and strategies for utilising Periodic Reporting data and outcomes at the national level. Reflecting on this aspect and sharing best practices in the future could be advantageous.

C. Recommendations formulated by States Parties for the improvement of the Periodic Reporting process

55. The general considerations presented below, represent a non-exhaustive summary of the narrative feedback received from different stakeholders in all regions regarding issues they consider important to be addressed. The feedback was collected and structured by the Secretariat and supplemented on the basis of statutory needs and requirements, as well as the Secretariat's own experience and reflections.
56. **Simplifying the questionnaire:** A significant number of respondents (approximately 65%) commented on the need to simplify the questionnaire. Both site managers and national focal points find the current complexity and length to be major challenges, often leading to confusion and incomplete responses. Simplifying the questions, avoiding redundancy, and providing clearer instructions would help respondents provide more accurate and relevant information. Additionally, both groups suggest including more specific, issue-oriented questions and allowing for free-text options to capture nuanced responses. Site managers particularly highlight the need for better integration of previous cycle responses to guide new focal points and ensure consistency, while national focal points emphasise the necessity of clearer guidance within the questionnaire to avoid misinterpretation.
57. **Consideration for specific questionnaires for transboundary and serial properties:** Nearly all World Heritage site managers responsible for the completion of the questionnaire for transboundary and serial properties found the online reporting form to be inadequate, although the Third Cycle questionnaire was improved in comparison with that of the Second Cycle. Nearly all reported that issues specific to these types of properties were not given sufficient scope and could therefore not be reported appropriately. Additionally, site managers and focal points reported that it was sometimes difficult to provide one single answer to questions, when important differences exist between components of a property. Elements such as factors affecting the property, financial and human resources, priority management needs, etc. can differ significantly from one component to another, and giving one single answer (e.g. an "average" between two or more States Parties) does not accurately reflect the situation. In addition, this cycle included transregional properties, such as The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern

Movement encompassing three regions in seven States Parties, making the reporting of the factors affecting the property with a single answer for each factor challenging.

58. **Capacity-building and support needs:** Capacity-building and support are consistently highlighted as essential by national focal points and site managers. They commended the frequent training sessions, workshops, and technical assistance from UNESCO to improve understanding and execution of the reporting process. Financial and technical support for some States Parties was considered crucial, with many respondents requesting funding to facilitate the process, including better support for organising national and regional meetings (e.g., access to facilities provided by UNESCO national and field offices to complete the questionnaires while also liaise with UNESCO on issues requiring clarifications). Site managers emphasised the need for offline and manual options for filling out the questionnaire, whereas national focal points suggested providing pre-filled questionnaires based on previous cycles to guide new focal points and ensure continuity in reporting.

Specific requests formulated by site managers to the attention of UNESCO and to their governments include financial and technical support to facilitate the reporting process, frequent training sessions, national and sub-regional workshops, targeted technical assistance, and translations of the questionnaire into national and local languages.

To enhance the reporting process further, respondents emphasised the need for more frequent and early training sessions and workshops. Providing examples and case studies to guide respondents, ensuring they understand the intent and requirements of each question, is recommended. Implementing feedback mechanisms for continuous reporting of issues and suggestions for improvements, along with more detailed guidance documents, will aid significantly in the reporting process.

59. **Specific questionnaire for cultural and natural properties:** The need for a more integrated approach that considers the unique aspects of cultural and natural heritage is another recurring theme. Several respondents proposed separate questionnaires for cultural and natural heritage to address the specificities of each type more effectively. Better coordination and synergy at national levels are also recommended, including joint training for site managers and focal points from both sectors to foster a more cohesive implementation strategy. Improving the questionnaire's user interface to allow easier navigation between sections and accommodating detailed responses for complex, serial, or transnational properties were also suggested. Site managers particularly proposed enhancements to the user interface, while national focal points emphasised the need to accommodate detailed responses for complex properties.
60. **Redundancy and overlap of questions:** Both site managers and national focal points have raised concerns about the redundancy and overlap of questions within the questionnaire. They observed that certain questions appeared repetitive, which not only made the process more cumbersome but also increased the time required to complete the questionnaire. Specifically, about 30% of respondents encountered similar questions multiple times. Additionally, some national focal points, who also serve as focal points for other UNESCO Culture Conventions, noted significant overlaps in the questions across different periodic reporting mechanisms. Approximately 25% of national focal points highlighted these overlaps, indicating that the similarities in questions among various UNESCO reporting systems created unnecessary duplication of effort. They suggest that UNESCO streamline these questions to avoid multiple responses for each convention's reporting requirements. To address these issues, it is recommended that the questionnaire undergo a thorough review to eliminate redundancies and ensure that each question is distinct and

necessary. This will streamline the reporting process, making it more efficient and less burdensome for respondents, while facilitate coherent and integrated reporting across UNESCO's Culture Conventions and Programmes.

61. **Language and accessibility issues:** Language and accessibility were also concerns. Throughout the cycle, a significant number of national focal points and World Heritage site managers reported to the Secretariat that some questions are too complex both in terms of understanding and comprehension, notably for non-native English and French speakers. Both groups stressed the importance of translating the questionnaire into more languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish, and Russian, to ensure broader accessibility and accurate responses. Providing an offline questionnaire in multiple languages as a reference and support document would be a significant step towards inclusivity. Additionally, respondents commended the offline tools and guidance provided during the cycle, which was valuable for filling out the questionnaire in regions with poor internet connectivity. Site managers specifically appreciated the system's ability to download the questionnaire offline and then upload the responses, while national focal points suggested providing more detailed glossaries (key terms) and clearer guidance within the questionnaire to help respondents from diverse linguistic backgrounds.
62. **Improvement of the online tool:** Respondents commented on the efficiency of the online reporting tool. While the tool was generally appreciated for its convenience, notably its user-friendliness in terms of readability and responsivity, minor technical improvements to the online reporting system are recommended by respondents from both groups. Site managers and national focal points alike suggest providing better integration of previous cycle responses to guide new users. Additionally, 50% of respondents advocated for the development of more detailed guidance documents, including FAQs, glossaries, and step-by-step instructions to assist in the reporting process.
63. **Use of data:** Several national focal points commented that the exercise enabled them to engage thoroughly in gathering a trove of information. They also suggested that Periodic Reporting should facilitate the collection of data over time, allowing States Parties to analyse their own data and access their information as needed. To enhance the utility of this data, UNESCO should develop tools and platforms that enable its effective use at both national and site levels. This would integrate the data into national heritage management systems, align it with broader policy goals, and leverage it for resource allocation and stakeholder engagement. Such an approach would not only improve site management and conservation efforts but also support informed decision-making, policy development, and international cooperation, thereby maximising the benefits of the Periodic Reporting process for States Parties.
64. **Reducing the gap between reporting cycles:** Respondents, notably site managers with 60% advocating for more frequent reporting cycles, such as every 3-4 years. Since the implementation of the Periodic Reporting mechanism in 1998, States Parties have been invited to report only three times over 26 years, resulting in an average of 8.6 years between cycles, with a reporting gap of 10 years between the Second and Third Cycles. Respondents suggested that the time lapse between reporting cycles should be reduced. Comments focused on the rapid changes occurring worldwide, emphasising the need for closer monitoring and timely reporting on its consequent impacts. These comments highlight the pressing need to address urgent impacts, such as those resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, regional conflicts, and new policies adopted in the framework of World Heritage.

III. LAUNCH OF THE REFLECTION PERIOD (2024-2025)

65. The feedback received throughout the Third Cycle clearly confirms the pertinence and usefulness of the Periodic Reporting exercise for all World Heritage stakeholders. The assessment highlights the need for further improvement and revision of the process itself. Areas for enhancement include the relevance of the questions – especially redundancies and overlaps – the use of data, and the enhancement of tools to further facilitate the reporting mechanism. These aspects should be explored to enhance the process while taking current constraints, such as financial limitations, into account. The periodicity and format of the Periodic Reporting questionnaire needs to be reviewed, streamlined, and adjusted to reflect new realities, particularly considering new policies adopted during the period of 2017-2024, which have not been included in the current Periodic Reporting questionnaire.
66. In this regard, the Committee may wish to consider initiating a 1-year Reflection Period from July 2024 to June 2025. This reflection period mechanism is now well established and has proven effective since its initiation with the first Periodic Reporting cycle in 1998. Significant groundwork laid during the Second and Third Cycles, including data collection and feedback mechanisms, allows for an efficient and focused reflection period. This maturity in the process enables a streamlined approach to address evolving needs and challenges in a timely manner.
67. The Reflection Period will be used to address the recommendations formulated by States Parties during the Third Cycle to improve the Periodic Reporting process. This will involve considering the assessment of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting, the Monitoring Indicators, and other elements such as policy developments. Supplementary consultations, notably through survey and/or meetings, where required, with States Parties and key stakeholders would be sought during the Reflection Period.
68. In this regard, the Secretariat shall prepare a comprehensive report of the overall outcomes of the reflection period for examination by the Committee during its 47th session including, but not limited to, the following key recommendations on Periodic Reporting:
 - a) **Revision of the format of the Periodic Reporting questionnaire:** As an established practice during the reflection period, a thorough revision of the Periodic Reporting questionnaire will be initiated. This revision will incorporate feedback from the Third Cycle and insights gained from the feasibility study, aiming to simplify the questionnaire and enhance its usability. The proposed changes would address concerns regarding the clarity and volume of questions, making the questionnaire more user-friendly for site managers and States Parties. Simplifying the Periodic Reporting questionnaire is essential to improving the efficiency of data collection and easing the reporting burden on site managers and States Parties. Feedback has indicated that the current complexity and high number of questions pose significant challenges. By reducing the number of questions and enhancing their clarity, the questionnaire could be made more accessible and user-friendly, thereby improving the quality of the data collected. The revised format would be presented for adoption at the 47th session of the Committee, ensuring alignment with current needs and practices.
 - b) **Enhancement of the online tool:** The Reflection Period will also address the technical issues encountered by the users during the Third Cycle. While the

online tool has been consistently developed, maintained and updated, the Reflection Period will be an opportunity to further enhance it and to consider how it can be further improved to enhance synergies with other online tools of other Culture Conventions and Programmes to optimise the reporting process notably by facilitating reporting and analysis across the Sector. Efforts will continue to ensure that the Periodic Reporting platform remains current and adaptable to technological advancements and user needs.

- c) **Development of a capacity-building programme:** A programme will be designed based on the feedback and recommendations formulated by States Parties as part of the assessment and the results of the feasibility study. The capacity-building tools and guidance developed during the Third Cycle will also be reviewed and enhanced. The objective is to support stakeholders in adapting to the revised reporting process and to enhance their capacity to effectively participate in the Periodic Reporting framework. A detailed proposal for the capacity-building programme will be developed to ensure that all stakeholders are well-prepared for the next reporting cycle.
- d) **Feasibility of the practical modalities of Periodic Reporting of the 1972 Convention:** The feasibility study will also assess the periodicity of the reporting cycle and the potential for transitioning from the current regional approach to a unified global framework as requested by Decision **45 COM 10E**, including the practicability of enhancing the periodicity of reporting cycles and establishing a common timeline of 2026 to 2029 for all regions, with a proposed global submission deadline in 2027. It will also examine the benefits of reporting simultaneously across all regions to allow for the comparison of data from the same year.
- e) **Considerations of recent policies in relation to Periodic Reporting:** The MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration unanimously adopted with the participation of 150 States in September 2022 called for culture to be integrated as a stand-alone goal in the post-2030 development agenda. It also called on UNESCO to produce a Global Report on Cultural Policies, on a quadrennial basis, building on information and data provided by its Member States, notably in the framework of the periodic reports of its normative instruments in the field of culture, as well as related programmes. This ambitious undertaking aims to provide a snapshot of all cultural domains, and in particular of the state of implementation by all States Parties and Member States of UNESCO's Culture Conventions and Recommendations, starting with the first edition of the Global Report on Cultural Policies in 2025, to be followed by the second edition in 2029, and every four years thereafter.

The UNESCO Internal Oversight Service (IOS) conducted [an evaluation](#) to generate findings and recommendations on the effectiveness and efficiency of the periodic reporting mechanisms of UNESCO's Culture Conventions and Recommendations. The evaluation notably highlighted that the reporting mechanisms' formats, cycles, and platforms differ significantly among these normative instruments, each one having been developed independently and at different points in time. By [Decision 219EX/13](#), the Executive Board invited the Director-General to enable, in full respect of the bodies of the Conventions concerned, adequate follow-up to all the recommendations contained in document 219EX/13 and to implement the actions indicated in the corresponding management response.

Therefore, in line with Decision 219 EX/13, during the Reflection Period, the feasibility study will explore the possibility of ensuring coherence across all reporting mechanisms, with the aim of facilitating a coherent analysis of global heritage trends and challenges, with a view to enhancing the overall utility of the reporting data, notably by considering the possibility of aligning the 1972 Periodic Reporting mechanism towards a single global submission process, including in preparation for the UNESCO Global Reports on Cultural Policies.

69. During the Reflection Period, States Parties may be invited to host Periodic Reporting reflection meetings, with the participation of representatives from all regions, Advisory Bodies, the Secretariat of the 1972 Convention, UNESCO field offices, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Category 2 Centres, and experts involved in the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting. These stakeholders will collaborate to enhance the reporting framework based on comprehensive feedback.

DRAFT DECISION

Draft Decision: 46 COM 10C

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC/24/46.COM/10C,*
2. *Recalling Decisions **41 COM 10A**, **42 COM 10A**, **43 COM10B**, **44 COM 10D**, and **45 COM 10E**, adopted respectively at its 41st (Krakow, 2017), 42nd (Manama, 2018), 43rd (Baku, 2019), extended 44th (Fuzhou/Online, 2021), and extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023) sessions;*
3. *Also recalling the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration, the 2024 IOS Evaluation of UNESCO's periodic reporting on the Culture Sector's Conventions and Recommendations, and the Decision 219 EX/13 of the Executive Board of UNESCO;*
4. *Commends the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention for actively participating in and completing the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting and notes with satisfaction the high rate of global submission of the periodic reports at both the national and World Heritage property levels;*
5. *Welcomes with satisfaction the successful implementation of the overall process of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting and takes note of the feedback and recommendations formulated by the States Parties for the improvement of the Periodic Reporting of the Convention;*
6. *Decides to launch a one-year Periodic Reporting Reflection Period from July 2024 to June 2025 and requests the Secretariat to prepare a comprehensive report based on the overall outcomes of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting and to present to the Committee a proposal for the revised format of the Periodic Reporting questionnaire for the Fourth Cycle, as well as proposals for improving the process, relevance, analysis, and use of data for its examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 47th session;*

7. Further requests the Secretariat to prepare a feasibility study to consider the practical modalities of enhancing the Periodic Reporting of the Convention including transitioning from a regional approach to Periodic Reporting to a global approach and the practicality of reducing reporting cycles and establishing a common reporting deadline for all regions, for examination at its 47th session;
8. Taking into consideration the IOS evaluation and in respect of Decision 219 EX/13, requests the Secretariat to also explore, within the above-mentioned feasibility study, the possibility of ensuring coherence between the 1972 Periodic Reporting mechanism and the reporting mechanisms of other Culture Conventions, with the aim of facilitating a coherent analysis of global heritage trends and challenges, enhance the overall utility of the reporting data, notably by considering aligning the 1972 Periodic Reporting mechanism towards a single global submission process, including in preparation for the UNESCO Global Reports on Cultural Policies;
9. Calls upon States Parties and other World Heritage stakeholders to provide extra-budgetary resources to ensure proper reflection, including through hosting Periodic Reporting reflection meetings with the participation of representatives of States Parties from all regions, Advisory Bodies, the Secretariat, UNESCO offices, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Category 2 Centres, as well as experts that have been involved in the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting to ensure representation of all regions throughout the process.