

WORLD HERITAGE AND THE KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

Recommendations from expert meeting

25-29 November 2024

International Academy for Nature Conservation (BFN)
Vilm, Germany



Kunming - Montreal
GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

Priority Recommendations

For the World Heritage Committee

1. Call for the development of a policy brief or similar document on the World Heritage Convention and the GBF¹, taking into account the results of the Vilm expert meeting².
2. Update the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* to integrate GBF provisions.³
3. Review the Rules of Procedure to strengthen participation of civil society in the World Heritage Convention and to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, good governance and co-management with the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in accordance with the Joint Programme of Work on the Links between Biological and Cultural Diversity (JPoW).
4. Integrate reporting on GBF implementation, including identified synergies with other Conventions and international agreements, into the working documents of the World Heritage Committee⁴ and next cycle of Periodic Reporting on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.
5. Noting that GBF joins international human rights norms and standards with the conservation of biodiversity, the World Heritage Committee is encouraged to consider:
 - a) implications for the processes of the World Heritage Convention, including nominations of new sites and existing World Heritage properties, in support of Target 22,
 - b) responsibilities for human right protection and which competent entities could inform Committee's decision-making on human rights issues.

¹ Similar to the 2022 UNESCO Policy Brief on “The role of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity’s Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework”, or the more recent Local actions for the New Global Biodiversity Framework published by the Nordic Council of Ministers.

² The policy brief should also consider the existing policy documents under the World Heritage Convention on Climate Action for World Heritage (<https://whc.unesco.org/document/204421>) and on Sustainable Development (<https://whc.unesco.org/document/139747>).

³ The relevant sections would include: protection and management of World Heritage properties; protection of biological and cultural diversity and ecosystem services and benefits in all types of World Heritage properties; recognition and respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; cultural landscapes; sustainable use of biodiversity; Tentative List format; nomination format; Periodic Reporting.

⁴ The World Heritage Centre already reports to Committee on cooperation with the biodiversity-related Conventions. Reporting on GBF could also be systematized.

6. As a follow-up to previous technical work⁵, reconsider the proposal to apply the World Heritage Convention to the protection of the high seas in cooperation with The Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement).⁶
7. Invite the Council of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to provide funding to States Parties for activities that support the World Heritage Convention and the GBF⁷, and request the GEF Secretariat to report on the funding provided by the GEF that supports the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.
8. Integrate GBF in the World Heritage capacity-building strategy⁸ and explore and promote synergies between UNESCO category 2 centres, regional technical support centres for GBF⁹, UNESCO chairs, and the work of the UNESCO Secretariat and the Advisory Bodies in joint capacity building activities that support the GBF targets in the context of the World Heritage Convention and UNESCO-designated sites.
9. Ensure that the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies have adequate staff with expertise in biodiversity conservation to implement the decisions of the Committee on the GBF.

For States Parties

10. Integrate the World Heritage Convention into the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)¹⁰, including actions to improve effective, equitable and inclusive management and protection of World Heritage properties, which will also facilitate access to biodiversity and climate funding.

⁵ In 2011, the UNESCO External Auditor recommended States Parties to the 1972 World Heritage Convention to explore the possible protection of marine areas beyond national jurisdiction. Between 2015-2021, the World Heritage Centre's Marine programme, in collaboration with IUCN, has developed the groundwork that provides insight in the scientific, policy and legal aspects of nominating and protecting World Heritage in marine areas beyond national jurisdiction. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/highseas/>

⁶ The Vilm expert meeting further recommended that the UNESCO Secretariat and the Advisory Bodies engage with the Secretariat of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) to further explore the synergies between the World Heritage Convention and the BBNJ Agreement and consider developing procedures for World Heritage nominations in the high seas.

⁷ An example of a funding priority could be the World Heritage GAP analysis proposed by IUCN.

⁸ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/capacity-building/>

⁹ The CBD Parties have selected 18 regional organizations to support the implementation of the KM-GBF through science, technology and innovation. <https://www.cbd.int/article/sbi4-regional-centres-implementation-2024>

¹⁰ The UNESCO/IUCN publication "World Heritage: a unique contribution to biodiversity conservation" (<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385392>) includes specific guidance on the NBSAPs and the World Heritage Convention.

11. Update Tentative Lists and pursue priority World Heritage nominations for biodiversity conservation to address current gaps in the World Heritage List, making full use of the available body of thematic studies by the Advisory Bodies.
12. Enlarge World Heritage buffer zones¹¹ (natural, cultural and mixed – as appropriate), and better integrate them in territorial planning, and establish, where necessary, improved ecological connectivity and thereby greater integrity of properties; including for climate change resilience; and ecological restoration.
13. Identify, using the internationally adopted criteria, current and potential World Heritage properties (natural, cultural and mixed) and their buffer zones which could be recognised as Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) and strengthen legal protection of these areas.
14. Harness cultural World Heritage properties in the implementation of the GBF, including properties that overlap with Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), and promote cultural World Heritage properties, in particular cultural landscapes and sacred and religious sites, as champions for Target 10 on lands and waters under sustainable production¹², and urban World Heritage properties as champions for Target 12¹³.
15. Coordinate technical and scientific cooperation across agencies and ministries at the national level¹⁴ to identify synergies and efficiencies in objectives common to the GBF and the World Heritage Convention, as well as with other multi-lateral environmental agreements, UNESCO site designations, and UNESCO culture conventions¹⁵.

¹¹ Paragraph 104 of the Operational Guidelines: “For the purposes of effective protection of the nominated property, a buffer zone is an area surrounding the nominated property which has complementary legal and/or customary restrictions placed on its use and development in order to give an added layer of protection to the property.” Buffer zones can be a “win-win” for World Heritage and for the GBF, especially targets 1 and 3.

¹² Promote cultural World Heritage properties, in particular cultural landscapes and sacred and religious sites, as champions for GBF Target 10 to enhance biodiversity and sustainability in agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries, and forestry. The Secretariat, or networks, may be tasked to scope which sacred and religious sites that may be most relevant.

¹³ Promote urban World Heritage properties as champions of the GBF Target 12 to enhance green spaces and urban planning for human well-being and biodiversity, tapping into networks such as the World Heritage Cities programme and UNESCO cities network.

¹⁴ The “Bern process” has been as example of a meeting to facilitate cooperation and coordination among Convention Focal points. This could be replicated at the national level, see page 28.

¹⁵ With the endorsement of the the Joint Programme of Work on the Links between Biological and Cultural Diversity, Parties to the CBD have recognised the ways in which culture can enhance conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. This is relevant not only to the World Heritage Convention but also to UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005).

16. Systematically integrate Indigenous and local knowledge, and other ways of knowing¹⁶, into plans and programmes to manage World Heritage properties, which thereby contribute to GBF Target 3, Target 22 and other targets.
17. Promote Nature-based solutions¹⁷ in cultural, natural and mixed World Heritage properties towards achieving GBF Target 8 and GBF Target 11 to minimize the impact of climate change on biodiversity and on properties, and increase resilience.¹⁸

For the UNESCO Secretariat and Advisory Bodies

18. Develop guidance on World Heritage and GBF based on:
 - a) Documentation of the contributions of cultural and natural World Heritage properties to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and options to work on GBF,
 - b) Mapping of cultural and natural World Heritage against the goals and targets of the GBF, in addition to the work already undertaken,
 - c) Study of natural values that contribute to biodiversity conservation in cultural World Heritage properties,
 - d) Options to collaborate with the Joint Programme of Work on the Links between Biological and Cultural Diversity (JPoW).
19. Work with the GEF multilateral funds and other relevant institutions to:
 - a) Promote the protection of priority areas for biodiversity conservation at the national level and consider the possibility of their nominations to the World Heritage List,¹⁹
 - b) Promote protection and management of existing World Heritage properties,²⁰
 - c) Ensure sufficient funding and mechanisms for comprehensive capacity building and awareness raising.²¹

¹⁶ The technical support unit (TSU) for Indigenous and local knowledge of IPBES is hosted by the UNESCO Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) programme. IPBES stands for the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services.

¹⁷ The United Nations Environment Assembly at its fifth meeting (UNEA-5) adopted a global definition of Nature-based Solutions: Nature-based Solutions are actions to protect, conserve, restore, sustainably use and manage natural or modified terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems which address social, economic and environmental challenges effectively and adaptively, while simultaneously providing human well-being, ecosystem services, resilience and biodiversity benefits. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3999268?v=pdf>

¹⁸ Taking into consideration the 2023 Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage and the 2015 Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention.

¹⁹ Taking into account that 32% of key biodiversity areas lack formal protection (Protected Planet Report 2024).

²⁰ Taking into account the increasing number of World Heritage properties that are subject to Reactive Monitoring, and that about half of all natural and mixed World Heritage sites have insufficient management effectiveness (World Heritage Outlook 2020).

²¹ Considering the potential 2.8-fold increase of staff engaged in nature protection activities for the projected new protected areas to meet 30/30 (Appleton et al. 2022)

Complementary Recommendations

The experts identified the below complementary recommendations that provide specific guidance to several of the priority recommendations and present additional suggestions for action by the States Parties, the UNESCO Secretariat and the Advisory Bodies.

For States Parties

World Heritage Convention and its processes	
1	Improve management and protection of priority sites for biodiversity conservation on the Tentative List in preparation of their future nomination on the World Heritage List.
2	Use appropriate assessment tools (e.g., Enhancing Our Heritage ²²) and data (Reactive Monitoring, Periodic Reporting, IUCN World Heritage Outlook) to monitor and improve management effectiveness of World Heritage properties relevant for biodiversity conservation.
3	Align World Heritage site management plans with GBF targets to strengthen properties' contribution to the GBF.
NBSAPs and implementation of GBF	
4	Use World Heritage properties as demonstration sites to implement the NBSAPs.
5	Highlight the contribution of the World Heritage Convention when reporting on the implementation of NBSAPs and GBF to the CBD, using specific indicators related to the World Heritage Convention, and providing both Party-led information and reporting by non-state actors.
Synergies and cooperation among conventions and programmes	
6	In their role as States Parties to the World Heritage Convention and Parties to the CBD, ensure that the World Heritage Convention is appropriately referenced in relevant discussions and decisions of CBD, including COPs and the CBD subsidiary body on <i>Article 8(j) and Other Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity related to indigenous peoples and local communities</i> .
7	Harmonize management approaches and communication on the contribution of sites with multiple international designations to biodiversity conservation.
8	Consider appropriate synergies in implementing the 1972 World Heritage Convention and the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage to support the GBF.

²² UNESCO/ICCROM/ICOMOS/IUCN. 2023. Enhancing Our Heritage Toolkit 2.0: Assessing Management Effectiveness of World Heritage Properties and Other Heritage Places. Paris, UNESCO.
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/eoh20/>

9	Partner with UNESCO on the “100 Sites for Transformation” initiative which is implemented as a primary component of the Joint Programme of Work on the Links between Biological and Cultural Diversity.
10	Continue to participate in the global Bern process for cooperation among Parties to the biodiversity-related conventions for the implementation of the GBF, requesting the convening organisations to invite the Secretariat of UNESCO designated sites (World Heritage, Biosphere Reserves, UNESCO Global Geoparks) and the relevant UNESCO Culture Conventions in this process.
Means of implementation: funding, capacity building, awareness raising	
11	Mobilise national and regional funding mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of the GBF through the World Heritage Convention, including through transboundary cooperation and taking into account ecological connectivity and areas beyond national jurisdiction.
12	Ensure capacity building and exchange of experiences among site managers and States Parties in order to improve management effectiveness and alignment with GBF targets.

For the UNESCO Secretariat and Advisory Bodies

World Heritage Convention and its processes	
13	Update biodiversity gap studies for priority nominations and communicate results regionally. (for IUCN)
14	Establish a task force comprising UNESCO, IUCN and other relevant organisations (e.g. UNESCO Category II Centres) to promote the implementation of the results of the biodiversity gap studies to nominate priority natural sites on the World Heritage List, which would add to the GBF 30x30 target and bring these sites under international oversight by the World Heritage Convention.
15	Explore the ways to assess the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of natural sites to enable inclusion of sites that have similar values and are equal global significance on the World Heritage List and develop guidance on this. ²³ (for IUCN)
16	Explore the possibilities of transnational World Heritage properties for migratory species in the context of the GBF.

²³ Workshop participants were concerned that currently, IUCN and ICOMOS are perceived to approach this question differently. IUCN may recommend against sites whose values are already represented on the List, even though the comparative analysis asks if a nominated property is “the best example, or one of the best examples.” Guidance should answer the question, “Why should equally valuable sites not be included just because there is already an example?”

17	Explore how provisions of paragraph 112 of the Operational Guidelines which refers to an integrated approach to planning and management that goes beyond the property to include any buffer zones, as well as the wider setting, can contribute to GBF Target 1 in relation to spatial planning and effective management. ²⁴
18	Use the Preliminary Assessment to provide specific guidance to States Parties for more effective conservation of biodiversity, cultural heritage, and the links between nature and culture ²⁵ in support of the GBF. (for ICOMOS and IUCN)
19	Conduct a desktop study on available resources to guide States Parties, the World Heritage Centre, and the Advisory Bodies in the implementation of the Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) under the World Heritage Convention in line with the GBF and in particular Target 21.
20	Explore opportunities for States Parties to include narratives of Indigenous Peoples in the statements of OUV as appropriate.
21	Continue to promote the World Heritage “no-go” commitment ²⁶ with the corporate sector to harness sustainable business conduct in and near World Heritage properties and seek ways to expand these commitments beyond the boundaries of World Heritage properties, in line with the GBF and in particular Target 15.
NBSAPs and implementation of GBF	
22	Engage with the Regional Technical Support Centres for the GBF to integrate guidance on World Heritage into their work plans, and explore opportunities to apply World Heritage-specific guidance through the NBSAP Accelerator ²⁷ , the NBSAP Forum ²⁸ , and similar mechanisms to support the development and implementation of NBSAPs.
Synergies and cooperation among conventions and programmes	
23	Strengthen the cooperation within UNESCO sectors and between the Advisory Bodies on biodiversity topics, bringing the different programmes and initiatives together through platforms such as the Joint Programme of Work on the Links between Biological and Cultural Diversity and the IUCN World Conservation Congress.

²⁴ “An integrated approach to planning and management is essential to guide the evolution of properties over time and to ensure maintenance of all aspects of their Outstanding Universal Value. This approach goes beyond the property to include any buffer zone(s), as well as the wider setting.”

²⁵ The *Policy Document for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention* also refers to the protection of biological and cultural diversity and ecosystem services and benefits.

²⁶ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/no-go-commitment> and “UNESCO guidance for the world heritage ‘No-Go’ commitment: global standards for corporate sustainability” (2022), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000383811>

²⁷ <https://nbsapaccelerator.org/>

²⁸ <https://www.learningfornature.org/en/nbsap-forum/>

24	Update the publication “Managing MIDAS” (Multi-Internationally Designated Areas) taking into account synergies between designations in achieving GBF targets. ²⁹ (for IUCN)
Means of implementation: funding, capacity building, awareness raising	
25	Produce a compilation of biodiversity funding opportunities for States Parties and World Heritage properties in support of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and implementation of the GBF.
26	Strengthen the capacity of States Parties to make funding proposals that support the implementation of the GBF through the World Heritage Convention.

²⁹ <https://iucn.org/resources/publication/managing-midas-harmonising-management-multi-internationally-designated-areas>