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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

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

Forty-seventh session UNESCO, Paris 6-16 July 2025

Item 5A of the Provisional Agenda:

Report of the World Heritage Centre on its activities and the implementation of the World Heritage Committee's Decisions

Summary

This document contains a non-exhaustive overview of activities and results achieved in implementing the Decisions and Strategic Objectives in conjunction with the Expected Result as defined in the approved 42 C/5 Programmes since the 46th session (New Delhi, 2024). Focus has been placed on the results of activities not otherwise covered in working and information documents prepared for the 47th session, in line with Decision **46 COM 5A**.

More detailed information about all World Heritage Centre activities is available in Document WHC/25/47.COM/INF.5A as well as at https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities.

<u>Draft Decision</u>: 47 COM 5A, see point VII

This document should be read in conjunction with Document WHC/25/47.COM/INF.5A

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This document presents a report on the main activities and their results, conducted by the World Heritage Centre since the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee (New Delhi, 2024). The report consists of a narrative part presenting the current structure of the World Heritage Centre and the results achieved in implementing the Decisions and Strategic Objectives in conjunction with the Expected Result, as defined in the approved 42 C/5. Focus has been placed on the results of activities not otherwise covered in working and information documents prepared for the 47th session, in line with Decision 46 COM 5A. It should be read in conjunction with Document WHC/25/47.COM/INF.5A.

II. DUTIES, STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE

- 2. As Secretariat of the World Heritage Convention, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre (hereinafter also referred to as the "Secretariat") is coordinating all matters related to World Heritage within UNESCO. Its main duties are to ensure the day-to-day management of the Convention, organize sessions of the Governing bodies of the Convention, assist and provide support and advice to States Parties in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.
- 3. Currently, the World Heritage Centre comprises 28 established posts financed under the UNESCO Regular Programme (2 posts at Director's level, 17 Professional posts and 9 General Service staff posts) to serve the 196 States Parties. The Professional staff is distributed among the Policy and Statutory Meetings Unit (2 posts), the Nominations Unit (1 post) and the five Regional Units and the Natural Heritage Unit (14 posts). Together, they implement numerous activities, as reported in parts III, IV and V below, to ensure the proper implementation of the World Heritage Convention and of the decisions adopted by its governing bodies.
- 4. In addition, 29 positions are being financed through voluntary/in-kind resources. Several of these positions are financed thanks to the generous support provided by the States Parties of Andorra, China, Germany, Government of Flanders, India, Japan, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Monaco, Norway, Spain, Republic of Korea via secondments, Junior Professional Officers, Project appointments under extrabudgetary projects or through contributions to the sub-account for Human Resources.
- Regarding Knowledge management, site boundary polygons are now visible on the 5. World Heritage Centre's website, online maps for an expanded selection of 289 properties, supported by an extensive collection of over 28,459 photographs of all properties, the databases of Nominations and State of conservation developed by the World Heritage Centre and available on its website, make it an established global heritage reference. 2024, the World Heritage Centre's ln (https://whc.unesco.org) represented 29% of the page views, and 27% of the visits to all UNESCO websites. Since 2022, page views increased by 13% and the visits by 29% (source of data: Googleanalytics).
- 6. In terms of **Communication and outreach**, social media is a significant part of the communication and outreach activities of the Secretariat, with 'X' (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok being used as platforms for disseminating information about World Heritage news, activities, calls for proposals, and capacity-building. Weekly posts about World Heritage were shared across UNESCO's media platforms (12,459,400 total followers) in English, French, Russian and Spanish. Special issues of the **World Heritage Map** and the **World Heritage Magazine** featuring World Heritage sites in India were published and widely distributed during the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee (New Delhi, 2024) in collaboration with the Indian authorities and the UNESCO New Delhi Office. An issue of World Heritage

Magazine highlighting new sites inscribed during the 46th session (New Delhi, 2024) of the World Heritage Committee was published in April 2025 and a special issue of the Map and of the Magazine featuring World Heritage sites in Bulgaria will also be published on the occasion of the 47th session (UNESCO, 2025) in collaboration with the Bulgarian authorities and widely disseminated.

III. ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED AND RESULTS ACHIEVED DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD (AUGUST 2024-MAY 2025)

- 7. The activities of the World Heritage Centre since the 46th session of the Committee (New Delhi, 2024) support the current Medium-Term Strategy (2022-2029) and Output 5.CLT1: "Member States' capacities strengthened to identify, protect and manage tangible heritage" of the Outcome 5 under Major Programme IV: "Enhance the protection and promotion of the diversity of heritage and cultural expressions", as approved in the Programme and Budget for 2024-2025 (42 C/5).
- 8. The Output 5.CLT1 has 2 Performance Indicators (PI) defined in the 42 C/5, as follows:
 - PI 1 Number of Member States protecting and managing their World Heritage properties in the framework of sustainable development, through the implementation of the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, and through UNESCO's cooperation and international assistance.
 - PI 2 Number of Member States supported in the identification and preparation of potential World Heritage Sites for nomination.
- 9. Special attention is paid to UNESCO's two global priorities, Africa and Gender Equality, in all activities of the Secretariat, as well as to priority target groups, youth and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). In terms of reporting, Africa and SIDS have their own agenda items (see Documents WHC/25/47.COM/5C and WHC/25/47.COM/5E). Youth-related activities are reported this year under Part IV dedicated to Thematic Programmes. A specific section on gender has been integrated in the present document (see Section IV.A below).
- 10. The Secretariat undertook a large number of activities, which are listed in Document WHC/25/47.COM/INF.5A. The main results are underlined below and illustrated with a non-exhaustive list of concrete examples. The focus has also been placed on the results of activities not otherwise covered in working and information documents prepared for this session.
- A. <u>PI 1</u>: Number of Member States protecting and managing their World Heritage properties in the framework of sustainable development, through the implementation of the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the 2011 Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, and through UNESCO's cooperation and international assistance.

A1. Governing Bodies

- 11. On 22 July 2024, Nauru officially deposited its instrument of ratification of the Convention with UNESCO. With this new ratification, the World Heritage Convention now has 196 States Parties, making it one of the most ratified instruments in the world.
- 12. The 46th session of the Committee was held from 21-31 July 2024 in New Delhi, India, under the Chairpersonship of H.E. Mr Vishal Sharma, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of India to UNESCO. This session examined 123 reports on the state of conservation of sites inscribed on the World Heritage List and World Heritage List in Danger,

- 27 nominations and adopted a total of 196 decisions. The session also discussed major issues such as "Priority Africa: a Strategy for World Heritage" or the revision of the World Heritage Capacity-building Strategy (see https://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/46COM). More than 50 working and information documents were prepared by the Secretariat for this meeting. The Decisions reports and related documentation were also made available online and can be consulted at the above-mentioned web address.
- 13. On 5 March 2025, at the invitation of the Chairperson of the 47th session of the World Heritage Committee, and in conformity with Rule 4.1 of the Rules of Procedure of the World Heritage Committee a meeting of the Bureau of the Committee was convened on 5 March 2025 at UNESCO Headquarters regarding the venue of the 47th session, scheduled to take place in Sofia (Bulgaria) on 6-16 July 2025. On this occasion, the Bureau decided that the 47th session of the World Heritage Committee would take place at UNESCO Headquarters, in Paris, from 6 to 16 July 2025 (see https://whc.unesco.org/document/219480).
- On 17 March 2025, the 2nd extraordinary session of the General Assembly of States Parties was convened, at the request of more than one third of the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, in accordance with Rule 4.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, with the purpose of States Parties deciding on the modalities for the organization of the 25th session of the General Assembly in 2025. Recalling Article 8.1 of the Convention, Rule 5.3 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, as well as the fact that the 43rd session of the UNESCO General Conference will be held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan in 2025, the General Assembly decided that the 25th session of the General Assembly would be opened during the 43rd session of the General Conference in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, to consider the items of the provisional agenda related to the opening of the General Assembly, the election of the Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and Rapporteur of the General Assembly and the adoption of the agenda and of the timetable; and that the subsequent items of the provisional agenda would be considered at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, after the 43rd session of the General Conference (see https://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/2extGA/). States Parties were subsequently informed that the 25th session of the General Assembly will take place on 11 November 2025 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan and on 24-25 November 2025 at UNESCO Headquarters.
- 15. Through the organization of Orientation sessions for Committee Members and Information sessions for all States Parties, the World Heritage Centre continues to support the preparation of Committee Members and States Parties for the forthcoming sessions of the Committee and provides them with a better understanding of major statutory processes such as the Nominations and Reactive Monitoring processes, and of procedural matters (notably on motions and voting procedures). The Information session on the 47th session of the Committee took place on 14 May 2025 while the Orientation session for Committee members is scheduled to take place on 6 July 2025.
- 16. The World Heritage Centre also ensured the smooth organisation as well as preparation of the relevant documentation to facilitate the work of the Open-ended Working Group established by the Committee in 2023 at its extended 45th session (Decision 45 COM 11) to start a fundamental reflection on the operations of the World Heritage Convention, notably on the representativity, credibility and balance of the World Heritage List. This mandate was extended by the Committee at its 46th session in 2024 (Decision 46 COM 11). The Working Group held five meetings between November 2024 and April 2025 to pursue its reflection and made concrete recommendations to the Committee on the major themes it identified in fulfilment of its mandate (see Document WHC/25/47.COM/11).

A2. Capacity-building

(this section A2. should be read in conjunction with Document WHC/25/47.COM/6A)

- 17. At the core of the World Heritage Centre's mission is the protection and sustainable management of World Heritage properties' Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). A fundamental pillar of this mission is capacity building, which plays a vital role in empowering site managers, local communities, and heritage professionals with essential knowledge, skills, and resources. Through targeted initiatives, the Centre strengthens the resilience of local communities and site managers, fosters a sense of ownership, and promotes sustainable development, collaboration, and the transfer of expertise across regions.
- 18. In Africa, UNESCO focused on building a new generation of heritage professionals. The "Mentorship Programme for African Heritage Professionals" and "Creating a Sustainable Heritage Ecosystem for Socioeconomic Development in Africa" trained experts from under-represented African States Parties. With Australian support, further training will continue in 2025. A significant initiative with African universities, under the "Institutionalise and strengthen capacity development" project funded through the UNESCO/Republic of Korea Funds-in-Trust, aims to enhance World Heritage education by developing innovative courses linking tangible and intangible cultural heritage as well as nature and culture. Risk management also received attention through the project "Capacity Building in Risk Management and Protection Systems in Africa", site managers from six properties updated disaster risk plans.
- 19. A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) workshop based on the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessment in a World Heritage Context, strengthened national capacities to evaluate heritage-related impacts was organised for Southern African States Parties, with 32 participants from seven countries.
- In the context of the development of the World Heritage Online Map Platform 20. (https://whc.unesco.org/en/wh-gis/) supported by the Government of Flanders (Belgium), and the project Creating a Sustainable Heritage Ecosystem for Socioeconomic Development in Africa, funded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a workshop on innovative technologies will be held in Windhoek. Namibia, in June 2025, in collaboration with the Host Country and relevant Regional and National UNESCO Offices. The workshop will bring together World Heritage site managers, heritage professionals, mentees of the African Heritage Professionals Mentorship Programme and stakeholders to reflect on the use of digital tools, in particular geospatial data, for heritage monitoring, management, protection and presentation. The overall objective is to further strengthen regional capacity to make best use of these tools for heritage preservation, including geolocalisation, multispectral remote sensing, virtual and augmented reality, drones, photogrammetry, and mobile apps. It also aims to promote regional collaboration through a network of professionals committed to advancing conservation through digital technology, consolidating a community of practice. UNESCO supported a capacitybuilding programme for 50 South African researchers and students on remote sensing for biodiversity mapping in Cape Floral Region Protected Areas World Heritage site with the support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust.
- 21. In the **Arab States**, capacity-building workshops have focused on heritage conservation and management; site interpretation planning; the elaboration of the Desired state of conservation for the removal of properties from the List of World Heritage in Danger; Heritage Impact Assessment and the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL).
- 22. In partnership with the Principality of Monaco, efforts are underway to explore how blue carbon credits could fund conservation activities in World Heritage marine sites. UNESCO has hosted several online exchanges between site managers and international experts to build capacity on this topic. As a result, a pre-feasibility assessment for a blue

- carbon project is now in progress at the Banc d'Arguin National Park World Heritage site in Mauritania, with the involvement of one of experts engaged by UNESCO.
- 23. In Asia and the Pacific, activities were closely linked to the implementation of the Regional Framework Action Plan (2023–2030). Continuing from the series of workshops in 2023-2024, in-person workshops in Beijing and Almaty focused on impact assessments, boundary clarifications, and nomination processes. In Timor-Leste, the first-ever capacity-building workshop on World Heritage inscription was held in December 2024, helping stakeholders understand the requirements for World Heritage inscription and develop a national Tentative List. In Nepal, two significant events took place in April 2025: a workshop on the conservation and management of the Kathmandu Valley World Heritage property, and the international conference "Lumbini, the Birthplace of the Lord Buddha" organised by the Lumbini Development Trust and the Department of Archaeology of Nepal, followed by a commemoration event on a decade of rehabilitation after the 2015 Gorkha earthquake. In April 2025, UNESCO and the government of Sri Lanka co-organized at UNESCO Headquarters a major international expert conference on the Sacred City of Anuradhapura, attended by over 400 participants, including Prime Minister H.E. Dr Harini Amarasuriya and international heritage experts, government representatives, religious leaders, and development partners. This event advanced discussions on integrated management of built and living heritage and set the groundwork for refining Anuradhapura's Management Plan and identified lessons learned for many other World Heritage properties that combine layers of archaeological heritage with associated intangible heritage practices in a cultural landscape (see https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2767).
- 24. In the **Europe and North America** region, a key project successfully strengthened the capacity of the National Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments and the Museum of Ohrid through targeted training in GIS database development. This initiative aimed to optimise the management of the World Heritage property 'Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid Region'. Funded by the World Heritage Fund's International Assistance, the project was completed in December 2024, equipping beneficiaries with advanced tools to ensure more effective management and conservation of this property.
- 25. In the Latin American and the Caribbean region, a number of important capacity building activities were implemented, focusing for the majority on risk preparedness and risk management, in particular as concerns fires. In this context, workshops and courses were held in Guatemala, Chile, Argentina and Peru using the 2024 UNESCO "Fire Risk Management Guide for Cultural and Natural Heritage" as a training tool. Another predominant subject was sustainable tourism, like in the regional project "Latin America and the Caribbean: Strengthening Capacities for Resilient Communities through Sustainable Tourism and Heritage Safeguarding", financed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Management practices, particularly impact assessment techniques, also featured prominently in capacity-building activities across the region.

A3. Civil society and communities

A3.1 Collaboration with NGOs or foundations

- 26. As is the practice every year, the World Heritage Centre participated in a series of meetings organized by World Heritage Watch (https://world-heritage-watch.org/content/), where civil society actors presented their perspective on the state of conservation of a number of World Heritage properties.
- 27. Conservation NGOs have been supporting many project activities led by the World Heritage Centre; they acted as implementing partners and provided technical expertise and additional financial and in-kind resources. Examples are Fauna and Flora International (FFI) partnering with UNESCO for the implementation of the Rapid

Response Facility (RRF) (see https://whc.unesco.org/en/rapidresponse/), the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Ripple Africa, African Parks Network (APN), African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), Virunga Foundation, Kastom Gaden Association (KGA) and many others.

A3.2 Site Managers' Forum and Site Managers' networks

- 28. In 2024–2025, UNESCO and its partners reinforced collaboration among World Heritage site managers through major capacity-building initiatives and networking platforms, fostering global and regional networks, and promoting sustainable, community-centered heritage conservation.
- 29. The 6th edition of the World Heritage Site Managers' Forum took place in New Delhi, India, from 18-25 July 2024. Organized by the Indian Ministry of Culture through the Archaeological Survey of India, the World Heritage Centre, ICCROM and IUCN (under the World Heritage Leadership Programme), and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, the Forum gathered 82 site managers from around the world under the theme "Heritage and Communities: Inclusive and Effective Approaches for Sustainable Management of World Heritage Properties". Participants shared conservation achievements, assessed challenges, and discussed the vital role of local communities. The Forum also fostered international networking among site managers (see https://whc.unesco.org/en/whsmf24).
- 30. The African Site Managers Network (ASMN), established in 2022, as a regional networking platform to enable site managers of World Heritage properties in Africa to share experiences, enhance networking and improve their capacity in implementing the Convention. UNESCO facilitated the organization of the election for a 2-year term (2022-2024) of the Permanent Committee, as well as its regular online meetings and activities. With the financial support provided to UNESCO by the governments of France and Japan, the ASMN website (accessible at https://www.asmn.africa/en/home-2/) was redesigned with the addition of an online platform, "Stewards of African Heritage", showcasing African expertise and profiles, including mentees, heritage professionals, and site managers on the continent. Elections for a new Standing Committee are planned for the Spring of 2025.
- 31. The World Heritage Cities Programme Network of Site Managers has actively engaged with national forums such as the University Heritage Forum in Cairo (UHF), and international conferences such as the (Re)connecting the River and the City organized with Sorbonne University and the International Convention on the Economics of World Heritage organized by the International Association for Cultural Economics, highlighting contributions from the perspective of the sites. These conferences also served to support capacity building of the Site Managers.
- 32. Through the Marine Managers Network, UNESCO continued to connect 51 marine site managers via daily exchanges, peer-to-peer support, and thematic capacity-building meetings. Discussions focused on managing tourism, land-based pollution, and the impacts of the 4th Global Coral Bleaching Event, in collaboration with the United States National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration. A key highlight was the first regional meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean marine sites, held at Península Valdés, Argentina, in September 2024. Managers from 12 sites exchanged best practices developed collaborative strategies to address shared conservation challenges.
- 33. Across all regions, these initiatives illustrate UNESCO's commitment to empowering site managers, fostering global and regional networks, and promoting sustainable, community-centered heritage conservation.

(this section A3.3 should be read in conjunction with Document WHC/25/47.COM/5D)

- 34. Positive developments in fostering greater dialogue with Indigenous Peoples can be reported, particularly regarding the Joint Programme of Work (JPoW) between the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the World Heritage Convention. Ahead of the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee and COP16 in Colombia, all Advisory Bodies and the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on World Heritage (IIPFWH) collaborated closely, emphasizing the need for a consistent human rights-based approach across these frameworks, aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the JPoW. In particular, Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) was emphasised, not as a procedural formality, but as a fundamental right essential to guarantee Indigenous Peoples a central voice in the management of World Heritage sites. A side event co-organised with IIPFWH brought representatives from all Indigenous socio-cultural regions to exchange experiences and promote broader, systematic application of FPIC, particularly by States Parties and site managers.
- Building on this momentum, IIPFWH, in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and 35. the Advisory Bodies, is co-organizing the workshop 'World Heritage and Indigenous Peoples - Building Participation and Ensuring Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)' at UNESCO Headquarters in May 2025, with the support of Australia and Canada to the World Heritage Fund. This workshop is a critical step in strengthening the active participation of Indigenous Peoples in the processes of the Convention, in line with ongoing efforts to integrate human rights and ensure that Indigenous voices are at the centre of heritage management. The workshop aims to equip IIPFWH members with a comprehensive knowledge of World Heritage processes to enable Indigenous Peoples to participate more effectively and actively in the management and decision-making processes of the Convention, to develop a deeper understanding and establish effective ways for the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to address FPIC within the evaluation and monitoring processes, ensuring that the rights of Indigenous Peoples are respected at all stages of heritage conservation and to identify and co-develop future actions between the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and the IIPFWH for continued capacity building, possible revisions to working processes for nomination evaluation and monitoring of state of conservation. Through this workshop, UNESCO, the Advisory Bodies and Indigenous Peoples have worked together to create a more inclusive and rights-based framework for World Heritage management that promotes both sustainable development and human rights in the context of global heritage conservation.
- 36. UNESCO has also implemented multiple community-driven projects worldwide. In the Arab States, the Medina of Sousse project in Tunisia, project 'Post COVID-19 World Heritage Site Management: Integration of Conservation, Tourism and Local Livelihood Strategies at World Heritage Sites' funded by the UNESCO/Japanese Funds-in-Trust, integrates conservation, digital presence, sustainable tourism, and livelihood strategies, revitalizing local crafts and artisanship.
- 37. In Africa, community support initiatives funded by the government of Norway strengthened conservation efforts at ten World Heritage sites. Highlights include community-driven emergency programme focusing on protecting mountain gorillas in Virunga National Park (Democratic Republic of the Congo DRC), establishing a structured local decision-making in Dja Faunal Reserve (Cameroon), engaging youth from the local community for the manual removal of invasive aquatic invasive plants and reactivating the local management committee in Djoudj National Bird Sanctuary (Senegal).
- 38. Thanks to the contribution of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the project "Creating a Sustainable Heritage Ecosystem for the Socioeconomic Development in Africa", the

Secretariat is supporting Comoros in the rehabilitation the Royal Palace of Ujumbé, a national heritage site in which restoration and valorisation works have been initiated in March 2025. This restoration incorporates the training of local artisans and the awareness of local communities all along the initiative. Additionally, the project supports six entrepreneurship initiatives in five countries (Comoros, Ghana, Gabon, Namibia and the United Republic of Tanzania), benefitting local communities living in and/or around the World Heritage sites.

- 39. In Stone Town, Zanzibar (United Republic of Tanzania), the contribution of Japan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands supported the rehabilitation of the Majestic Cinema into a dynamic cultural hub, which now hosts, as part of its cultural programming for the local communities, monthly film screenings featuring young local filmmakers, providing a platform for emerging talents to showcase their work and engage with the community. Since January 2025, it also hosts a reading club and library, promoting literacy and a culture of knowledge-sharing, nurturing young minds through literature and interactive learning and fostering creativity, literacy, and local engagement.
- 40. Further capacity-building efforts have been pursued under the "Heritage and Creativity for AlUla's Sustainable Development" project, a partnership between UNESCO and the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU). A series of workshops focusing on interpretation planning have been implemented. In collaboration with UNESCO Regional Office for Gulf States and Yemen in Doha, and UNESCO Category 2 Centres, ARC-WH and WHIPIC, the workshops have focused on interpretation planning for the World Heritage property Hegra Archaeological Site (al-Hijr / Madāʾ in Ṣāliḥ), in addition to regional capacity-building in site interpretation.
- 41. Marine heritage conservation has also benefited from innovative approaches. The "Environmental DNA (eDNA) Expeditions" project, led by the World Heritage Centre Marine Programme in collaboration with UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and supported by the Government of Flanders, engaged 21 marine sites worldwide in a citizen science initiative to monitor climate change's impact on species distribution in World Heritage sites. Over 250 community members, including youth and Indigenous participants, took part, with findings published in the report "UNESCO eDNA Expeditions: Engaging Communities to Safeguard Ocean Life" in December 2024.
- 42. A new project funded by the European Union (2M €) aimed at strengthening the role of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC) in the management and protection of natural World Heritage sites in Cameroon was initiated in January 2025.
- 43. In East Rennell (Solomon Islands), UNESCO and its partners supported community resilience initiatives through consultation meetings, capacity-building activities to enhance livelihoods, food security and environmental resilience of the local communities, with the support of the UNESCO/Netherlands and UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trusts and the UNESCO Earth Network. These efforts—coordinated with Indigenous communities, the national government, and local NGOs like Kastom Gaden Association— included model farm workshops between May 2024 and April 2025 to enhance livelihoods, promote sustainable agriculture, and document traditional ecological knowledge, contributing to the site's conservation and the community's food security.
- A3.4 Level of women's engagement in the field of World Heritage conservation in collaboration with UNESCO
 - (this section A3.4. should be read in conjunction with Document WHC/25/47.COM/5D)
- 44. In the framework of the project "Creating a Sustainable Heritage Ecosystem for the Socioeconomic Development in Africa", funded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia an event entitled "Women. Heritage. Digital Technology" was organised from 6 to 8 March 2025,

- in Dakar, Senegal, with 180 women (out of 200) participants. This event aimed to engage and promote the use of digital tools and new technology by women and young girls to safeguard and promote heritage for development.
- 45. Several projects funded by the Government of Norway's contribution to the World Heritage Fund support the empowerment of women in heritage management and their active role in the sustainable use of natural resources. In the Djoudj National Bird Sanctuary (Senegal), women's associations are being supported to help control the invasive *Typha* plants which are harmful for the wetland ecosystem but can be reused as construction material and biofuel (https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2679/). The fish conservation project in Lake Malawi National Park (Malawi), which continues to support the active role of women in the local associations, has been expanded to include the construction of fuel-efficient cook stoves in the park's enclave villages. They reduce the need for firewood, thereby reducing pressure on the park natural resources, but also reduce the time women spend cooking and collecting firewood.

A4. Conservation and Sustainable Development / SDGs (this section A4. should be read in conjunction with Document WHC/25/47.COM/5D)

A4.1 Emergency situations

- 46. In the face of ongoing armed conflicts and natural disasters, safeguarding World Heritage properties remains a paramount concern for UNESCO. From rehabilitation efforts in conflict-affected regions to post-disaster assessments and capacity-building initiatives, the World Heritage Centre's interventions aim to mitigate the impact of these crises on cultural and natural heritage across all regions.
- 47. In Mali, the "Project to rebuild and rehabilitate the built heritage of the Cliff of Bandiagara (Land of the Dogons)", started in 2022 with funding from the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage (ALIPH), has continued to provide relief to local communities affected by the persisting security crisis, resulting to date in the reconstruction of 126 houses, 172 granaries and four togunas in the beneficiary villages. It also supports the inventory of cultural objects. Cultural groups are supported as well, as these are important actors to sensitize and mobilize local communities in the villages. The project is foreseen to end in the course of 2025. Moreover, International Assistance under the World Heritage Fund provides support to all four Malian properties for the updating of the Management and Conservation plans, the functioning of the management entities and for the implementation of corrective measures.
- 48. Due to the continuing deterioration of the security situation in the Virunga National Park (DRC), which is affected by the presence of militant groups, UNESCO has increased its funding for conservation and management activities. In addition, as part of the "Initiative to support the sustainable management of the W-Arly-Pendjari Complex" (Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger), UNESCO has facilitated the organization of the last two national technical consultations in Burkina Faso and Benin in December 2024, as a follow-up to the first national technical consultation in Niger (May/June 2023). This has led to the finalization of National Action Plans for Burkina Faso and Benin in preparation for a Regional Emergency Plan for the three countries, covering the entire property.
- 49. Given Mozambique's ongoing vulnerability to natural hazards, particularly cyclone-induced disasters, the World Heritage Fund and the Heritage Emergency Fund are providing targeted support to enhance the State Party's heritage resilience and disaster response capacity. This initiative includes the rehabilitation of traditional houses affected by recent cyclones, with five houses already restored under the programme. Additionally, efforts are underway to develop comprehensive management resources that equip local communities with resilient building techniques and disaster preparedness strategies. To further strengthen Mozambique's emergency response framework, a multisectoral first-

- response team is being established to coordinate disaster management efforts to cyclone induced threats.
- 50. Through the contribution of the Government of Norway to the World Heritage Fund, UNESCO has continued its support for conservation and management activities in the African properties affected by conflicts. These properties include Manovo-Gounda St Floris National Park (Central African Republic), the transboundary W-Arly-Pendjari Complex (Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger) as well as 'Virunga National Park, Kahuzi-Biega National Park and Okapi Wildlife Reserve (DRC). This support has also strengthened the Rapid Response Facility (RRF) that deploys emergency grants for natural sites. An emergency grant was provided in October 2024 to support firefighting efforts in Noel Kempff Mercado National Park (Plurinational State of Bolivia).
- UNESCO, through the UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trust 'Support for Ukraine in Culture and Education through UNESCO: Emergency Response for World Heritage and Cultural Property: Damage Assessment and Protection', in close cooperation with ICOMOS and ICCROM, continues to strengthen Ukraine's capacity to protect its cultural heritage. Initiatives focus on supporting the development of advanced documentation of the state of conservation of World Heritage properties and sites in Ukraine's Tentative List, and emergency preparedness. From 29 July to 7 August 2024, UNESCO, in collaboration with ICOMOS, led an international expert mission to document key elements of Kyiv: Saint-Sophia Cathedral and Related Monastic Buildings, Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, specifically the Bell Tower and the Metropolitan's House. The mission provided critical technical assistance on disaster preparedness and emergency response planning. Following the mission, detailed 3D documentation was delivered in March 2025, accompanied by targeted recommendations for the development of emergency preparedness plans for these properties. In addition, a comprehensive review of the structural integrity of the Bell Tower and All Saints Church was conducted between November 2024 and February 2025. The findings were presented to the National Conservation Area Saint Sophia of Kyiv and the National Preserve Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra at several meetings in late February and early March 2025.
- 52. In continued support of Ukraine's conservation efforts, UNESCO, in collaboration with ICOMOS, provided the *Guidance Document for the Development of a Rehabilitation Plan for the Historic Centre of Chernihiv* in both English and Ukrainian. This package, delivered in December 2024, included 3D documentation of the Taras Shevchenko Chernihiv Regional Academic Music and Drama Theatre. Recommendations for the development of a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan were also provided in April 2025.
- 53. In August 2024, UNESCO, in partnership with ICCROM, organized a two-day 'field school' in Kyiv to train trainers in the use of the damage assessment methodology and the 'International Form for Conducting Post-Event Damage and Risk Assessment of Immovable Cultural Property'. This training, aimed at enhancing Ukraine's capacity to respond to cultural heritage crises, followed an earlier session in L'viv in October 2023. In addition, a UNESCO/ICCROM workshop in March 2025 updated the Ukrainian terminology of the damage assessment methodology, with the final version to be delivered to the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications (MCSC) in April 2025.
- 54. UNESCO, in close coordination with ICCROM and ICOMOS, supported the Ukrainian authorities in the development of guidelines and procedures focusing on risk reduction, emergency preparedness and first aid for World Heritage and Tentative List sites. This process included four online thematic consultations engaging 22 professionals from conservation and management roles at pilot sites such as the Historic Centre of Chernihiv, Wooden *Tserkvas* of the Carpathian Region and the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. The resulting General Guidelines, available in both English and Ukrainian, were presented to the MCSC and workshop participants in Spring 2025.

- 55. Following the recent hostilities in the region, a UNESCO damage assessment mission to Lebanon was undertaken in March 2025. The mission visited seven cultural heritage sites, including two World Heritage properties: Baalbek and Tyre, and has outlined recommendations for urgent conservation needs and potential longer term recovery actions.
- 56. The capacity-building project 'Strengthening Civil Society Emergency Response Actions for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage in Myanmar' was implemented following Cyclone Mocha (May 2023) with the support of Heritage Emergency Fund. The project strengthens the capacity of national heritage practitioners and grassroots civil society actors to play an active role in safeguarding and protecting cultural heritage in times of emergencies. It has increased knowledge and understanding across the disaster risk management cycle (prepare, respond, and recover). As a result of this activity, an informal nation-wide network of site-based teams in Myanmar has been established.
- 57. A severe 7.7-magnitude earthquake hit Myanmar and Thailand on 28 March 2025, causing significant loss of life and widespread destruction. Based on the information available at the time of writing the present report, only minor damages were recorded at World Heritage properties, whereas several other heritage sites in the region affected by the earthquake were severely damaged. UNESCO keeps monitoring the situation through its Offices and partners, and further damage assessments are planned, notably through UNESCO's Heritage Emergency Fund.

A4.2 Properties inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger

- The World Heritage Centre has continued its support to activities that strengthen management and conservation of World Heritage properties in Africa, notably natural heritage properties and those severely threatened, thanks to the significant financial contribution of the Government of Norway to the World Heritage Fund. As of March 2025, out of the 30 sites in Africa (20 natural, seven cultural and three mixed) benefitting from this support, 13 are included on the List of World Heritage in Danger, six of which have already developed their Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR), and in some sites, together with costed action plans. All these sites are implementing key projects to improve their state of conservation and update their management and conservation plans. Niokolo-Koba National Park (Senegal) was removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger at the 46th session of the Committee in 2024 (https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2703/). In Kenya, UNESCO is implementing an ambitious scientific programme to understand the hydrology of Lake Turkana and to improve the food security and economic well-being of the vulnerable populations around the lake in the face of climate change, supporting also Lake Turkana National Parks.
- 59. In addition to African efforts, through International Assistance, support has been provided for the development of a Conservation Plan for Abu Mena (Egypt), a critical step for achieving the DSOCR. In February 2025, a joint capacity-building workshop in Rabat, Morocco, organized by ICESCO, ARC-WH, ICOMOS, and the World Heritage Centre, focused on developing DSOCRs, corrective measures and related timeframe for implementation for World Heritage properties in the Arab region. This workshop brought together site managers from eight Arab countries (Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, State of Palestine, Syria, Sudan and Yemen), all of which have properties on the World Heritage in Danger list. Technical support continues for countries like Syria and Iraq to help them develop their DSOCRs and implement necessary corrective measures. Moreover, the provision of technical support to Arab States for the elaboration of the DSOCR and the related corrective measures have continued, particularly for Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq.

- 60. With the support of International Assistance, the Solomon Islands National Commission for UNESCO, in cooperation with the World Heritage Centre and other partners including BirdLife International and Live & Learn Environmental Education, is undertaking an evaluation of the implementation of DSOCR for East Rennell in order to identify gaps and accelerate the progress towards achieving the DSOCR.
- 61. In the Federated States of Micronesia, five online technical assistance workshops were organised between November 2024 and January 2025 for the elaboration of the DSOCR for Nan Madol: Ceremonial Centre of Eastern Micronesia, with technical support provided by ICOMOS. The State Party has proceeded with elaborating the relevant DSOCR and corrective measures.
- 62. With funding from the World Heritage Fund and from the Japan Funds-in-Trust project phase II, UNESCO and ICOMOS initiated a targeted technical assistance programme in December 2024 aimed at revising the draft Management Plan for The Historic Centre of Odesa (Ukraine) World Heritage property. This initiative focuses on integrating an Emergency Preparedness Plan and establishing the DSOCR and a set of corrective measures. Two online workshops, held in December 2024 and January 2025 and bringing together national, regional and local authorities and key stakeholders to engage in the review process, were designed to ensure that all parties were aligned on the critical issues and steps necessary for the conservation and management of the property. Following the online workshops, a UNESCO/ICOMOS technical mission to Odesa in February 2025 was conducted in conjunction with the World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission (February 2025) and provided field expertise and further recommendations for the revision of the Draft Management Plan to ensure that it fully reflects the conservation priorities and necessary corrective measures to address the challenges outlined by the World Heritage Committee.

A4.3 Conservation / management activities at other sites

- 63. The Secretariat has organised training and activities to strengthen management and sustainable conservation of 16 World Heritage properties in the Africa region, as well as initiatives aiming to mitigate the impacts of development projects on the OUV of properties, such as awareness-raising activities for stakeholders.
- 64. In the Asia and the Pacific Region, Reactive Monitoring missions were conducted for seven World Heritage properties. Additionally, the World Heritage Centre undertook two Advisory missions in Uzbekistan, at the request of the State Party. UNESCO organised a capacity-building workshop for Western Tien-Shan (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan) in April 2025 in Almaty, Kazakhstan, aimed to support ongoing efforts by the concerned States Parties and site managers to strengthen their joint management and governance of serial transnational property, including joint wildlife monitoring.
- 65. UNESCO, in the framework of International Assistance, supported a geotechnical study and risk assessment of Fels Cave at the Chief Roi Mata's Domain (Vanuatu), which included baseline mapping, 3D laser scanning, and a detailed photo record of the rock art, as well as an assessment of the cave's external slope. This data is crucial for future conservation efforts. In December 2024, a major earthquake struck Vanuatu, causing the entrance of Fels Cave to collapse, highlighting the importance of the study. The collected data will now serve as a baseline for recovery efforts. Additionally, UNESCO's Field Office in Apia assisted Vanuatu in preparing a Heritage Emergency Fund proposal to assess post-disaster needs and provide technical support for the site's protection and promotion.
- 66. The World Heritage Centre is advancing the development of the World Heritage Online Map Platform (WHOMP), a GIS designed to improve monitoring and management of World Heritage sites. Supported by the Flanders Trust Fund and Heritage Emergency

Funds, WHOMP uses cutting-edge geospatial technologies to improve monitoring environmental and human-made threats to these sites. The platform now integrates live satellite data, external datasets, and early warning systems, linking them to the State of Conservation Information System (https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc) for real-time analysis and proactive decision-making. WHOMP has been enhanced to include geo-referenced maps for additional UNESCO-designated sites, particularly those protected under the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols. Initially focused on sites in Europe and North America, the platform now includes properties in Africa, with plans to extend its functionality to Biosphere Reserves and Geoparks, aiming to become the primary GIS tool for all UNESCO-designated sites globally.

A4.4 Impact assessments for World Heritage properties prepared by States Parties

- 67. Recent efforts and initiatives took place to enhance the preparation and implementation of impact assessments for World Heritage properties, with a focus on capacity building, technical support, and regional cooperation.
- 68. The World Heritage Centre supported the State Party of Malawi in the preparation and submission (March 2025) of a Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) for the rehabilitation of staff houses within Lake Malawi National Park. The HIA aims to evaluate the potential impact of the proposed project on the property's OUV and will undergo technical review by IUCN.
- 69. Although not all impact assessments are undertaken in line with the <u>Guidance and Toolkit</u> for <u>Impact Assessment in a World Heritage Context</u>, there is a noticeable increase in their preparation and submission to the World Heritage Centre. In Europe, the majority of countries in the region use impact assessment procedures quite systematically in relation to projects that relate to a World Heritage property. However, further site-specific training workshops seem needed.
- 70. In the framework of the trilateral Memorandum of Understanding between UNESCO, IUCN, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessments (NCEA) signed in 2023, the partners are cooperating to reinforce capacity building and quality assurance for Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) and Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA) for World Heritage properties.
- 71. Under the project Strengthening World Heritage management in World Heritage properties in Latin America and the Caribbean, the World Heritage Centre, the ICCROM/IUCN World Heritage Leadership (WHL) programme and the Regional World Heritage Institute in Zacatecas (Mexico) provided a 3-day course held online in Spanish in October 2024, which was attended by 65 site coordinators and heritage professionals from 15 States Parties in the region and Spain. This was followed by an online training of trainers workshop on 'Impact Assessment in a World Heritage Context' organised by the WHL programme, together with the World Heritage Centre, which took place online in Spanish in November 2024 and was attended by 15 site coordinators and heritage professionals from seven States Parties in the region and Spain. The workshop was structured around the methodology of the Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context
- A4.5 Management plans for World Heritage properties prepared / revised by States Parties
- 72. According to the results of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting across all regions, 71% (804 out of 1,128) of the World Heritage properties who submitted the reports have a Management Plan in place. Furthermore, 67% (759 out of 1,128) have a Statutory Management Plan or zoning plan for the property. When asked whether the Management System/Plan is adequate to maintain the property's OUV, 66% (746 out of 1,123) responded it was fully adequate, while 28% (310 out of 1,123) answered that it is only

- partially adequate and 2% (17 out of 1,123) answered that it was not adequate. The remaining properties had no Management System/Plan in place. It should also be noted that 81% (905 out of 1,124) of respondents reported that the authorities in charge of the property planned to use the data from the Periodic Reporting to update Management Plans.
- 73. The World Heritage Centre has successfully used the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting for the Europe and North America region to make significant progress in improving the management of World Heritage properties. This monitoring exercise has not only provided a comprehensive overview of the state of conservation of these properties but has also resulted in the collection of 91 new and updated Management Plans for properties across the region, since August 2023. These newly acquired Management Plans represent a critical step forward in ensuring the long-term conservation and sustainable management of World Heritage properties. They provide valuable, contextualised examples for World Heritage property managers and stakeholders to address challenges, set clear priorities and implement effective conservation strategies. Between June 2024 and March 2025, in the Arab States region, two Management Plans for properties have been submitted for technical review, in addition to a Natural Disaster and Risk Management Plan, as requested by the Committee.
- 74. Thanks to the financial contribution from the Government of Norway, the Secretariat is supporting the update of the Management Plan the Niokolo-Koba National Park (Senegal). Similar support is being provided to Ivindo National Park and to the Ecosystem and Relict Cultural Landscape of Lopé-Okanda (Gabon), where Management Plans are currently being updated with assistance from the Secretariat to strengthen conservation planning and implementation.

A4.6 Sustainable Development / SDGs

- 75. The World Heritage Centre continues to advance its leadership in integrating sustainable development and climate action into heritage conservation, building on key policy documents like the 2015 Policy for Integrating a Sustainable Development Perspective into the World Heritage Convention and the 2023 Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage, in close cooperation with the Advisory Bodies. A significant area of focus is supporting States Parties in finding an optimal balance between meeting the growing global demand for renewable energy and safeguarding the OUV of World Heritage properties.
- 76. In March 2023, the World Heritage Centre launched online *Guidance for Wind Energy Projects in a World Heritage Context*, developed in collaboration with ICCROM, ICOMOS, and IUCN, to help States Parties assess potential impacts of wind energy developments on heritage sites, while promoting clean energy. With further support from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Belgium, and the Swiss Confederation, this guidance is being expanded to include solar energy projects. This initiative contributes to global efforts to combat climate change and support the Sustainable Development Goals. A key milestone was a stakeholder workshop in Namur, Belgium, in March 2024, supported by the Walloon Heritage Agency and led by the World Heritage Centre in partnership with ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN, which addressed how solar energy solutions can be integrated responsibly into World Heritage site management. This comprehensive tool, set for release during the 47th session of the World Heritage Committee, will help States Parties to implement renewable energy solutions, contributing to climate change mitigation while ensuring the long-term protection of the world's most valuable heritage sites.
- 77. The UNESCO-Greece Melina Mercouri International Prize for the Conservation and Management of Cultural Landscapes plays a pivotal role in integrating local knowledge into conservation practices, thus contributing significantly to the preservation of cultural

heritage as a driver of sustainable development. Fully aligned with the 2030 Agenda and specifically supports SDGs 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 13 (Climate Action) and 15 (Life on Land), reinforcing the critical link between heritage conservation and the broader goals of environmental sustainability, climate resilience and community well-being. In its commitment to advancing these global goals, the UNESCO Executive Board, at its 220th session, renewed the Prize for the period 2024-2030. In addition, the call for nominations for the new edition of the Prize was launched in January 2025. By linking heritage conservation to the global sustainability agenda, the Prize remains a powerful tool for promoting integrated approaches to protecting the environment, advancing climate action and strengthening communities worldwide.

- 78. Reinforcing its leadership in heritage-based climate action, UNESCO co-led the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) report on Non-Economic Losses (NELs) focused on cultural heritage as well as loss of territory, and biodiversity and ecosystem losses published in December 2024. Building on the collaboration, a proposed new knowledge product focused only on the NELs of Cultural Heritage is currently under review by the UNFCCC Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage.
- 79. With the financial support from the Government of Flanders, UNESCO has continued its work on corporate sustainability and the World Heritage 'no-go' commitment (https://whc.unesco.org/en/no-go-commitment/), to encourage the corporate sector to endorse and apply safeguards on World Heritage as part of their business strategies. The database of corporate strategies and policies that support the protection of World Heritage has been updated to include the policies of several development finance institutions. UNESCO is also working with WWF and a group of investors to update WWF's 2015 study on activities of the extractive industries in World Heritage properties (https://whc.unesco.org/document/193197).
- 80. In collaboration with the Fondation pour la Sauvegarde du Patrimoine Culturel de Rabat (Maroc), UNESCO is holding a series of online workshops "African Heritage Sites Facing Climate Change", an initiative aimed to address various aspects related to the impacts of climate change on African heritage, in line with the orientations established in the 2023 Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage. The first workshop was held on 12 December 2024 and brought together over 300 participants, from African site managers, mentees, experts, civil society representatives, institutions to cultural heritage and professionals. The second workshop will be held in the first semester of 2025.

B. <u>PI 2</u>: Number of Member States supported in the identification and preparation of potential World Heritage Sites for nomination

B1. Trends and a few statistics on Nominations

- 81. Following the inscription of 24 new properties on the World Heritage List (four natural, 19 cultural and one mixed) by the Committee at its 46th session (New Delhi, 2024), the World Heritage List currently counts 1,223 properties across 168 States Parties, of which 952 are cultural, 231 natural and 40 mixed. At the same session, the Committee also approved two significant boundary modifications of properties already inscribed on the List.
- 82. Concerning the geographical distribution of inscriptions, the trend has been that more properties have been inscribed from the Europe and North America and the Asia and the Pacific regions than from the other three regions.
- 83. In terms of categories of properties inscribed, there has been a predominance of cultural properties over the other two categories (natural and mixed).

- 84. Over the last ten years, the number of nominations withdrawn has been decreasing, to about two to three per year, but no trend in their geographical distribution has been observed.
- 85. In 2025, the World Heritage Centre received 37 nomination dossiers (24 cultural, 10 natural and three mixed) by the annual deadline. Out of these, 32 (22 cultural, eight natural and two mixed) were considered as "complete" in conformity with Paragraph 132 and Annex 5 of the Operational Guidelines. The trend observed over the years has been for the Europe and North America and the Asia and the Pacific regions to submit more nomination dossiers than the other three regions. Concerning completeness of nomination dossiers, the recent trend has been for States Parties from all regions to submit nomination dossiers that are subsequently considered incomplete following the completeness check carried out by the Secretariat.
- 86. By the 2024 deadline, a total of 45 Preliminary Assessment requests were received (34 cultural, four natural and seven mixed) from all regions. Following the completeness check by the Secretariat, withdrawals and prioritization by submitting States Parties (in accordance with Paragraph 60bis of the Operational Guidelines), 34 Preliminary Assessment requests are being reviewed by the Advisory Bodies (26 cultural, three natural and five mixed). The list of all requests is included in Document WHC/25/47.COM/8.

B2. Trends on Tentative Lists

87. Regarding Tentative Lists, the trend in the categories of sites proposed for inclusion is clear, with a very high proportion of cultural sites. However, no trend is observed in the geographical distribution of submissions, with a great variation over the years.

B3. Support to Tentative Lists and to the preparation of Nomination dossiers

- In the framework of the "Capacity-building programme for the nomination of World Heritage sites in the Africa Region", supported by UNESCO/Japan Funds-in-Trust, the World Heritage Centre has provided technical support to assist eight States Parties of the region with no site on the UNESCO World Heritage List. In November 2024, the State Party of São Tomé and Príncipe submitted its first nomination dossier. Concurrently, following the submission of its nomination dossier, and pending examination, the World Heritage Centre has effectively mobilised resources to assist the State Party of Sierra Leone in developing an Integrated Management Plan, anticipated, at the moment of reporting, for completion by mid-2025. The States Parties of Djibouti, South Sudan and Liberia also received support in identifying sites for nomination dossiers. A field mission and capacity building workshops were conducted in South Sudan in February 2025, with similar activities scheduled for Djibouti in April 2025. Eswatini is being supported in revising its Tentative List, with a field mission invited to assess the potential site extension. Additionally, supported by International Assistance granted under the World Heritage Fund, Burundi's Tentative List revision is ongoing, and a workshop took place in April 2025, with the expectation to conclude the process in 2025, and the States Parties of Zambia and Malawi are also being supported to update their Tentative Lists.
- 89. Through the project "Creating a Sustainable Heritage Ecosystem for the Socioeconomic Development in Africa", two States Parties (Sao Tome and Principe and Comoros) have been supported in the preparation and submission of their first nomination dossier by 1 February 2025. The Secretariat is currently supporting the preparation for the nomination dossier for the State Party of Djibouti to which the dossier is anticipated to be submitted by 1 February 2026.
- 90. A capacity-building workshop on the Tentative List revision process is also scheduled for the second half of 2025 in Equatorial Guinea.

- 91. The World Heritage Centre is also providing technical support to the States Parties of Angola, Botswana and Namibia for the revision of their Tentative Lists, as a follow up of the recommendations of the feasibility study of a transboundary extension of the 'Okavango Delta' (Botswana) with the support of the Flanders UNESCO Trust-Fund.
- 92. In the framework of "the Sultanate of Oman Programme: Supporting capacity-building for nomination projects and promotion of World Heritage Sites in East Africa", five countries (Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Somalia and the United Republic of Tanzania) are supported in revising their Tentative List towards developing nomination dossiers. With this support, the State Party of Comoros successfully submitted a nomination dossier in January 2025 for the Historic Sultanates of Comoros, and Somalia submitted its revised Tentative List the same month. The United Republic of Tanzania and Madagascar are both supported for the revision of their Tentative List, in addition to the support of a nomination dossier for the Catholic Mission of Ambodifotatra in Madagascar. A field visit with capacity-building activities took place in Madagascar in February 2025, and the submission of the United Republic of Tanzania's Tentative List is anticipated for the end of 2025.
- 93. Thanks to funding from the Kingdom of the Netherlands and France, guidelines are being developed to support African States Parties to identify sites related to modern heritage of Africa and harmonise their Tentative Lists with a view to developing nominations for that category of heritage.
- 94. Thanks to support from the World Heritage Fund, the Cook Islands could submit their first Tentative List, adding 'Maungaroa' as the first nomination file currently under preparation by the national authorities of the Cook Islands.
- 95. In July 2024, Nauru ratified the World Heritage Convention as the 196th State Party. Following the ratification, several online meetings were organized by the World Heritage Centre with Nauru, providing guidance and support in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention at national level. As a result, Nauru submitted its first International Preparatory Assistance request to receive technical assistance from international experts in assessing national heritage sites, developing a five-year workplan for heritage conservation, and in reviewing the current National Heritage Act. This request was approved by the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee in February 2025, and the preparation of the implementation is ongoing and will conclude in December 2025.
- 96. Technical consultations for the preparation of a study on gaps in the World Heritage List for natural heritage in the Latin America and the Caribbean region were started, following the hypothesis that more natural and mixed nominations from the region are possible, in view of the implementation of the study by end 2025.

IV. REPORT ON THEMATIC PROGRAMMES

- 97. By Decision **45 COM 5A** (Riyadh, 2023), the Committee requested the World Heritage Centre to submit a result-based report on the Thematic Programmes under Item 5A, for examination at its 47th session.
- 98. These programmes are either fully funded under voluntary contributions or outsourced to respective partners under the overall strategic supervision of the World Heritage Centre. Their pursuit beyond 2025 will totally depend on their capacity to attract donors' interest.
- A. World Heritage Education Programme (in place since 1996) (https://whc.unesco.org/en/wheducation/)
- 99. The World Heritage Centre, through its World Heritage Education Programme and its diverse range of activities and initiatives, supported the capacities of States Parties in

furthering heritage education and awareness among youth globally, the Programme continued to mobilize local communities (through NGOs, youth organizations, institutions, etc.) to work alongside World Heritage Site Managers, UNESCO National Commissions and UNESCO Permanent Delegations and implement hands-on conservation activities at the sites. In a concerted effort to incorporate World Heritage into early education systems, the Programme continued to provide support to States Parties (through their National Commissions) towards educational resource kits in national and regional languages.

- 100. In its commitment to nurturing a new generation of heritage professionals, the Programme collaborated closely with States Parties to organize regional and international capacity-building trainings to provide in-depth expertise on conservation challenges along with a platform for intercultural exchange and mutual learning for the youth. A prime example of this collaboration is the World Heritage Young Professionals Forum 2024, convened as part of the 46th session of the Committee (New Delhi, 2024). It was organized in Pt. Deendayal Upadhyaya Institute of Archaeology, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture through the Archaeological Survey of India, under the theme of "World Heritage in the 21st Century: Building Capacities and Exploring Opportunities for Youth" in July 2024. 50 young professionals from 31 countries explored in depth various concepts and themes around heritage conservation, such as the use of innovative new technologies to promote World Heritage, sustainable tourism, understanding the impact of climate change and community involvement and attended multiple discussions, lectures, group work and site visits, led by local and international heritage experts (see https://whc.unesco.org/en/whypf2024/).
- 101. Additionally, the World Heritage Volunteers Initiative played a pivotal role in actively involving youth and local communities in preservation activities through the implementation of 81 action camp projects in 2024 at 77 World Heritage properties and sites on the Tentative Lists, by 64 organizations in 38 countries (see https://whc.unesco.org/en/whvolunteers/).
- 102. With the aim to better integrate World Heritage into early-education curricula and to translate the <u>UNESCO Global Framework for Culture and Arts Education</u> into action, the programme is updating the "World Heritage in Young Hands" Kit (open access), and its adaptation into interactive digital technology and open learning, which was last revised in 2002, in collaboration with UNESCO Associated Schools Network at the Education Sector. This revision is part of a larger project including capacity building for teachers, school campaigns and e-learning courses.
- 103. A project "E-learning for World Heritage and Climate Protection: Innovative Education for All" has been initiated in collaboration with the NGO Heritage & Education GmbH with the aim to increase awareness, knowledge and skills of school children and to address climate change and protect the World cultural and natural Heritage. This project aims to establish a dedicated website and craft two interactive learning modules (Introduction to World Heritage and Climate Change; and thematic learnings to offer systematic insights into the effects of Climate Change on World Heritage sites) for school children aged 9-16. This dedicated website will serve as an information gateway for knowledge sharing, promotion and community building among different stakeholders. It provides an elearning portal with direct access to various e-learning modules.
- 104. The Malagasy National Commission for UNESCO is organizing a capacity building workshop "Training on volunteering for World Heritage and Climate Action", in collaboration of the World heritage Centre and in the framework of the World Heritage Volunteers Initiative, from 30 April to 6 May 2025 in Antananarivo, Madagascar. This training aimed to introduce the challenges of climate change for heritage conservation and develop the strategic planning of the World Heritage Volunteers Initiative applied to climate and heritage action. It gathered representatives from partner organizations from

- the World Heritage Volunteers Initiative, mostly from the African region, and provided participants with the skills to design and implement participatory action research at the field level and develop volunteer project proposals based on the needs and engagement of the youth and communities at the World Heritage sites.
- 105. An innovative activity in the field of communication is a trilingual podcast series on World Heritage preservation. Financed by Brazil and realized by the World Heritage Centre and the UNESCO Field Office in Brasilia, this podcast is meant to reach out new audiences among young people. The first three episodes of the podcast, launched in the second trimester of 2024, focus on the themes of Climate Change, Transatlantic Slave Trade, and Transboundary Cooperation.
- B. World Heritage Cities Programme (adopted by the Committee in 2001) (https://whc.unesco.org/en/cities/)
- 106. The World Heritage Cities Programme continues to develop solutions, tools, and guidance for States Parties and to build their capacities to protect and manage urban heritage in a framework of sustainable development and climate action. Following several decisions requesting implementation of the 2011 Recommendation for the management of World Heritage properties in urban contexts that face increasing pressures from climate change and uncontrolled development, the activities of the Cities Programme have been fully aligned to the principles and approach of the 2011 Recommendation that forms the foundation and serves as the main tool for urban heritage conservation in World Heritage Cities.
- 107. The Third Member States Consultation on the implementation of the 2011 Recommendation carried out in 2022-2023 resulted in 187 reports from 69 Member States, including national and city level reports that were requested to report for the first time. Of the 125 cities that responded, 51% had World Heritage properties inscribed, and 29% of the responding cities had sites inscribed on their national Tentative List. The reports received confirmed the importance of the 2011 Recommendation as a tool for integrating heritage conservation and management with urban development, disaster risk reduction and climate action plans at the local level. The complete findings of the consultation are available in the report <u>Urban Heritage for Resilience</u>, which was published in November 2023.
- 108. Following several requests of the World Heritage Committee (Decisions 37 COM 12.II, 39 COM 11, 41 COM 7, 43 COM 7.3, 44 COM 7.2 and 45 COM 5A), for "a guidance document on urban heritage", the Cities Programme, in consultation with the Advisory Bodies, UNESCO Chairs, and other experts, has been developing a guidance Manual, Managing Urban Heritage for implementing the 2011 Recommendation and a first draft of this Manual has been prepared.
- 109. A digital platform, the <u>UNESCO Urban Heritage Atlas</u> (Atlas) was developed by the World Heritage Centre, in consultation with the Advisory Bodies, UNESCO Chairs and other experts, thanks to the support of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and launched at an Information Meeting for all Member States on 9 February 2024. As a repository of knowledge on World Heritage Cities as well as a tool for the implementation of the 2011 Recommendation, the Atlas is linked to the *Managing Urban Heritage* Manual under preparation with additional digital tools to support site managers and city authorities of historic cities and settlements to better manage their urban heritage with the 2011 Recommendation as well as communicate and raise awareness of civil society groups.
- 110. Engaging and building capacities of site managers from Africa and the SIDS has been a priority. Thanks to the financial support of the government of Norway and the World Heritage Fund, the Cities Programme has been contributing to several projects of the

- World Heritage Centre in Africa as for instance towards successful restoration work of the Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi (Uganda).
- 111. The World Heritage Centre continues to collaborate with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to advance the integration of culture and heritage in the design and management of cities and settlements. UNESCO's active participation in the 12th World Urban Forum (WUF12) in Cairo, Egypt, in November 2024, include several high-level sessions, significantly advanced awareness and understanding of the 2011 Recommendation, particularly with respect to public space and local communities.
- 112. The Cities Programme has been collaborating closely with UNESCO Chairs related to urban heritage from co-organizing a global workshop of related UNESCO Chairs at the Politecnico di Milano (Italy) to explore design of new interventions in historic urban areas. Another collaboration with the UNESCO Chair from TU Delft (Kingdom of the Netherlands) resulted in co-organizing an international workshop on '(Re)Connecting River with the City' together with the Paris Institute for Advanced Study (IEA), Sorbonne Université (France), highlighting sustainable water historical and traditional practices from World Heritage Cities to reconnect communities with waterbodies to (re)establish liveable, sustainable, and resilient environments in the face of climate change.
- 113. With a view to engaging with other international agreements, the Cities Programme has actively collaborated with the Davos Alliance for Baukultur. Participating in the annual meetings of the Alliance each year, most recently, UNESCO led the theme of nature-positive solutions for climate resilient cities and settlements, drawing on case studies from the UNESCO World Heritage Canopy platform that was also showcased in their publications.
- 114. Following Member States calls to integrate climate action with the implementation of the 2011 Recommendation (such as during the 42nd session of the General Conference, the 216th session of the Executive Board, the 45th and 46th sessions of the World Heritage Committee), increased focus has been placed on activities related to climate change adaptation and sustainable development. In this regard, the Cities Programme has collaborated with the Group on Earth Observation (GEO), the Greek GEO Office, and the Academy of Athens to look at climate change in 114 World Heritage Cities in the Mediterranean region using earth observation data together with on-the-ground reporting from the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting on these World Heritage Cities to examine climate change related threats as well as their cultural heritage as a resource to enhance resilience.
- 115. In response to nearly a third of the properties inscribed on the World Heritage List being historic cities or settlements, and the immense pressure of uncontrolled urban development on urban heritage, and the Committee's call to integrate sustainable development, resilience, and climate action for World Heritage Cities, the Cities Programme has developed methodologies, frameworks, tools, guidance, and good practices operating almost exclusively on extrabudgetary funding to support both activities and the temporary staff to implement them.
- C. World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Programme (adopted by the Committee in 2001, revised in 2012) (https://whc.unesco.org/en/tourism/)
- 116. To support a more integrated and forward-looking approach to tourism at World Heritage properties, the World Heritage Centre will undertake a review of tourism-related projects across sites. This review aims to enhance strategic coherence and ensure alignment with the objectives of the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme. The review will help identify good practices, gaps, and opportunities to strengthen the role of tourism in supporting conservation, community engagement, and the safeguarding of Outstanding Universal Value, while promoting sustainable development outcomes.

- 117. Within the framework of the project "Heritage and Creativity for AlUla's Sustainable Development," supported by the Royal Commission of AlUla (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) important progress has been made in advancing sustainable tourism initiatives. A regional seminar on visitor centres and visitor management was successfully convened, bringing together international experts and local stakeholders to inform the development of the Hegra Gateway Interpretation Centre. Additional activities are currently underway to support sustainable tourism planning and capacity-building, including the design of heritage itineraries, development of visitor management tools, and regional workshops focused on site presentation and interpretation. These efforts are reinforcing AlUla's positioning as a model for heritage-based sustainable tourism.
- 118. The Communities for Heritage: Latin America and the Caribbean project aims to enhance community engagement in managing and safeguarding the region's rich cultural and natural heritage. Supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the project is part of the UNESCO Programme on Culture and Digital Technologies and is being implemented during 2023-2026 in collaboration with Educational and Cultural Coordination of the Central American Integration System (CECC/SICA) and is benefiting ten countries in the region: Belize, Cuba, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama. UNESCO is enhancing visitor management in World Heritage sites through management training programmes and 'cash for work' schemes for communities focused on sustainable tourism and heritage conservation. In addition, the project is supporting the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts through community-based identification, inventories and policy guidance development.
- 119. A major initiative in the field of sustainable tourism in the Latin America and the Caribbean region since 2023 is the synergy project "Latin America and the Caribbean: Strengthening Capacities for Resilient Communities through Sustainable Tourism and Heritage Safeguarding", implemented in collaboration with the UNESCO Living Heritage Entity. Based on an interdisciplinary approach linking tangible and intangible heritage, during 2024, the tourism component of the project focused on training sites on the use of the Visitor Management Assessment and Strategy Tool (VMAST), an addition to the UNESCO World Heritage Sustainable Tourism Toolkit that complements and integrates the 'How to' guides and the Sustainable Development Goals. VMAST is specifically developed within the context of the World Heritage Convention to help site management authorities manage visitation and tourism for the protection of heritage values while contributing towards local sustainable development, adaptive and resilient communities. Capacity building activities included an in-person workshop on enhancing visitor management and community engagement for site managers from nine countries in Oaxaca, Mexico, supported by the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Tourism of the State of Oaxaca. As part of this training process, the VMAST indicators were updated to be in line with current policy and practice and the tool was translated into Spanish. During 2025, UNESCO organised in-depth consultations with site managers and analysis of VMAST results to identify priorities for capacity building for the project. Governance, managing visitor flows and community engagement were some of the key challenges identified.
- D. Small Island Developing States Programme (adopted by the Committee in 2005) (https://whc.unesco.org/en/sids/)
- 120. At the request of the World Heritage Committee in its Decision **46 COM 14**, the activities of the World Heritage Programme for SIDS are reported under Document WHC/25/47.COM/5E.

- E. World Heritage Marine Programme (adopted by the Committee in 2005) (https://whc.unesco.org/en/marine-programme)
- 121. The World Heritage Marine Programme currently works across 51 natural properties in 37 Member States. The programme's work focuses on a) strengthening the network of marine World Heritage managers to share and replicate management solutions; b) strengthening climate resilience by improving local management capacity; and c) accelerate understanding of climate impacts on World Heritage protected biodiversity and ecosystems.
- 122. Researching climate impacts and assisting sites with local biodiversity monitoring through Environmental DNA (eDNA): The "eDNA Expeditions" is a global citizen science initiative that measures marine biodiversity and provides early insights into how climate change may affect marine life distribution in World Heritage sites. The 2022-2023 sampling campaign engaged 250 citizen scientists, as young as six years old, in 21 marine World Heritage sites across 19 States Parties, who identified nearly 4,500 species, including IUCN Red Listed, and concluded that nearly all fish species identified are nearing their thermal limits as a result of climate change. The project is led by the Programme in collaboration with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and funded by the Government of Flanders (Belgium). The findings were published in the report 'UNESCO eDNA Expeditions: Engaging Communities to Safeguard Ocean Life' in December 2024.
- 123. With the support of the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, four World Heritage Listed coral reefs in Palau, Belize, France and Australia, have now <u>community-driven resilience</u> <u>strategies</u> in place which are being implemented through over 30 resilience projects and the help of nearly 75 local delivery partners.
- 124. With the support of the French Agency for Biodiversity, the 5th global marine World Heritage managers conference was organized in the Wadden Sea World Heritage property in October 2023, of which the results were reflected in a summary report. In September 2024, managers from the 13 marine World Heritage sites in the Latin America and the Caribbean region convened in Peninsula Valdès for the first regional managers meeting, focusing on the region's commonly shared marine challenges such as the avian bird flu crisis, sustainable visitor management and climate adaptation. Three online webinars were organized, including on carbon credit financing for World Heritage conservation, sustainable tourism and the effects of the 4th global mass bleaching event. With the support of the principality of Monaco, a feasibility study is being undertaken to assist the government of Mauritania with the establishment of a sustainable finance system, derived from its significant blue carbon assets, through the international carbon credit market.
- 125. The Programme continues to focus on climate change, the biggest threat to the conservation of the marine sites. Two thirds of marine sites are unprepared to deal with the impacts of climate change due to the lack of available scientific knowledge, technical capacity and/or financial resources. The Programme works with scientists to assess impacts across all sites, build resilience and climate adaptation strategies, monitor impacts on local biodiversity and improve resource mobilization.
- 126. Building resilience at coral reefs: with the help of an USD 10,5 million investment and implemented through an international consortium of partners, four World Heritage-listed coral reefs in Palau, Belize, France and Australia have launched community-led resilient strategies and are implementing more than 30 local climate actions collectively (https://whc.unesco.org/en/reefresilience/). UNESCO partnered with the Global Fund for Coral Reefs to support resilience-building activities in developing countries and actively works together with the fund to channel investment to World Heritage properties.
- 127. Carbon assets and carbon credits: In partnership with the Principality of Monaco, efforts are underway to explore how blue carbon credits could fund conservation activities in

World Heritage marine sites. The workshop, organized in partnership with the UNESCO IOC, brought together marine protected area practitioners from around the world and leading players in the carbon credit markets, who shared first-hand insights into how blue carbon credits work to bring finance to marine protected areas around the world and their communities. UNESCO has hosted several additional online exchanges between site managers and international experts to build capacity on this topic. As a result, a prefeasibility assessment for a blue carbon project is now in progress at the Banc d'Arguin National Park World Heritage site (Mauritania), with the involvement of one of experts engaged by UNESCO.

- 128. The Programme continues efforts to strengthen the network of World Heritage marine site managers and facilitates sharing of expertise, lessons learnt and best practices, via exchange of staff, online meetings, and tri-annual global, in-person managers conferences (https://whc.unesco.org/en/marine-managers/).
- 129. In 2016, the Committee recalled that "the implementation of thematic priorities is no longer feasible without extra-budgetary funding" (Decision 40 COM 5D, paragraph 13). This was very clear for the Marine Programme, which operated for almost 20 years only with extrabudgetary funding which supported both activities and the temporary staff to implement them.

V. SYNERGIES WITH OTHER CONVENTIONS AND PROGRAMMES

A. Culture Conventions and Programmes

- 130. The World Heritage Centre is involved in the organization of the second Naples Conference on Cultural Heritage in the 21st century, 4-6 June 2025, in Naples (Italy) (see https://www.unesco.org/en/culture/naples-conference). The Conference, which is building on the success and outcomes of the first Conference in 2023 will have the primary objective to take stock of the implementation of the Call for Action 'Spirit of Naples. It will address practical actions for safeguarding heritage and will also make substantive contributions, particularly in the areas of cultural rights, culture and climate action, economy of culture, and culture, heritage and crises, to the forthcoming World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development MONDIACULT 2025.
- 131. MONDIACULT 2025, which will take place in Barcelona, Spain, from 29 September to 1 October 2025 (https://www.unesco.org/en/mondiacult) will offer a unique opportunity to build on the commitments made at MONDIACULT 2022 (Mexico), serving as a global platform for inclusive dialogue on cultural policies. It will focus on advancing cultural rights, strengthening international solidarity, and enhancing culture's role in sustainable development. In a time of global transitions and rising inequalities, reinforcing intergovernmental dialogue on and through culture is crucial. Multilateralism is essential for fostering collective solutions, with culture acting as a key driver of inclusive and locally grounded development, empowering communities and respecting diverse worldviews. The conference will focus on the six priority domains defined in 2022 (Cultural Rights; Digital technologies in the culture sector; Culture and education; Economy of culture; Culture and climate action; Culture, heritage and crisis) and will open dialogue on two focus areas that have emerged as important for UNESCO Member States since 2022: Culture and peace, and Artificial intelligence and culture.
- 132. At the UNESCO Culture Sector level, two workshops were held for the development of the Cultural Monitoring Platform, for which the World Heritage Centre has been providing inputs. This online platform would provide a common entry point to serve multiple objectives, including enabling evidence-based cultural policies, consolidating data collection and analysis for UNESCO' staff and stakeholders through a structured

- process, and improving communication by implementing data visualisation to present its public data and information to a wider audience.
- 133. On the periodic reporting on the Culture Sector's conventions, regular meetings have taken place to foster synergies between different conventions, recommendations, and programmes and to try aligning the reporting periods on national policies. This exercise is also being undertaken in the framework of the reflection for the World Heritage Convention Periodic Reporting (also see Document WHC/25/47.COM/10 for further details).

B. Biodiversity-related Conventions and Programmes

B1. Collaboration with other biodiversity-related Conventions and programmes

- 134. The activities of the Secretariat related to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) are reported under Document WHC/25/47.COM/5D. This includes reporting on the outcomes of the Expert Meeting on synergies between the World Heritage Convention and the GBF, organised in November 2024 (https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2748) and which was financially supported by the Governments Germany, Switzerland and Norway.
- 135. As part of implementing the World Heritage Committee Decision **46 COM 7A.52** for the Rainforests of the Atsinanana (Madagascar), the Secretariat has organised in March 2025, a joint World Heritage Centre/IUCN/CITES Reactive Monitoring mission to the site to assess progress made in implementing the corrective measures needed to achieve the Desired state of conservation of removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (DSOCR) and to update the corrective measures, as well as their implementation schedule, with a view to eventual removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger (see Document WHC/25/47.COM/7A).
- 136. UNESCO is working with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), IUCN, and other partners on the operationalization of the Joint Programme of Work (JPOW) on the links between biological and cultural diversity. For UNESCO the JPOW is coordinated by UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) Programme.
- 137. UNESCO took part in the 16th Conference of Parties (COP-16) to the CBD in October 2024 in Cali, Colombia (https://www.unesco.org/en/biodiversity/cop16), co-organised the Nature and Culture Summit 2024 (https://www.cbd.int/conferences/2024/parallel-meetings/nature-culture-summit), and published a regional study "Pathways for peace with nature: achieving global biodiversity goals in UNESCO Designated Sites, Latin America and the Caribbean" (https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391707).
- 138. The World Heritage Centre participated online in the meeting of the Liaison Group of Biodiversity-related Conventions (BLG) organised at FAO Headquarters in Rome (Italy) in February 2025, ahead of the second part of COP-16 of the CBD. The executive heads of the Conventions discussed common work on the implementation of the GBF and relevant events of the Conventions (https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2749). BLG meeting reports are available at https://www.cbd.int/blg/.
- 139. The World Heritage Centre has continued to promote the World Wetlands Day (https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2740) and the World Wildlife Day (https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2750).

B2. Collaboration with other UNESCO programmes

140. UNESCO is conducting an external evaluation of the <u>UNESCO Earth Network</u>, a capacity building programme supporting UNESCO designated sites and elements of intangible cultural heritage.

- 141. The World Heritage Centre is collaborating with the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP) of UNESCO in the implementation of joint activities in view of the 2025 International Year of Glaciers' Preservation. Joint activities include the preparation of a comprehensive global outreach and awareness campaign and support to the implementation of scientific research and monitoring initiatives as well as sustainable measures and best practices for the preservation of glaciers in World Heritage sites.
- 142. During the UN Decade of Ocean Science led by UNESCO (2021-2030), the World Heritage Centre intends to strengthen its multidisciplinary cooperation with the UNESCO IOC.
- 143. The World Heritage Centre collaborated closely with UNESCO's IOC to implement the UNESCO environmental DNA (eDNA) Expeditions initiative (see Section IV.E. above) from October 2021 until December 2024. It is the world's first global use case for detecting ocean biodiversity with citizen-science using shared eDNA collection approaches.
- 144. The World Heritage Centre has also initiated discussions with the UNESCO Natural Sciences Sector, in particular the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) Programme, to develop a joint proposal to support conservation efforts and improve local communities' well-being in the Lakes of Ounianga, a natural property in Chad, inscribed on the World Heritage List since 2012.

VI. KEY CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

- 145. The World Heritage Convention continues to face a major challenge in achieving balanced representation on the World Heritage List. Despite longstanding recognition of this issue, sites from various parts of the world remain significantly less represented or not represented at all. This imbalance not only weakens the universality of the Convention but also limits the global narrative of shared heritage. While the Openended Working Group established in 2023 has initiated constructive dialogue (see Paragraph 16 above and Documents WHC/24/46.COM/11 and WHC/25/47.COM/11), systemic barriers—including technical capacity gaps, limited access to preparatory funding, and unequal access to advisory services—persist. Addressing this imbalance will require not just procedural changes, but long-term investment in capacity-building with regards to the nomination process, for which the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies remain fully mobilized.
- 146. The accelerating **impacts of climate change** pose one of the most serious threats to World Heritage properties, both natural and cultural. Increasingly frequent extreme weather events, coastal erosion, desertification, wildfires, and climate-induced migration are putting the integrity and viability of many sites at risk. Cultural heritage is also being affected through the disruption of traditional knowledge systems and community livelihoods. The 2023 Policy Document on Climate Action and new tools such as Renewable Energy Guidance are important steps, but implementation remains uneven across regions. Greater support is needed to conduct climate risk assessments, promote adaptation at site level, and integrate heritage into broader climate strategies. Heritage must be recognized not only as vulnerable, but also as a resource for climate resilience.
- 147. Furthermore, **development pressures**, particularly from infrastructure expansion, extractive industries, and unregulated urban growth, continue to drive threats to the OUV of World Heritage properties. Due to the increasing complexity of conservation-related issues, the number of Impact Assessments submitted to the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies has increased significantly in recent years. While this demonstrates a growing awareness of the need to safeguard heritage in planning processes, it also adds substantially to the workload -requiring additional human and financial resources and highlights the need for stronger national frameworks to screen, assess, and manage

- development impacts effectively. Early engagement, improved quality of assessments, and better integration into planning cycles are crucial to prevent irreversible harm to heritage. Meeting this demand comes at a considerable cost, further straining the World Heritage Centre's capacity to effectively address conservation challenges.
- 148. The entire and meaningful **involvement of local communities and indigenous peoples** in all World Heritage processes is not just a matter of principle—it is a necessity for sustainable and inclusive conservation. Too often, these groups are consulted late or not at all, leading to ineffective management, social tensions, and missed opportunities for local stewardship. Indigenous peoples and local communities are the custodians of invaluable knowledge and practices, and their participation enhances both resilience and legitimacy of heritage protection. The Convention must operationalize its commitments by embedding community rights and roles in the nomination processes, governance structures, as well as monitoring mechanisms. Capacity-building, benefit-sharing, and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) must become standard practice.
- 149. All of these challenges and the increasing requests from the Governing Bodies are occurring in the context of **limited and overstretched financial and human resources**, which hinder the ability of the Secretariat to deliver in satisfactory conditions. The World Heritage Centre, despite generous voluntary contributions, continues to face a widening gap between workload and capacity. The rising volume of properties on the World Heritage List, the complexity of conservation issues, and the increased demand for technical review and support cannot be met through project-based funding alone. A predictable, well-resourced Secretariat is essential for the Convention to remain credible, effective, and responsive to global challenges. Sustainable solutions must include long-term staffing, diversified funding sources, and stronger partnerships with States Parties and civil society. This mismatch undermines the Secretariat's capacity to adequately support States Parties and fulfil its duties under the Convention.

VII. DRAFT DECISION

Draft Decision: 47 COM 5A

The World Heritage Committee,

- 1. Having examined Documents WHC/25/47.COM/5A and WHC/25/47.COM/INF.5A.
- 2. <u>Recalling</u> Decisions **45 COM 5A** and **46 COM 5A** adopted at its extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023) and 46th (New Delhi, 2024) sessions respectively,
- 3. <u>Takes note with appreciation</u> of the activities undertaken by the World Heritage Centre over the past year in pursuit of Output 5.CLT1 to ensure that "Member States' capacities [are] strengthened to identify, protect and manage tangible heritage", and the five Strategic Objectives of the World Heritage Committee;
- 4. <u>Commends</u> the government of Norway for its continued substantial contribution to the World Heritage Fund to strengthen management and conservation of threatened natural World Heritage properties in Africa, including those inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger and calls on other States Parties to join this this initiative;
- 5. <u>Thanks</u> all the States Parties, notably Andorra, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belgique (Government of Flanders), Brazil, Cambodia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, India, Italy, Japan, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Monaco, Norway, Poland, Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Spain, Sultanate of Oman, Switzerland, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Viet Nam, that generously supported financially and/or in kind both the

- activities towards the implementation of the Convention, in Africa particularly and in line with the Priority Africa, as well as the reinforcement of the human resources of the World Heritage Centre, and <u>invites</u> other States Parties to continue providing such support and increase it where possible;
- 6. Thanks the States Parties that have provided georeferenced data for inclusion into the World Heritage Online Map Platform, encourages all States Parties to provide such data, including in nomination dossiers or in boundary clarification and modification requests, in order to fully benefit from the potential of this tool for monitoring the state of conservation of World Heritage properties, invites States Parties to contribute to the World Heritage Online Map Platform with expertise, networks and financial resources, and thanks the Government of Flanders (Belgium) and the Heritage Emergency Fund for the support provided;
 - 7. <u>Requests</u> the World Heritage Centre to present a report on its activities at its 48th session, as well as an updated result-based report on Thematic Programmes, under the Report of the World Heritage Centre on its activities, for examination at its 49th session.