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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 10 of the Provisional Agenda: General reflection on Periodic Reporting

## SUMMARY

This document is presented pursuant to Decisions **45 COM 10E** and **46 COM 10C**. It contains the results of the Feasibility Study as requested by the World Heritage Committee at its extended 45th session (Riyadh, 2023) and a report on the reflection of the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting as requested by the Committee at its 46th session (New Delhi, 2024).

The general web page on Periodic Reporting can be accessed at the following address: <u>https://whc.unesco.org/en/periodicreporting/</u>.

Draft Decision: 47 COM 10, see Point VI

## I. Background

- The Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting (2018–2024) concluded at the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee (New Delhi, 2024). Recognizing the need to further refine this process, the Committee decided to launch a one-year Reflection Period, from July 2024 to June 2025 (Decision <u>46 COM 10C</u>). In response to the Committee's request, this report presents the results of a comprehensive review of the Third Cycle.
- 2. Periodic Reporting is a statutory process established under Article 29 of the World Heritage Convention (hereinafter the Convention) and regulated through Chapter V of the Operational Guidelines. The analysis of the findings from the reports submitted by States Parties is then used as the basis for drafting Regional Action Plans, through a collaborative process that may involve national focal points, site managers, Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre (hereinafter WHC). These plans are a tool for setting regional priorities and respond to the needs and priorities of those directly engaged in the protection and management of World Heritage properties.
- 3. Three cycles of Periodic Reporting have taken place to date: the First Cycle (1998–2006), the Second Cycle (2008–2015), and the Third Cycle (2018–2024). After each cycle, a Reflection Period is initiated, allowing the process to be revised. The Third Cycle introduced several methodological improvements, including a revised questionnaire, a robust online reporting platform, and the integration of monitoring indicators aligned with the objectives of the Convention and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Unlike the previous two-year Reflection Periods, the shortened timeframe of the current one year reflects the growing maturity of the Periodic Reporting mechanism. Over the years, the process has become more structured and effective, with significant groundwork laid during the previous Cycles, including enhanced data collection and feedback mechanisms, allowing for a focused and targeted Reflection Period.
- 4. Pursuant to Decisions <u>45 COM 10E</u> (Riyadh, 2023) and <u>46 COM 10C</u> (New Delhi, 2024), in addition to examining the effectiveness of the reporting tools and methodologies, this Reflection Period also explored the feasibility of reducing the timeline of the reporting cycles, establishing a common reporting deadline for all regions, and developing synergies with other international instruments and programmes related to cultural and natural heritage, particularly within the framework of sustainable development. Consideration was also given to how the data and outcomes from Periodic Reporting could be used to inform other global reporting mechanisms especially UNESCO's Global Report on Cultural Policies (herein after UNESCO Global Report). The Reflection Period has therefore provided an opportunity to enhance a global perspective that would complement, rather than replace, the existing regional approach while informing a broader analysis of the state of World Heritage and contributing to other global conservation efforts.
- 5. This report presents the key findings and recommendations emerging from the Reflection Period. It identifies opportunities to strengthen the overall process and proposes preliminary revisions to the format of the questionnaire to simplify its structure, reduce the number of questions, and enhance clarity and usability. These revisions aim to address concerns raised during the Third Cycle, ensuring that the questionnaire is accessible for national focal points and site managers, while improving the efficiency and quality of data collection. In addition, the report reflects on the analytical framework and monitoring indicators introduced during the Third Cycle, with a view to refining and consolidating these tools to support more coherent analysis and reporting across all regions in the Fourth Cycle.

## II. Implementation of the Periodic Reporting Reflection period

6. The preparation of this report structured around three main strands designed to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach to improve the Periodic Reporting process: 1) a review of the recommendations formulated by States Parties during the Third Cycle; 2) a targeted survey to gather further feedback and 3) a series of interviews with States Parties, UNESCO staff, experts from all regions who were involved in the process, and representatives from the Advisory Bodies. These strands provided multiple layers of input and analysis, ensuring that recommendations for improvement were grounded in practical experience and reflected diverse perspectives.

## A. Analysis of the recommendations from States Parties for the improvement of the Periodic Reporting process through the reports of the Third Cycle

7. The analysis of recommendations for improving the Periodic Reporting process started with a review of an initial overview of the feedback and suggestions received from States Parties during the Third Cycle (see Document <u>WHC/24/46.COM/10C</u>). Building on it, a detailed analysis of the responses was conducted to examine the recommendations, identifying recurring challenges, gaps, and opportunities for improvement. The focus was on key aspects such as simplifying the questionnaire, reducing redundancy, improving the clarity and accessibility of questions, enhancing the usability of the online platform, and strengthening capacity-building efforts.

## B. Periodic Reporting Reflection Survey

- 8. To complement the above analysis and gather further feedback from States Parties, a Periodic Reporting Reflection Survey was officially launched on 14 February 2025 with a deadline of 7 March 2025. The survey aimed to gather inputs on several aspects of the Periodic Reporting process, with a particular focus on the following topics:
  - a) Relevance and perceptions of the Periodic Reporting process;
  - b) Contribution to raising awareness of key aspects for effective implementation of the Convention;
  - c) Usefulness of background materials and clarity of guidance provided;
  - d) Ease of use of the online platform;
  - e) Impact of Regional Action Plans on national conservation efforts; and
  - f) Suggestions for future improvements to address reporting challenges.
- 9. A total of 384 respondents (260 site managers, 71 national focal points and 53 holding other positions) participated in the survey. Key findings highlighted broad support for the Periodic Reporting process as a strategic opportunity for reflection and self-assessment. Respondents noted its usefulness in raising awareness of World Heritage responsibilities, informing national priorities and improving management practices at property level. At the same time, they reiterated recommendations from States Parties during the Third Cycle. Respondents were also invited to identify emerging thematic areas that deserve greater attention in future cycles. The most frequently selected themes included: the role of World Heritage in contributing to societal well-being and community benefits; inclusive heritage governance with the participation of local communities, Indigenous Peoples and civil society; and the development of strategies for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. The outcomes of the survey have directly informed the recommendations presented in Chapter III.

### C. Reflection meetings and consultations

- 10. All regional Units of the WHC participated in structured interviews. Discussions explored the benefits and challenges of coordinating the reporting, the alignment of findings of the Periodic Reporting with other monitoring processes, the complexity and time demands of the exercise, and the relevance and implementation of Regional Action Plans. Discussions also explored how the process stimulates or falls short in fostering regional cooperation, particularly in terms of the development and implementation of Regional Action Plans and shared strategies for heritage conservation and reporting deadlines especially in connection to the UNESCO Global Report.
- 11. In addition, representatives from other key WHC Units were consulted, including the Nominations Unit, the Natural Heritage Unit, the Policy and Statutory Meetings Unit (World Heritage Education Programme), and those responsible for the online platform and data management. An interview was also conducted with representatives from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, who provided insights into improving data collection methods and refining the formulation of multiple-choice questions. Their feedback provided valuable insights into operational challenges and potential solutions to enhance the reporting process, also in the wider context of the UNESCO Global Report.
- 12. Further consultations were also conducted with some States Parties and members of the World Heritage Committee, particularly in relation to the preparation of the Feasibility Study. Discussion explored, among others, effective practices and areas of improvement concerning the analytical framework of the Third Cycle and its monitoring indicators, synergies with other Conventions and Programmes, the UNESCO Global Report, and the possibility of reducing the reporting cycles and establishing of a common reporting deadline for all regions. These inputs contributed to the Feasibility Study presented in Chapter IV, as well as to other sections of this report.
- 13. Consultations also extended to representatives of the Advisory Bodies, who offered critical perspectives on the use of their expertise during the Third Cycle and provided suggestions for enhancing their contribution to future cycles. Discussions explored how they utilise data from the Periodic Reporting to support other statutory processes, such as Reactive Monitoring, and especially to inform their capacity-building activities, particularly by identifying areas where States Parties require additional guidance, training, and resources to strengthen heritage conservation efforts.
- 14. In addition, consultants who supported capacity-building as well as the drafting of Regional Reports and Action Plans during the Third Cycle provided valuable insights into the process. They highlighted the challenges of managing complex data sets and producing reports that effectively synthesize diverse national inputs into coherent regional narratives. Variations in national frameworks, resources, and conservation challenges make it difficult to develop Action Plans that are both comprehensive and relevant across all States Parties. Additional difficulties were noted in addressing the reliability of self-assessed data and in extracting qualitative information, which is always harder to capture compared to quantitative data. They also emphasized the need for the Periodic Reporting process to better capture regional specificities and enhance its relevance for national focal points and site managers, ensuring that future cycles are more responsive to regional contexts and needs.
- 15. On 26 March 2025, the Secretariat held a workshop to explore synergies between the UNESCO *Culture*|*2030 Indicators* and the Periodic Reporting exercise of the Convention. The event brought together experts of both programmes, representatives from the WHC and the Advisory Bodies to discuss the implementation and integration of the indicators at national, urban, and World Heritage property levels. The discussion made emerge weaknesses and strengths of the Periodic Reporting based on self-reporting.

## III. Strengthening the Periodic Reporting process: findings, opportunities for improvement and future directions

16. This Chapter presents the review of the Third Cycle. The first sub-chapter summarises the main findings, while the second focuses specifically on the format of the questionnaire. The final section outlines strategic recommendations and methodological approaches to inform the preparation and implementation of the Fourth Cycle. These reflections aim to strengthen its process and ensure it continues to serve as an effective tool for monitoring, planning and cooperation under the Convention.

## A. Main Findings from the Third Cycle and the Reflection Period

17. This section highlights key insights that emerged from the analysis of the Third Cycle and the consultations held during the Reflection Period. It brings together perspectives and inputs from a wide range of professionals involved in the implementation of the Convention as described in Chapter II. Their contributions reflect diverse but complementary experiences and provide a broad understanding of how the Periodic Reporting process is experienced and applied at different levels.

Periodic Reporting is widely regarded as a valuable opportunity for national and property-level reflection and for strengthening collaboration across governance levels

- 18. Feedback gathered through the different information sources points to an overall perception of the Periodic Reporting process as a meaningful and useful exercise, particularly in supporting reflection at both national and property levels. It is considered a dedicated moment to review how cultural and natural heritage is being protected and managed, to provide updated information on both successes and challenges, and to document changing circumstances affecting World Heritage properties.
- 19. The Periodic Reporting process encourages collaboration and strengthens communication between national focal points and site managers. It is a moment to come together and serves as a platform for professional exchange among heritage practitioners at different levels and across World Heritage properties. This collaborative dimension is considered particularly beneficial for mutual learning, knowledge-sharing and informal peer support.
- 20. Data from the Third Cycle reports indicated that only 47% of respondents considered that Periodic Reporting adequately provides a mechanism for regional cooperation. Survey results reflect a similar perception: 40% of respondents described it as a mechanism for regional cooperation and exchange of information and experiences between States Parties, while only 27% saw it as a tool to identify priorities for developing Regional Action Plans. his dimension is perceived as a limited benefit of the process. At the same time, only 12% of survey respondents described the process as an obligation with limited practical benefits, indicating that such views are not widely held.

Ambiguity around the primary target audience of Periodic Reporting weakens the focus and coherence of the questionnaire

21. Comments submitted through the questionnaires suggest that Periodic Reporting is sometimes perceived as being primarily focused on data collection, with limited emphasis on the use of results to support heritage management or capacity-building. There remains a lack of clarity around for whom the Periodic Reporting process is mainly designed and who it is intended to benefit, particularly in terms of the data it generates. Although it is promoted as a self-assessment exercise for States Parties, the content of the questionnaire often appears more closely aligned with the needs of UNESCO and its global monitoring functions. Clarifying the intended users and beneficiaries of the

process, as well as considering how they are expected to use the data and for what purposes – could streamline the questionnaire by ensuring that the type, number, and formulation of questions reflect that intent. The underlying principle should be to collect data that is used; if data serves no clear purpose, it should not be collected.

#### The potential of Periodic Reporting data to inform policy and action remains underused

- 22. Based on the analysis of the Periodic Reporting data across regions, the most common use of data is for improving the State Party's implementation on the Convention (93%), followed by revising priorities/strategies/policies for the protection, management and conservation of heritage (91%) and awareness raising (86%). Updating management plans is also significant (79%), whereas fundraising is less frequently prioritised (44%).
- 23. More than half of the national focal points (37 out of 71) who responded to the Reflection Survey reported that the outcomes of the Periodic Reporting exercise have led to the creation or revision of policies or strategies aimed at strengthening heritage conservation and management at the national level. However, a quarter (18 out of 71) reported the opposite, stating that the process had not resulted in any such changes. Similar findings were observed regarding the use of the Periodic Reporting data by site managers to improve conservation and management actions at their World Heritage property: 56% (148 out of 260) responded positively, while 25% (64 out of 260) responded negatively.
- 24. Comments submitted in response to the survey question on whether Periodic Reporting data influenced national policies reveal a broad range of experiences. While several respondents reiterated the feedback already submitted through the Third Cycle reports that the process contributed to updates in management plans, others added that data was used to develop Action Plans and update legal frameworks. Some comments also highlighted its role in aligning heritage management with broader planning processes and enhancing inter-institutional collaboration. Limited institutional capacity or ongoing reforms were mentioned as reasons influencing the degree to which findings were translated into policy action.
- 25. At the property level, outcomes were also used to identify threats, adapt monitoring programmes, and guide measures related to risk management and climate change. Several comments reinforced the importance of Periodic Reporting as a self-assessment tool, useful for identifying management gaps as well as refining the understanding of values and attributes. However, some respondents pointed to limitations in applying the results, noting that despite the availability of data, its integration into daily management was often hindered by lack of time, resources, or follow-up support. A few comments also noted that the exercise felt too generic or disconnected from on-the-ground realities, reducing its perceived usefulness.
- 26. Across the different sources, a recurring challenge relates to the limited ability to track changes over time. In the absence of integrated tools to compare data across reporting cycles, users struggle to assess trends or monitor progress systematically. This limitation constrains the potential of Periodic Reporting data to support adaptive management and inform long-term planning. In addition, high staff turnover was frequently mentioned as a barrier to effective data use. Without continuity, institutional memory is lost, making it difficult to reference previous reports or build on earlier findings, thus reducing opportunities for learning across cycles.

Outcomes of the Periodic Reporting exercise have had a limited impact in mobilising additional human or financial resources

27. The results of the Reflection Survey suggest that the Third Cycle has only had a limited impact on securing additional human or financial resources. At the national level, only 32% of national focal points (23 out of 71) reported that the outcomes helped mobilise additional human resources, and 34% (24 out of 71) noted a positive impact on financial

resources. Similar findings are noted at the property level: only 31% of site managers (81 out of 260) reported that the process contributed to securing additional human resources, and 27% (69 out of 260) indicated a positive impact on financial resources.

- 28. While these figures suggest some successes, they also highlight that the overall impact of the process on resource mobilisation remains modest. The findings suggest a need to better communicate how the outcomes of the Periodic Reporting, when clearly linked to identified gaps or challenges, could support advocacy, guide funding efforts, or inform staffing decisions. This issue is particularly relevant given that the analysis of data generated through the monitoring indicators in the framework of the Third Cycle, across all regions, highlights a lack of both financial and human resources (see <u>Annex 1</u> of Document <u>WHC/24/46.COM/10C</u>). It may also reflect missed opportunities to present outcomes of the Periodic Reporting to governments, decision-makers, or potential donors to demonstrate specific resource needs and justify requests to leverage support. In addition, in the feedback on the Third Cycle, several reported that limited resources hindered their ability to conduct comprehensive consultations among different actors involved in the protection and management of the World Heritage properties or gather the necessary data to fill in the questionnaires, especially for complex properties.
- 29. Beyond national and property levels, resource constraints also limit the ability of UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies to support the Periodic Reporting exercise more broadly. Financial and human resources are insufficient to coordinate the process and fully analyse the data, particularly in relation to Section II. Although external consultants assist in regional analysis, capacity gaps remain. Regional Units at the WHC also reported difficulties in absorbing and using Periodic Reporting data in their daily work due to limited staff and competing priorities.

### Communication of Periodic Reporting outcomes remains limited across levels

- 30. Many respondents to the Third Cycle reported limited awareness of how the outcomes were used or whether they inform actions or decisions at national, regional or international levels. In addition, several respondents noted a lack of clarity on UNESCO's use of the compiled data to inform global strategies or support international cooperation. Others described a lack of structured follow-up at national level, with little or no communication regarding how the information provided had contributed to decision-making or programme development. This disconnect was particularly noted by site managers, many of whom were not involved in national-level dialogue and received no feedback after the submission of the report.
- 31. The absence of clear follow-up mechanisms contributes to the perception that the process ends with the submission of the questionnaire, rather than serving as a foundation for continuous improvement and action. Strengthening these mechanisms is critical to maintaining engagement. Respondents called for outcomes to be more systematically communicated and used to inform discussions with national authorities, donors, and other partners. Improved visibility and use of Periodic Reporting outcomes could make the process more effective as a tool for advocacy, policy development and strategic planning.

#### Regional Reports and Action Plans are underutilised in supporting action

32. While the results of the Reflection Survey indicate that Regional Action Plans are broadly recognised as potentially useful, a significant share of respondents either could not assess their relevance or were unaware of any implementation efforts at the national or property level. Survey responses also indicate a mixed perception of the usefulness of Regional Action Plans in helping guide heritage conservation and management efforts, both at the national and property level. While 20% of respondents found them very helpful and 39% considered them somewhat helpful, 3% reported that they were not

helpful. Around 23% stated they did not know, and 14% indicated that insufficient time had passed to evaluate their usefulness.

- 33. In a separate question, respondents were asked whether their State Party had developed measures or strategies to implement the Regional Action Plan at the national level. 32% of respondents reported that such measures were already in place, while another 33% indicated that implementation was planned for the future. A small number (1%) stated that no action was planned. Notably, 33% of respondents answered that they did not know whether any measures had been developed.
- 34. Insights from consultations carried out during the Reflection Period reinforce these findings and shed further light on some systemic challenges regarding the implementation of the Regional Action Plans. While they provide a broad framework for identifying regional priorities, many reported difficulties in translating them into actionable steps at the national or property level. This challenge is compounded by the limited awareness of the plans, particularly among site managers, who are not always consulted during the development of the Regional Action Plans. This lack of involvement diminishes their sense of ownership and engagement, contributing to inconsistent implementation.
- 35. A recurring concern revealed from consultations was the weakness of existing mechanisms for monitoring implementation, largely due to limited resources and capacity within UNESCO. Consultation findings also noted that it was often unclear whether actions identified in previous cycles had been carried out or had led to tangible improvements. There was also limited clarity regarding who holds responsibility to follow up on implementation. It was recommended that the questionnaires for future cycles include questions to assess the implementation of previous Regional Action Plans.
- 36. Finally, beside the holistic approach through the common questionnaire and the Analytical Framework of the Third Cycle, it was noted that each Regional Unit approached the Periodic Reporting process differently, leading to some divergences in data analysis and the formulation of Action Plans. The lack of a standardised methodology for undertaking key steps of the reporting process is considered a missed opportunity. While the report format and the approach to statistical analysis are consistent across regions, the interpretation of the data varies significantly and often depends on the consultants involved (see Paragraph 96 below for more information).

### Periodic Reporting contributes significantly to awareness-raising and capacity-building

- 37. Survey results and comments submitted through the Third Cycle indicate that the Periodic Reporting exercise plays an important role in raising awareness across a wide range of topics that underpin the effective implementation of the Convention, and is widely recognised as a useful learning mechanism for national focal points and site managers. Survey respondents most frequently indicated that the Periodic Reporting process contributed to their awareness of conservation and management requirements (88%), the identification of capacity-building needs (86%), and the adequacy of existing legislation and regulations (84%) the three topics with the highest combined ratings of either 'high' or 'medium' contribution for each aspect.
- 38. Other areas also received strong ratings. Awareness of the role of effective collaboration among actors was reported by 80% of respondents, followed by the integration of sustainable development principles into heritage management and the contribution of World Heritage to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (79%) and policy frameworks adopted by the World Heritage Committee and the General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention (76%). However, synergies with other UNESCO instruments and international frameworks received comparatively lower ratings (71%). This result suggests that while the Periodic Reporting contributes to building awareness, there may be opportunities to further strengthen this dimension, particularly in terms of practical guidance and integration at national and property levels.

- 39. Survey comments also underscored the potential for the questionnaire itself to function as a capacity-building tool – a point reinforced by the finding that 86% of respondents, across regions in the Third Cycle, reported that the Periodic Reporting process contributed to raising their awareness. In this regard, the Periodic Reporting data concerning capacity-building needs is already being used to inform the development of the new World Heritage Capacity-building Strategy for 2025–2035, ensuring that capacity-building priorities are aligned with actual needs identified across all regions (see Document WHC/25/47.COM/6A). The data from the Fourth Cycle of Periodic Reporting should continue to contribute to the Capacity-building Strategy.
- 40. Recognising the Periodic Reporting as instrumental in helping national focal points and site managers understand where further training and support are required, respondents highlighted the value of the questionnaire not only as a reporting mechanism but also as a diagnostic and planning tool provided that it is structured in a way that guides reflection and encourages users to identify areas for improvement. Several respondents suggested including prompts that ask how issues identified in previous cycles have been addressed, or how challenges are being mitigated. Others emphasised the need for clearer explanations of terms and expectations, and greater use of case studies to illustrate good practice.
- 41. There is scope to reinforce the learning function of the Periodic Reporting process by aligning its design with practical guidance and tools that support deeper understanding and the application of knowledge. This includes improving the glossary of terms, offering interactive tutorials, and enhancing the accessibility of support materials, especially for new site managers and those working in regions with limited connectivity.

Current support materials for the questionnaire are useful but further guidance and broader accessibility are needed

- 42. Comments from the Third Cycle reports and the Reflection Survey indicate that, while most respondents found the materials helpful to support understanding and completion of the questionnaire, several limitations still exist. The most frequently cited concerns related to unclear terminology, the lack of contextual examples, and the limited availability of translations.
- 43. The survey results show that about 71% of the respondents felt the materials provided clear guidance both on how to complete the questionnaire and clarifying the purpose and objectives of the Periodic Reporting process. However, only around 61% felt the materials clearly explained the use of collected information. Moreover, only 59% found the materials sufficient in explaining the conservation and management related terms and concepts used in the questionnaire, including the differences between them. These findings reinforce the importance of providing further conceptual explanations, particularly regarding technical terminology, and the practical use of reported data.
- 44. Through the comments submitted in the Third Cycle reports, a significant number of users expressed difficulty in interpreting key concepts such as "integrity", "authenticity", and "OUV". Others noted that the guidance documents did not provide sufficient support for answering questions in complex situations, namely for serial, transboundary, or mixed properties. The absence of examples relevant to different property types was highlighted as a gap, particularly for those less familiar with the World Heritage-specific terminology.
- 45. Several respondents stressed the need for a more user-centred approach to guidance, suggesting that resources include simplified definitions, case studies, and step-by-step explanations. Others recommended that guidance materials be made available in a broader range of languages to ensure better accessibility for all respondents.
- 46. These findings point to a clear opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of the support materials by building on other existing materials such as the <u>World Heritage Resource</u> <u>Manuals</u>. The more recent publications in this series include comprehensive glossaries

and explanations of key concepts, which could serve as a basis for developing clearer guidance on terminology.

- 47. The need for capacity-building activities also featured prominently in the comments provided through the Reflection Survey. Many respondents called for workshops, online webinars, and in-person orientation sessions to be offered systematically, especially at the beginning of the cycle. These were seen as particularly useful for new or recently appointed site managers, especially for those in countries where staff rotation is frequent. Some suggested conducting these sessions at national or regional levels, allowing for the sharing of experiences and clarification of common challenges.
- 48. In addition, respondents expressed interest in materials that explain the use of the information provided in the questionnaire at international level be it to develop the Regional Action Plan but also by UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies for other processes. Others called for more guidance in interpreting results at the property level and use it to inform management decisions.
- 49. Lastly, some emphasised the importance of improving the design of the questionnaire so that it becomes an effective learning tool. Suggestions included adding introductory explanations to each section, clarifying the intent of the questions, and using the form not only to collect data but also to build awareness and guide reflection. A recurring recommendation was to provide sample responses and case studies to demonstrate how to answer the questions effectively, particularly for serial properties.

#### Design and functionality issues with the online platform affected the reporting experience

- 50. Survey results provide insight into users' overall assessment of the platform: 63% of respondents (242 out of 384) rated the ease of use of the online platform as good, while 38% (145) considered it fair, and only 4% (16) rated it as poor. These findings suggest a generally positive experience with the basic functionality of the platform, while also pointing to areas where improvements could strengthen usability. Comments received through the Reflection Survey about the online platform reveals a consistent set of suggestions and critiques that can be grouped into three main areas for improvement: technical reliability, user experience, and adaptability to different user contexts.
- 51. Firstly, technical reliability emerged as a recurring concern. Users reported frequent data loss, particularly when exiting the platform or when the system mistakenly marked incomplete sections as complete. The absence of a strong auto-save function forced many to rely on external solutions, such as saving responses in Word or PDF formats. Exporting completed questionnaires also presented issues: some visible answers were missing in the exported files. There is a clear need for improved data stability, accurate exports and the ability to save progress incrementally without losing work.
- 52. In terms of user experience, several flagged the platform's navigation system as unintuitive and difficult to use particularly when moving between sections or responding to branching questions. Users also had trouble identifying incomplete sections, which led to confusion and omissions. Suggestions included a progress-tracking dashboard, adding interactive tutorials, and clearer examples to support interpretation of the questions. The character limit on responses was another recurring issue, as it often restricted the ability to describe complex situations.
- 53. Regarding adaptability and inclusiveness, language accessibility emerged as a major concern. Since the platform was made available only in English and French, several respondents called for translations into additional languages or integration of built-in translation tools.
- 54. Another major limitation was the inability for multiple users to work on a questionnaire at the same time a key requirement for properties with complex governance

arrangements. Users strongly requested collaborative editing features, including version tracking and shared access controls.

- 55. Additional suggestions included generating custom reports with graphs and infographics (useful for communication and capacity-building), improved accessibility across different devices (namely mobiles) and browsers, and aggregated data analysis tools to help national focal points identify national trends.
- 56. Feedback also highlighted the need for improvements in performance, user-friendly design, and the capacity to support more efficient data extraction. Developed internally at UNESCO with occasional external support, the platform faces technical constraints related to maintenance and the demands of managing a high number of users, which requires effort to ensure correct access and validation throughout the reporting process.
- 57. In addition to technical and user interface concerns, consultations also highlighted limitations in how the data generated through the Periodic Reporting is extracted and analysed. Although the statistical treatment of questionnaire responses is structured consistently across regions, the preparation and analysis of the data remain largely manual. Much of the interpretation relies on consultants. The lack of automated tools on the platform —such as cross-referencing and built-in analysis makes data analysis time-consuming and resource-intensive. This limitation reduces the ability to identify trends and establish meaningful connections across the large volume of information collected through the questionnaire.

#### Limited continuity across reporting cycles restricts the ability to track change over time

- 58. Findings from the Reflection Period emphasised the need to strengthen continuity and enable the comparison of data across reporting cycles. In particular, difficulties were reported in retrieving previous submissions or assessing how site conditions or management approaches have changed over time. Frequent staff turnover was also mentioned as a factor that can hinder institutional memory and make it difficult to track or interpret data from previous cycles.
- 59. One proposal to facilitate the process was to expand the use of pre-filled sections with data from previous cycles building on the limited examples used in the Third Cycle to provide continuity and reduce the burden of re-entering unchanged information. Respondents also recommended incorporating specific questions that encourage users to reflect on progress or persistent challenges since the last reporting to support more consistent follow-up and improved use of data. Visual dashboards and comparison tools were also recommended as way to identify patterns and inform decision-making.
- 60. Improving the continuity and accessibility of data across cycles namely the ability to retrieve past submissions and compare trends over time would not only benefit site managers and national authorities, but also enhance the Convention's global monitoring functions. A consistent structure for data collection and interpretation would facilitate cross-regional comparison, support the identification of emerging global trends, and strengthen the Committee's capacity to assess implementation of the Convention at a strategic level.

### B. Reflections on the Periodic Reporting questionnaire and areas for improvement

61. This section focuses on the format of the Periodic Reporting. It examines key concerns related to the length, clarity and internal coherence of the questionnaire, particularly in relation to its usability by national focal points and site managers. Particular attention is given to the challenges faced in interpreting and responding to certain questions, as well as to suggestions made by respondents to make the questionnaire more user-friendly, relevant and better aligned with their needs.

- 62. The suggested questionnaires presented in Annex I should be viewed as preliminary and exploratory. Although they draw on input collected throughout the Third Cycle and from consultations held during the Reflection Period, the work was undertaken under significant time constraints and will probably require further adjustments as a result of the discussion that will be held during the 47th session of the World Heritage Committee.
- 63. The proposals presented below to revise the questionnaire aim to improve clarity, logical flow and usability by national focal points and site managers. Key areas for improvement include the following:

#### Streamlining the structure and scope of the questionnaire

- 64. Feedback from the Third Cycle consistently identified the need to streamline the questionnaire's overall structure. Many respondents found the reporting excessively long and administratively burdensome, with several describing it as difficult to navigate and fragmented in its logic. While the intention had been to simplify the format compared to previous cycles, the final version used during the Third Cycle included a greater number of questions, more diverse question types, and broader thematic coverage all of which contributed to a more demanding experience, particularly for site managers.
- 65. One key recommendation is to remove questions that are redundant, vague or unclear particularly those that lack a clear purpose, giving priority to most relevant and usable in practice. Some themes are perceived as too broad or more relevant to UNESCO than to those directly involved in heritage management, especially site managers, and may not warrant detailed reporting.
- 66. Another recommendation is to avoid requesting static or archived information that does not change between cycles and loses relevance once collected. Examples include whether the State Party has ratified or accepted a convention, or whether property holds multiple designations since such information should already be part of the official records and does not need to be re-reported.
- 67. The overall layout and presentation of the questionnaire can also give the impression of fragmentation, due to the accumulation of section titles, explanatory texts, and definitions placed before the actual questions. This structure can make the questions themselves less visible and may contribute to user fatigue. While it is important to provide context and clearly explain the purpose of each section as has been requested by many respondents through the Third Cycle reports and the Reflection Survey further consideration is needed on how best to present this information. A more effective balance could be achieved by shifting detailed guidance and definitions to supporting materials or interactive tools.
- 68. Improving the logical grouping and sequencing of topics in certain parts of the questionnaire are also important to strengthen internal consistency and thematic coherence. In addition, while open comment fields can provide valuable context, they should not serve simply as a space to add general or highly property-specific information that cannot be easily analysed or compared across properties and which those working with the data may not have the time or means to examine in depth.

### Simplifying language and terminology

69. Feedback gathered during the reflection highlighted widespread difficulties in understanding the language used throughout the questionnaire. Although support materials were available, many respondents noted that the formulation of several questions was too complex, abstract, or ambiguous – particularly for users less familiar with World Heritage terminology or working in contexts where English or French are not widely used. Simplifying language and terminology across the questionnaire is essential to ensure that it is accessible, interpretable, and usable by all respondents, regardless of their level of technical expertise. The simplification would ensure that respondents

clearly understand what is being asked, leading to more accurate and meaningful answers, and ultimately improving the reliability and usefulness of the data. In particular, using present verb tenses and direct sentences – rather than passive or conditional ones – can make questions clearer and easier to interpret.

- 70. Attention is also needed on how key terms are used and understood across the questionnaire to avoid inconsistencies in terminology between different sections. Overly technical or specialised vocabulary should also be avoided; using plain language in these cases would make the questionnaire more accessible and inclusive, particularly for those less familiar with World Heritage terminology.
- 71. In addition, some questions remain too vague or open-ended, making it difficult for users to know how to respond. Where appropriate, short examples or model answers could be included in the support materials to show a type of expected response.
- 72. These improvements aim not only to reduce misunderstandings and support more consistent responses, but also to strengthen the capacity-building dimensions of the questionnaire.

#### Addressing the specific needs of transboundary and serial properties

- 73. While the questionnaire must maintain a unified format applicable to all properties reflecting the principle that each World Heritage property is inscribed as a single entity specific challenges arise in applying this approach to transboundary and serial properties. Serial properties often include numerous components and both serial and transboundary properties typically involve complex governance structures and coordination across different authorities.
- 74. The experience of the Third Cycle highlighted the limitations of the current format of the questionnaire in capturing internal variation and collaborative governance arrangements and management instruments. A more flexible and responsive design, applied within the existing unified structure, would allow respondents to provide relevant information about these types of properties without the need for a separate version of the questionnaire.
- 75. The online platform could be designed to automatically display additional questions or response fields when a property is transboundary or serial. This modification would allow respondents to provide information about component-level management or coordination mechanisms, when relevant. Key sections should also include open-text fields where respondents can explain differences between components or describe how responsibilities are shared across different jurisdictions.
- 76. As aforementioned, the platform should allow inputs from multiple users working on the same questionnaire at the same time, while ensuring that access is limited to a reasonable number to avoid excessive administrative burden. A single, coordinated submission would continue to be required for each property, as it is currently the case.

## Supporting the interconnections between cultural and natural heritage while addressing their specificities

77. While some respondents from the Third Cycle suggested creating separate versions of the questionnaire for cultural and natural properties, the World Heritage system has progressively moved towards recognising and reinforcing the interconnections between the two. An integrated approach is increasingly seen as more effective and aligned with current practice. It is reflected in the recent <u>Resource Manuals</u> developed by UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies. Programmes such as the World Heritage Leadership Programme (implemented by ICCROM and IUCN) and the Connecting Practice initiative (developed jointly by IUCN and ICOMOS) have also contributed to this shift.

- 78. In this context, the questionnaire should continue to use a single format applicable to all properties. However, some questions could better reflect the specific needs of cultural, natural and mixed properties. Proposed adjustments include:
  - a) Clarifying how certain terminology applies to both cultural and natural heritage contexts;
  - b) Providing examples to illustrate how certain questions may apply differently depending on property type;
  - c) For transboundary and serial properties, introducing targeted sub-questions or drop-down menus for mixed properties, where relevant, to allow respondents to address both cultural and natural dimensions within a single integrated structure.

Balancing revision with consistency to enable monitoring trends over time

- 79. One of the key objectives of the Periodic Reporting is to provide an assessment as to whether the OUVs of the properties are being maintained over time. This monitoring requires a degree of continuity in the format and content of the questionnaire, so that the data from each cycle can be compared meaningfully. While doing so, the questionnaire must be adapted in response to user feedback, evolving policy priorities, and the operational needs and challenges of heritage management. Any future adjustments to the questionnaire should strike a careful balance between allowing necessary updates and maintaining continuity with existing monitoring indicators, so that data remains comparable, and trends can still be meaningfully assessed over time. To support this approach, the following principles should guide any changes made to the questionnaire:
  - a) Introduce changes as part of a process of gradual evolution, maintaining a structure that helps users build on previous cycles without losing familiarity with the questionnaire's core design;
  - b) Retain core questions linked to monitoring indicators, so that existing data series remain usable and comparable over time;
  - c) Introduce new sections or questions only when they address clearly identified gaps or priorities;
  - d) Expand the use of pre-filled sections with data submitted in previous cycles building on the limited examples used in the Third Cycle – not only to reduce the burden of re-entering unchanged information, but also to help users reflect on what has changed, such as shifts in the status of factors affecting the property.
- 80. In light of the Fourth Cycle extending beyond 2030, references to the SDGs in the questionnaire must be reviewed. Rather than asking respondents to report directly against the SDGs, the questionnaire should instead integrate the underlying principles of the 2030 Agenda and be consistent with the *Policy for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention* (2015).

#### Reinforcing the questionnaire's role as a tool for reflection and strategic planning

81. Periodic Reporting has largely functioned as a mechanism for data collection and compliance monitoring. However, insights from the Reflection Period highlight the need to strengthen its role in supporting strategic planning – helping national focal points, site managers, WHC and the Advisory Bodies use the results of the process not only to reflect on current conditions, but also to inform future priorities and actions. Several proposals can help support this shift. First, the questionnaire should integrate prompts that invite reflection on developments since the previous cycle, identify persistent challenges, and indicate where further efforts, resources, or coordination may be needed. Selected questions could also allow space to note anticipated risks, opportunities, or capacity needs – linking reporting more clearly with future planning.

82. Strengthening the connection between reporting and follow-up is also essential. Specific responses could be used to trigger links to relevant guidance or capacity-building initiatives, helping to translate reporting into practical support and reinforcing the feedback loop between information and action. Insights from the Reflection Period already show that Periodic Reporting data is used to inform the development of national heritage strategies and site management plans. To support this use more effectively, the timeframe of the Periodic Reporting exercise should be aligned with property-level planning cycles, making it easier for site managers to use reporting results directly in their existing planning (see Option 4 in Chapter IV below).

### Additional focus areas to enhance the relevance of the Periodic Reporting process

- 83. The Reflection Period identified several cross-cutting themes and evolving priorities that should be further addressed in the Fourth Cycle questionnaire. These areas may not require major changes to the overall format, but they offer opportunities to strengthen the relevance, depth, and forward-looking character of the reporting process. The following focus areas should be more systematically reflected in the questionnaire:
  - a) Climate change adaptation and mitigation While climate change was referenced in the Third Cycle, it has become increasingly central to the effective management of World Heritage properties. The Fourth Cycle should enable more detailed reporting on observed impacts, property-level responses, and links to broader climate strategies.
  - b) Community engagement The questionnaire should reinforce attention to participatory governance by inviting reflection on the involvement of local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and other rights holders in decision-making and conservation, as well as how they benefit from the protection of the World Heritage properties. While references to gender and community engagement already exist, clearer prompts or examples could improve consistency, encourage reflective responses, and highlight good practices. Opportunities to report on equity, representation, and traditional knowledge systems should also be made visible.
  - c) **Risk preparedness and crisis response** The Fourth Cycle should enable clearer reporting on preparedness for natural disasters, conflict, pandemics, and other emergencies, including institutional resilience and continuity mechanisms.
  - d) **Digital transformation and data management** The growing use of digital tools in monitoring, conservation, visitor management, and interpretation should be better captured through targeted questions on innovation, digital capacity, and data systems at both national and property levels.

### C. Future Directions: strategic recommendations and methodological approaches

84. This section outlines a set of strategic recommendations and methodological approaches to strengthen the Periodic Reporting process and build on the positive aspects identified during the Third Cycle, while also addressing key challenges. The wide range of suggestions submitted through the Reflection Survey reflects a strong shared interest in improving the Periodic Reporting process. Rather than calling for drastic changes, many respondents proposed practical adjustments to make the process more relevant, accessible and effective, both in responding to emerging challenges and in reflecting the diverse realities of implementing the Convention across different contexts.

#### Communicate the multiple purposes of Periodic Reporting

85. Despite the widespread recognition of the importance of Periodic Reporting and a generally positive outlook, feedback gathered during the Third Cycle suggests that the process is still sometimes perceived as a statutory reporting obligation – as expressed

by 24% of the respondents of the Reflection Survey as well as numerous comments submitted through the Third Cycle. By communicating its multiple purposes more effectively, the process can build stronger buy-in and help shift perceptions from "obligation" to "opportunity". To reinforce understanding and uptake of the multiple purposes of Periodic Reporting, the following actions are recommended:

- a) Clearly communicate the full range of benefits of the Periodic Reporting through guidance materials and outreach documents;
- b) Embed this framing in the structure of the questionnaire itself, particularly in the introduction and at the beginning of each major section, to help users better frame their reflection in relation to their own work, challenges and needs;
- c) Share examples of how Periodic Reporting results have been used to support decision-making, capacity-building and policy development in the dedicated page of Periodic Reporting on the WHC's website; and
- d) Use regional meetings and capacity-building activities during the Periodic Reporting process to reinforce these messages.

#### Make Periodic Reporting data more accessible and usable across all levels

- 86. While the Periodic Reporting process generates a large volume of valuable information, its potential to inform property-level management planning, shape national heritage strategies, and contribute to other global agendas remains underutilised. To increase the impact of Periodic Reporting at all levels from site management to global reporting greater attention must be given to how data is structured, accessed, analysed and used particularly in ways that make it more useful for national focal points and site managers.
- 87. Feedback received from multiple sources during the Reflection Period emphasised that more consistent access to past reports, summaries, and aggregated data would allow national authorities and site managers to track change over time, compare trends, and strengthen their planning and reporting processes. The online platform should facilitate not just the collection of data, but also better data extraction, meaningful analysis, cross-references with other World Heritage databases including clearer integration with Reactive Monitoring and direct link to respective State of conservation on the Information System (accessible at <a href="https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc">https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc</a>), where applicable and dissemination of results. This cross-referencing is intended solely for information purposes, and the Periodic Reporting should not be used to trigger Reactive Monitoring.
- 88. Periodic Reporting data also has the potential to contribute to broader cultural, natural and development frameworks. Important efforts were made during the Third Cycle to align the process with the SDGs, including through the introduction of dedicated questions. Building on this foundation, there is scope to further integrate Periodic Reporting data into national planning and development policies, climate adaptation plans, and reporting to global frameworks such as the Global Biodiversity Framework and UNESCO Global Report (for more details on the latter, see Chapter IV below). Greater alignment with other global agenda can increase the visibility of World Heritage in policymaking and advocacy, while supporting a more coherent approach to balancing conservation and development.
- 89. To make Periodic Reporting data more accessible and usable across all levels, the following actions are recommended:
  - a) Improve access to past responses and results by introducing features to the online platform that allow respondents to easily retrieve, review, and compare information from previous cycles, enabling them to track changes and assess progress;
  - b) Develop dashboards and data visualisation tools that allow trends to be explored across regions and themes;

- c) Develop national strategies to translate the results of the Periodic Reporting and Regional Action Plans into national priorities and actions, while also promoting synergies with other conventions and international programmes. Provide practical guidance on how to implement this process as part of the Periodic Reporting supporting materials;
- d) Allow continuous extraction and analysis of Periodic Reporting data not only after the completion of the reporting process in each region;
- e) Strengthen the platform to support global and regional reporting. Ensure that UNESCO staff and consultants supporting data analysis have access to well-structured datasets and statistical tools that enable meaningful interpretation of questionnaire responses moving beyond quantitative summaries to allow for in-depth qualitative analysis. Use of the data could also be explored to develop deep-dive analysis in terms of typologies (e.g., urban heritage, cultural landscapes, mixed sites) and themes (e.g., climate action, sustainable tourism, community engagement).
- f) Encourage States Parties to organise post-reporting reflection activities following the adoption of the Regional Action Plan, to develop national action plans where relevant, and to identify measures to apply lessons learnt at the property level.

## Strengthen guidance and supporting mechanisms to enable more effective use of Periodic Reporting as a self-assessment exercise

- 90. Effective participation in the Periodic Reporting exercise depends on the availability of support structures, capacity-building opportunities and technical resources. Feedback from the Reflection Period confirmed that additional capacity-building is needed to ensure national focal points and site managers can complete the questionnaire confidently and meaningfully, particularly those who are new to the process.
- 91. The specific circumstances and availability of resources in each region must be taken into account when designing and delivering support. In some regions, the presence of Category 2 Centres played a fundamental role in coordinating implementation and facilitating capacity-building, though such support structures are not available in all regions. In addition, lack of resources and the high number of properties in some regions created challenges for involving site managers in critical Periodic Reporting activities such as the development of the Regional Action Plan.
- 92. Rather than relying on expanded institutional support at the international or regional level, a sustainable solution lies in empowering national focal points and site managers with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively use Periodic Reporting as a self-assessment process. To do so, the following actions are recommended:
  - a) Frame supporting materials explicitly as a self-assessment to support reflection and strategic thinking at the national and property levels;
  - b) Strengthen the clarity and accessibility of guidance, including by developing short video tutorials specifically focused on completing the questionnaire, as well as annotated examples of completed responses and step-by-step instructions available in multiple languages;
  - c) Develop short support materials tailored to user groups (e.g. site managers, national focal points, first-time users), and ensure their availability in formats and languages that reflect regional needs. These materials should also be accessible offline or under low-bandwidth conditions to support users with limited connectivity;
  - d) Promote peer support, mentoring schemes and regional exchange platforms to reduce reliance on UNESCO support and encourage knowledge sharing and learning between practitioners;

- e) Encourage States Parties to organise national workshops or other exchange activities that bring together national focal points, site managers, and other relevant actors to share experiences, build a common understanding of the Periodic Reporting process, and strengthen collaboration in completing the questionnaire;
- Maximise the support that Category 2 Centres and other regional actors can offer for capacity-building, while recognising that their involvement should be tailored to their specific areas of expertise and operational capacities;
- g) Introduce platform features that provide automatic links to relevant guidance or capacity-building resources based on the types of responses provided, particularly when challenges or gaps are flagged by the user. Strengthen capacity on how to collect data – especially qualitative data – to generate meaningful information that can more effectively inform analysis and management decisions; and
- h) It is also important to recall that States Parties should aim to maintain the continuity of staff engaged as recommended for the SOC process in the <u>Evaluation of the</u> <u>World Heritage Reactive Monitoring process</u> (2019).

#### Reinforce conditions for a well-resourced and coordinated Periodic Reporting process

- 93. An effective Periodic Reporting exercise depends on strong planning, adequate resources, and a supporting platform that enables coordination and data use across all levels. Ensuring that the process delivers meaningful results over time requires thoughtful preparation, adequate staff levels, and tools that help reduce workload burden while maintaining quality and consistency.
- 94. Respondents to the Reflection Survey stressed the importance of a well-communicated implementation calendar, allowing national focal points and national authorities to plan, coordinate and prepare more effectively. Each cycle should follow a clear schedule with sufficient time allocated for capacity-building activities, national consultations, data collection, validation, analysis and follow-up.
- 95. Securing adequate resources is a prerequisite for the long-term success of Periodic Reporting exercise. If States Parties wish the process to deliver its full potential as a mechanism for reflection, planning, and cooperation they must commit to supporting it not only at the international level, but also by allocating resources nationally. This process includes enabling meaningful consultations between different actors involved in the management of World Heritage properties, fostering dialogue and exchange between site managers and national focal points throughout the cycle at the national as well as the regional level. A well-resourced national coordination process is essential to ensure quality responses to the Periodic Reporting questionnaire and meaningful participation.
- 96. At the same time, the successful coordination of the process requires a dedicated team within the WHC, with the necessary capacity and expertise to support regional units in implementing the Periodic Reporting exercise. Without adequate human and financial resources, coordination of the process risks being inconsistently applied across regions. The absence of a standardised methodology for key steps of the Periodic Reporting process has been highlighted as a missed opportunity, underscoring the need for dedicated capacity to ensure a more coherent and consistent approach. Additional support for the Advisory Bodies and Category 2 Centres is also essential to maintain their involvement in coordination, technical support and regional follow-up.
- 97. A further concern raised in the interviews with UNESCO staff and consultants who assisted the preparation of the Regional Reports and Action Plans was the difficulty in extracting and analysing data from the Third Cycle reports. Hence, the online platform should be reinforced to include more automated functions that allow to filter and synthesise data, both at the regional and global levels but also in terms of property types

and thematic areas. Strengthening the platform's analytical capabilities will be critical for timely and meaningful reporting outputs.

- 98. To ensure the Periodic Reporting process is well planned, adequately resourced, and effectively implemented, the following actions are recommended:
  - a) Establish and communicate to all stakeholders a clear and realistic implementation calendar for each cycle and region, including milestones for capacity-building activities, completion and submission of the questionnaires, data analysis, preparation of the Regional Report and Action Plan, and follow-up. The calendar will help States Parties prepare and allocate resources more effectively;
  - b) Ensure that capacity-building activities are planned before, during, and after questionnaire completion, and treated as integral to the Periodic Reporting process rather than optional add-ons;
  - c) Ensure sufficient human and financial resources are allocated to support the implementation of the process at both the national and regional levels. While each State Party is encouraged to mobilise its resources to support coordination and consultation at the national level, the development of a global fundraising strategy to be established prior to the launch of each cycle could help sustain implementation across all regions in addition to the World Heritage Fund. This strategy should also aim to strengthen UNESCO's ability to support States Parties in implementing the Regional Action Plans;
  - d) Strengthen the WHC's capacity by establishing a dedicated Periodic Reporting team to support the regional Units and ensure the consistent implementation of the process across regions. Another advantage is that the data is analysed in the same manner, thereby enhancing the comparability of the data, and thus the conclusions stemming from it;
  - e) Improve the platform's technical functionality to enable easier extraction, comparison and analysis of data;
  - f) Reinforce collaboration with Category 2 Centres and other regional actors to support coordination and capacity-building throughout the Periodic Reporting process.

### Improve the relevance and credibility of monitoring indicators

- 99. Monitoring indicators were introduced in the Third Cycle to support the consistent tracking of changes over time and to provide a structured overview of key aspects related to the implementation of the Convention at both national and property levels. While the indicators are closely linked to the format and content of the questionnaire and provide a structured way to examine results across thematic areas, several limitations affect the extent to which they reflect reliable and meaningful information.
- 100. One of the main concerns is the heavy reliance on self-assessment and perception-based responses. Many indicators are derived from simplified or binary rating scales (e.g. yes/no; adequate/inadequate), which do not fully capture the complexity of conditions on the ground. In most cases, responses are not supported by justification or evidence, making it difficult to assess the credibility of the reported information. It is particularly problematic for indicators related to the state of conservation, the integrity or authenticity of properties, and the effectiveness of management systems.
- 101. In addition, although the current set of 43 indicators covers a range of thematic areas (e.g., legal frameworks, management, resources, factors affecting the properties, and links with sustainable development) many focus on the existence of instruments or mechanisms, rather than on their implementation or effectiveness. It also raises the

question of whether all 43 indicators are necessary, or whether a focused set could serve the purpose more effectively, while improving clarity and reducing reporting burdens.

- 102. While the indicators help to organise and interpret large volumes of data, their ability to serve as robust monitoring tools depends on how well they reflect the realities on the ground. In this context, the following measures could be considered:
  - a) Select a focused subset of indicators to achieve similar objectives with greater clarity and reduced reporting burden;
  - b) Refine selected indicators to capture not only the existence of instruments or mechanisms, but also their implementation and effectiveness;
  - c) Avoid linking indicators to questions based solely on perception or self-assessment, particularly when no supporting evidence is required;
  - d) Clarify the intended role of each indicator, ensuring alignment with the type and quality of information available through the questionnaire; and
  - e) Differentiate clearly between indicators that reflect factual reporting and those that may involve a degree of subjective judgement.

#### D. Conclusions from the Review of the Third Cycle

- 103. The review of the Third Cycle highlights the central role of Periodic Reporting in promoting reflection at all levels of the Convention's implementation. The process was widely recognised as a valuable opportunity, not only for national and regional cooperations, but also for supporting planning and adapting management at the property level. It demonstrated the commitment of States Parties, national focal points and site managers to reflect on practices, share experiences, and identify areas for improvement.
- 104. Among the statutory processes of the Convention, Periodic Reporting stands out as the only mechanism that actively engages all actors involved in the implementation of the Convention. It is not merely a requirement, but a collective process of dialogue, shared learning and knowledge exchange. As such, it should be seen as a celebratory moment an opportunity to acknowledge collective efforts, strengthen collaboration, and renew shared responsibility for the protection of World Heritage.
- 105. The recommendations presented in this chapter stem from the many constructive comments made by a large number of professionals involved in the implementation of the Periodic Reporting at different levels. They are directly linked to the challenges identified and point to areas where practical improvements can be made. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that certain limitations and systemic challenges persist, and these will take time and sustained effort to address. Not all issues can be resolved at once, and some require long-term commitment. In addition, these recommendations should be seen as preliminary, particularly those related to the revision of the questionnaire, which will need much further technical development.
- IV. Feasibility Study in relation to practical modalities of enhancing Periodic Reporting in relation to the UNESCO Global Report on Cultural Policies
- A. Developing Synergies in relation to the UNESCO Global Report on Cultural Policies
- 106. The <u>Evaluation of UNESCO's Periodic Reporting on the Culture Sector's Conventions</u> <u>and Recommendations</u> by IOS (March 2024) (hereinafter IOS Evaluation) explored the feasibility of harmonizing and streamlining Periodic Reporting processes. One advantage of harmonization identified was a simplified reporting with a single deadline.

By <u>Decision 219EX/13</u>, the Executive Board invited the Director-General to enable, in full respect of the bodies of the Conventions concerned, adequate follow-up to all the recommendations contained in document 219EX/13 and to implement the actions indicated in the corresponding management response.

- 107. The IOS Evaluation stated that the harmonization would lead to greater efficiencies, better predictability in reporting schedules, ability to conduct analyses over time, increased synergies between instruments, and more collaboration both within and outside UNESCO for the collection of data. It did, however, also highlight the necessity to consider the diversity of instruments and not disregard information related to their specificities. The specificity of the World Heritage Convention is that it concerns both Cultural and Natural heritage, not just cultural. The Culture Conventions and Recommendations are different for a reason and such specificities must be maintained, and even strengthened, rather than diluted.
- 108. The IOS Evaluation identified removing redundancies in questionnaires as a key step in simplifying the reporting. In this regard, this report provided suggestions to streamline the questionnaire of the Periodic Reporting to the Convention (see Chapter III).
- 109. The matter of States Parties having to submit the same information for multiple instruments concerns Section I, which focus on the implementation of the Convention at national level. This Section gathers data regarding legal and institutional frameworks, heritage policies and strategies, coordination mechanisms, capacity-building efforts, and synergies with other cultural and natural heritage Conventions and Programmes. As such, Section I offers valuable insights that could contribute to the UNESCO Global Report, particularly in relation to national-level heritage governance. The data from Section I reflects the current state of the implementation of the Convention for both cultural and natural heritage and aligns with broader efforts to strengthen public policies in the cultural sector. Its inclusion could support a comprehensive understanding of heritage-related policies worldwide, provided the distinctive scope and nature of the Convention are fully respected. Opportunities to enhance the relevance and use of this information, if appropriate, are further explored in this report.
- 110. Ensuring further synergies between the various Conventions and Recommendations would eliminate overlap in the questionnaires and facilitate the comparison of this information and thus providing strategic data concerning the Culture Conventions. It in turn could assist in working towards 'a more robust and resilient cultural sector, fully anchored in the perspectives of sustainable development as well as promotion of solidarity, peace and security, in line with the vision enshrined in the UN Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda* (September, 2021) as mentioned on <u>UNESCO's MONDIACULT page</u>.
- 111. As per <u>Decision 219 EX/11</u>, the World Heritage Committee could consider the methodology and use of information of the Culture Monitoring Platform, a common platform that the UNESCO Culture Sector is currently developing, for the overlapping data under Section I. Using this Platform could enhance the synergies with other Conventions and Recommendations. The entry point for the Periodic Reporting data remains the same. The overlapping data is pre-filled, States Parties check its accuracy and validate. This methodology should ensure accurate information at all times and minimise the work involved for the States Parties. The relevant data gets rerouted to the Culture Monitoring Platform via the backend of the website, so no extra work is required for the States Parties. This Platform is also intended to allow immediate quantitative analyses of data. It is important to note that it has to be clear from the outset which data is kept in the Platform, and that the data is used anonymously.
- 112. This section focuses on enhancing synergies between the UNESCO Global Report and the Periodic Reporting of the Convention. Some information concerning enhancing synergies with other international instruments is provided in other sections of this report.

#### Global World Heritage Report

113. The idea of a Global World Heritage Report at the end of the Periodic Reporting cycle was strongly endorsed by States Parties in the Reflection Survey reported to the Committee in 2017 (See Document <u>WHC/17/41.COM/10A</u>) with 81% giving a positive response. Currently, no format for drawing the results of all Regional Reports into a 'State of the World's Heritage' style report is proposed, and this idea has not been taken further.

### UNESCO Global Report on Cultural Policies

- 114. There are several ways in which the data from the Periodic Reporting can contribute to the UNESCO Global Report. As the Periodic Reporting process is cyclic by nature, it structurally provides the latest data concerning the application of the Convention. The findings in this report suggest that a consistent structure for data extraction and analysis should ensure that the most up-to-date information is provided for the UNESCO Global Report (or any other reports if so desired). It further entails that a strict coherence to a global timeframe is not necessary as the information is available whenever needed.
- 115. The current Periodic Reporting mechanism operates on approximately an eight-year cycle, whereas MONDIACULT is expected to follow a four-year cycle (as it was requested to UNESCO in the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration). If UNESCO is to establish a common reporting deadline across all regions, adjustments to the existing Periodic Reporting timeline is necessary. One way to achieve it is by separating Section I and Section II, allowing Section I containing the key information for the UNESCO Global Report to align with UNESCO's standardized reporting deadline.
- 116. On the other hand, reporting Sections I and II at the same time preserves the Periodic Reporting framework's holistic nature. A unified timeline ensures that national policies and frameworks (Section I) are considered in conjunction with property-level realities (Section II), fostering a comprehensive analysis and strategic follow-up. It also ensures institutional linkages, as the Sections are generally completed by different respondents: Section I by national focal points and Section II by site managers. The two options with proposed timelines for the Periodic Reporting cycles discussed below provide information regarding the potential benefits and disadvantages of separating or maintaining Sections I and II together.
- 117. To further increase the relevance of the data provided for the UNESCO Global Report, it could be considered to also provide data from Section II particularly general trends and challenges identified through the analysis of the factors affecting World Heritage properties. This data has a direct link to the policies, legal and institutional frameworks reported in Section I, as they enable the analysis of the impact of the policies and frameworks rather than just providing a general assessment of their adequacy. Hence, such an approach would offer in-depth insights into the issues affecting cultural, natural and mixed World Heritage thus moving from a regional to a more global approach.
- 118. The added value for the Convention of providing in-depth data for the UNESCO Global Report is that this report reaches a more diverse audience outside the World Heritage system, thus potentially creating greater international awareness and targeted actions on an international level to ensure the protection of World Heritage properties. It also contributes to global approach and inform cross-cutting capacity-building strategies as this information is shared internationally via the UNESCO Global Report.

## B. Timeline of Reporting Cycles and Reporting Deadlines of Periodic Reporting in relation to the UNESCO Global Report on Cultural Policies

119. The IOS Evaluation explored the feasibility of harmonizing and streamlining Periodic Reportings. One aspect is the timeline of reporting cycles and deadlines. The Feasibility Study looked at one proposed timeline for the Periodic Reporting cycles that separate

Sections I and II. Furthermore, it took the feedback received during the study to consider an option which does not separate the Sections. These two options presented below (see Annex II for a graphic overview of the options) should be read in conjunction with the earlier suggested improvements to the process.

- 120. **Option 1** proposes separating the cycles for Sections I and II. All regions report at the same time for Section I in a four-year cycle and it undergoes a year of analysis of the data before the report is presented to the Committee. In Section II, two regions report per year.
- 121. The benefits of Option1 are:
  - a) This option suggests separating Sections I and II, thus aligning reporting on Section I with the reporting cycle of the UNESCO Global Report. One year analysis of the Section I before presenting the report to the Committee will contribute to the UNESCO Global Report. As a result, the Reflection Period's findings will be presented to the World Heritage Committee the year following MONDIACULT;
  - b) By having two regions reporting on Section II in one year, the interval between the Periodic Reporting cycles for this Section is shorter, namely six years. Therefore, the information collected is more up to date as opposed to a cycle of eight years, enabling quicker action in addressing evolving conservation challenges. Shorter cycle is particularly important in the context of global issues such as conflict, climate change, biodiversity loss, and rapid urban transformation, where delays in data may hinder the ability to take informed and timely action;
  - c) Reporting on two regions per year creates opportunities for greater interregional dialogue and exchange. Simultaneous presentation of regional syntheses could foster shared learning, comparative analysis, and collaboration on cross-cutting challenges, strengthening the global dimension of the Convention;
  - d) Evidence gathered during the Third Cycle (Document <u>WHC/24/46.COM/10C</u>) confirms strong support for shorter intervals: 60% of site managers advocated for reporting every 3–4 years. The average interval between cycles since 1998 has been 8.6 years, with a 10-year gap between the Second and Third Cycles highlighting a need to reduce the cycle to maintain momentum and engagement;
  - e) The proposed timeline would support a more operational and outcome-driven approach to Regional Action Plans. Shorter cycles provide a better framework for evaluating whether plans are being implemented effectively and producing the intended results. It would also facilitate closer alignment with other tools, such as the Global Capacity-Building Strategy; and
  - f) The divergence in scheduling could also allow targeted capacity-building efforts to be aligned with the specific needs of either Section I or II, leading to more tailored technical support and learning opportunities. However, the time span for achieving this is one year, as no year is allocated to implement the findings from the Reflection Period.
- 122. The disadvantages of Option 1 are:
  - a) Option 1 suggests separating Section I and II, thereby losing the coherence between them, which is considered a strength of the current reporting process;
  - b) The separation of Section I and II may risk institutional fragmentation, as they are generally completed by different respondents. The separation could result in fewer opportunities for dialogue and collaboration across governance levels;
  - c) Other disadvantages due to the separation of the Sections are the possibility of reduced clarity and consistency in communication with States Parties regarding timelines, expectations, and deliverables; the difficulty in assessing the

implementation progress by linking policy with practice holistically and potentially limiting the opportunity for comprehensive debate at the Committee;

- d) The shorter cycle due to two regions per year implies a concentrated workload over a reduced period. However, the suggested improvements to the Periodic Reporting process, such as a dedicated Periodic Reporting team and the simplification and streamlining of the questionnaires, would alleviate pressure on both the Secretariat and States Parties;
- e) Coordinating and synthesising two Regional Reports per year, instead of one Regional Report per year, would require robust planning and additional analytical capacity. To facilitate the work of the Secretariat, the use of Artificial Intelligence through the Culture Monitoring Platform could be considered; and
- f) Although the aim is to reduce the complexity of reporting, the transition to a shorter cycle would require sustained investment in capacity-building, communication, and technical support. However, by positioning Periodic Reporting increasingly as a self-assessment tool supported by user-friendly guidance and learning materials, the overall workload for States Parties is expected to diminish over time.
- 123. **Option 2** suggests reporting on two regions per year for both Sections I and II, as the result of the consultations held during this study revealed the importance of reporting Sections I and II together. A one-year Reflection Period is allocated at the end of each cycle.
- 124. The advantages of Option 2 are:
  - a) Due to the proposed improvements to the Periodic Reporting process, Sections I and II do not have to be separated in order to obtain up-to-date data for the UNESCO Global Report. The suggested improvements should facilitate the comparison of data from the Convention with the data from the other Conventions and Recommendations, and thereby potentially increasing the strategic relevance of the accumulated data. The proposed new way of generating, extracting and analysing data should result in the availability of the latest information of all the regions, regardless of where they are in the Periodic Reporting cycle. By reporting two regions per year, up-to-date information is always available by the next deadline of the UNESCO Global Report;
  - b) The proposed timeframe is more compatible with national heritage management cycles. In addition, cultural properties often operate under five-year management plans, and aligning Periodic Reporting with such frameworks would enhance its relevance and integration at the property level;
  - c) The integrated nature of Periodic Reporting is preserved, bringing together information on the implementation of the Convention at both national and property levels. While proposals to separate the reporting on Sections I and II aim to facilitate global reporting, they also raise concerns about a potential loss of coherence on how the Convention is monitored and understood – namely that it covers both cultural and natural heritage. A unified timeline helps ensure that national policies and frameworks are considered alongside property-level realities as this supports more meaningful analysis and strategic follow-up;
  - d) A shorter reporting cycle should enable timely data collection and analysis, ensuring that the Periodic Reporting process remains relevant and capable of addressing evolving conservation challenges which is crucial in, amongst others, the context of global issues. Furthermore, as aforementioned, the Third Cycle highlighted strong support for shorter intervals;
  - e) The proposed timeline should support a more operational and outcome-driven approach to Regional Action Plans and facilitate closer alignment with other tools,

such as the World Heritage Capacity-Building Strategy. Reporting on two Sections together also further enhances the value of the gathered data as it should ensure the integrated understanding of the Convention;

- f) This option creates opportunities for greater interregional dialogue and exchange. Simultaneous presentation of regional syntheses could foster shared learning, comparative analysis, and collaboration on cross-cutting challenges, strengthening the global dimension of the Convention;
- g) While the frequency of reporting would increase, the workload for the States Parties and the Secretariat is expected to decrease under the proposed improvements to the process. Additionally, the reporting is increasingly being framed as a self-assessment mechanism, supported by self-learning and capacity-building tools. This evolution should contribute to a lighter and more empowering experience for national focal points and site managers; and
- h) For the Secretariat, increased reliance on a Periodic Reporting team and improved automation of data analysis and processing should help ensure that the additional volume of submissions can be handled efficiently without compromising quality.
- 125. The disadvantages of Option 2 are:
  - a) It requires a shift in mindset. While Periodic Reporting continues to work within cycles, the different ways of generating, extracting and analysing data, would require adjustments in workflows, tools and expectations - particularly since there is no need to wait until the end of a cycle for all regions to obtain relevant and up-to-date information;
  - b) The shorter cycle implies a more concentrated workload as reporting for two regions that previously spanned two years is now condensed into one. Therefore, it would be essential to implement the suggested improvements to the Periodic Reporting process; and
  - c) The transition to a shorter cycle would require investment in capacity-building, communication, and technical support. The workload could over time nonetheless be reduced due to positioning the Periodic Reporting increasingly as a self-assessment tool supported by user-friendly guidance and learning materials.
- 126. The study further found that there was a need for a clear timeframe for the Periodic Reporting for multiple cycles once a timeline of reporting and deadlines have been adopted. It should allow stakeholders to be better informed about the process and thereby being more engaged with it. It would also facilitate the planning of human resources, awareness raising and engaging relevant stakeholders such as other agencies that hold vital information for the process. The importance of a well-communicated implementation calendar was also highlighted earlier in this report.

## V. Moving Forward: Key Lessons and Strategic Next Steps for the Fourth Cycle

127. This final chapter synthesises the key insights and directions emerging from both the review of the Third Cycle (Chapter III) and the Feasibility Study (Chapter IV). It outlines practical priorities and strategic orientations, while identifying areas where additional consolidation or innovation may help enhance the process and its long-term relevance.

### A. Key lessons from the Reflection Period

128. The importance of Periodic Reporting as an opportunity for learning and building a common understanding or priorities and challenges was highlighted. The process was widely recognised as a space for national coordination, reflection at all levels, and a

better understanding of the implementation of the Convention. This collaborative process helped bring together multiple levels of governance and fostered exchange across diverse management contexts. Many perceive it as a valuable opportunity, not only for national coordination and regional cooperation, but also for supporting planning and adaptive management at the property level. The process also demonstrated the strong commitment of States Parties, national focal points and site managers to reflect on practices, share experiences, and identify areas for improvement.

- 129. Several challenges were also identified, particularly in aligning the design of the process with the practical needs of the stakeholders. Recurrent concerns were raised about the complexity of the questionnaire, the usability of the online platform, and the lack of clarity in some of the terminology. Section C of Chapter III highlighted several key directions for improvement.
- 130. Further improving the questionnaire remains a priority. A large number of suggestions were received through the Reflection Period. At the same time, maintaining consistency with previous cycles is essential to support the ability to identify trends over time, through the monitoring indicators. For this reason, no major structural changes are proposed at this stage. Instead, the focus is on targeted improvements that enhance clarity, reduce redundancy, and strengthen the relevance and usability of the questionnaire, while preserving comparability with earlier cycles. Although a preliminary revision is proposed (see Annex I), further work will be needed to refine and test its practical use across regions. This work will be essential to ensure that the questionnaire becomes not only easier to complete but also useful for strategic planning, reflection, and for improving the quality and relevance of the data placing greater emphasis on collecting information that can be meaningfully used, and less on data gathering for its own sake.

#### B. Proposed Analytical Framework and strategic priorities for the Fourth Cycle

- 131. The proposed Analytical Framework for the Fourth Cycle of Periodic Reporting builds on those used in previous cycles. For the purpose of this report, the Analytical Framework is understood as the structured approach that defines: what aspects of the Convention is implemented at national and property levels; how the questionnaire will be structured and what key thematic areas it will include; what monitoring indicators will be used to assess changes over time; what methods of analysis will be applied to identify trends and determine how results will be presented and at which level (i.e., regional, global).
- 132. At present, no major revisions are proposed. The logic of the proposed adjustments and recommendations is that Section I should continue to function in close complementarity with Section II, reflecting the two levels at which the Convention is implemented: at national and property levels. However, it is also recognised that much of the information gathered through Section I could contribute to broader reporting efforts, including the UNESCO Global Report. In this context, the operational link between Sections I and II should not be seen as a limitation, but rather as a feature that allows data from Section I to be used independently when appropriate.
- 133. However, the report includes a wide range of recommendations aimed at improving their clarity, internal coherence and usability. Rather than introducing major structural changes, the proposed approach focuses on refining the existing framework to make it more practical and responsive, while preserving comparability with previous cycles.
- 134. While monitoring indicators help organise information across thematic areas, several limitations have been identified. The Reflection Period highlighted the need to improve the relevance and credibility of the indicators and questioned whether all 43 currently in use are necessary. A more focused and refined set of indicators could strengthen their function of the Periodic Reporting without increasing the workload.

- 135. A potential significant change from the Third to the Fourth Cycle is the timeline of reporting cycles and reporting deadlines in relation to the UNESCO Global Report. This shift would have a follow-on effect on the organisation and execution of the process, both for the States Parties as the Secretariat.
- 136. Building on the conclusions of the Reflection Period, the following presents five key areas proposed to improve the overall design and implementation of the Fourth Cycle:
- 137. **Strengthen capacity-building and guidance mechanisms:** The Fourth Cycle should place renewed emphasis on strengthening the guidance and support mechanisms that enable effective use of Periodic Reporting as a self-assessment exercise. Many respondents stressed the importance of framing the process as an opportunity to reflect on management practices. To support this shift, users need improved access to training, mentoring, and offline resources, tailored to different types of properties and national contexts. It is also essential to work on capacity-building concerning the collecting of good practice, and simplified language that facilitate understanding across linguistic and cultural contexts. Encouraging peer learning and regional collaboration will also be essential to increase ownership and capacity at all levels.
- 138. **Strengthen data continuity and use:** Improvements to the online platform are essential to support easier access to previous reports and data, enabling effective tracking of changes and trends over time, supporting the identification of common challenges and strategic responses. Additionally, it should facilitate cross-referencing with other World Heritage tools, such as the State of conservation Information System, while preserving the distinct purposes of each mechanism. These improvements will also contribute to the feasibility of future global-level syntheses, including a potential Global World Heritage Report or the UNESCO Global Report.
- 139. Reinforce Periodic Reporting as a strategic and inclusive process: The questionnaire should be framed and used as a tool that supports planning, learning, and informed decision-making. The emphasis is on only collecting what is needed. Greater emphasis should be placed on encouraging follow-up and reflection, particularly in translating findings into national strategies or property-level action. Improved communication about how the data is used and shared will help strengthen engagement and ownership across all levels. Equally important is the continued inclusion of a dedicated Reflection Period following each cycle. This moment of structured assessment bringing together all actors involved has proven essential for identifying challenges, consolidating lessons learned, and guiding future improvements.
- 140. Encourage greater coherence and efficiency across cycles: While maintaining the regional structure of the Periodic Reporting, practical modalities should be explored to enhance overall coherence and enable more consistent global synthesis. Among the options considered in the Feasibility Study, a more integrated model allowing for regular cross-regional analysis and contributing to global-level reporting could provide a balanced and forward-looking approach. A gradual shift in this direction, aligned with the continued implementation of regional priorities, would support the efficiency, consistency, and strategic relevance of the process.

### C. Looking Ahead

141. The Fourth Cycle represents an opportunity to consolidate past achievements while introducing adjustments that make the process more usable, strategic, and responsive to current challenges. The recommendations in this report provide a roadmap for these improvements, but their implementation will require ongoing collaboration, commitment, careful planning, and financial support. Acting on the outcomes of the Reflection Period will be essential before launching the next cycle. The current report put forward a wide

range of recommendations aimed at improving the Periodic Reporting process, which now require careful consideration and practical implementation.

## VI. DRAFT DECISION

### Draft Decision: 47 COM 10

The World Heritage Committee,

- 1. <u>Having examined</u> Document WHC/25/47.COM/10,
- 2. <u>Recalling</u> Decisions **41** COM **10A**, **42** COM **10A**, **43** COM **10B**, **44** COM **10D**, **45** COM **10E** and **46** COM **10C**, adopted at its 41st (Krakow, 2017), 42nd (Manama, 2018), 43rd (Baku, 2019), extended 44th (Fuzhou/Online, 2021), extended 45th (Riyadh, 2023), and 46th (New Delhi, 2024) sessions,
- 3. <u>Also recalling</u> the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration, the 2024 IOS Evaluation of UNESCO's Periodic Reporting on the Culture Sector's Conventions and Recommendations, and the Decision 219 EX/13 of the Executive Board of UNESCO;
- 4. <u>Commends</u> the implementation of the Reflection Period by the Secretariat;
- 5. <u>Welcomes</u> the comprehensive report based on the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting, and the proposals for improving process, relevance, analysis, use of data, and revised format of the Questionnaire for the Fourth Cycle;
- 6. <u>Also welcomes</u> the Feasibility Study considering the practical modalities of enhancing the Periodic Reporting exercise as well as the review of the analytical framework and the monitoring indicators for the Periodic Reporting;
- 7. <u>Decides</u> to launch the Fourth Cycle of Periodic Reporting in July 2026, in view of the need to allow sufficient time for appropriate preparation by the Secretariat and by the States Parties, and to follow the recommended proposal [Option 1/Option 2] as presented in Document WHC/25/47.COM/10;
- 8. <u>Approves</u> the methodology and use of information of the Culture Monitoring Platform to facilitate the reporting by the States Parties and analysis by the Secretariat:
- 9. <u>Requests</u> the World Heritage Centre to present, for examination by the World Heritage Committee, a revised version of Chapter V of the Operational Guidelines (Periodic Reporting on the implementation of the World Heritage Convention) and Annex 7 (Format for the Periodic Reporting of the application of the World Heritage Convention), at its 48th session, based on the results of the Reflection Period;
- 10. <u>Encourages</u> the active engagement of the States Parties in the following reporting cycles, and <u>also decides</u>, that, in view of the current financial and human resources constraints of the World Heritage Centre, its role should consist of ensuring a holistic approach across regions, by providing overall coordination, guidance tools and analysis, as well as facilitating a State Party-driven approach, and <u>invites</u> the States Parties to contribute extrabudgetary resources for this purpose, and <u>further decides</u>, in case the resources are insufficient to ensure continuity, to supplement the funding of an extra-budgetary position from the Periodic Reporting budget line in the World Heritage Fund.

## List of Annexes to Document WHC/25/47.COM/10

- Annex I Proposal for the revised format of the Periodic Reporting questionnaire for the Fourth Cycle: <u>Section I</u> and <u>Section II</u>
- Annex II Overview of two Options of Reporting timeline in relation to the UNESCO Global Report on Cultural Policies

Year	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
Milestones	September MONDIACULT				MONDIACULT				MONDIACULT	
World Heritage Committee	July 47 COM	June/July (TBC) 48 COM	June/July (TBC) 49 COM	June/July (TBC) 50 COM	June/July (TBC) 51 COM	June/July (TBC) 52 COM	June/July (TBC) 53 COM	June/July (TBC) 54 COM	June/July (TBC) 55 COM	June/July (TBC) 56 COM
Section I All regions		Launch of the Reporting	30 June Global Deadline	Analysis of the reports	Report to the Committee	Launch of the Reporting	30 June Global Deadline	Analysis of the reports	Report to the Committee	Launch of the Reporting
		Capacity-building begins with the launch	Capacity-building until the deadline			Capacity-building begins with the launch	Capacity-building until the deadline			Capacity-building begins with the launch
Section I Reflection period					Start Reflection period	Present the reflection to the Committee			Start Reflection period	Present the reflection to the Committee
Section II Arab States		Launch of the Reporting	June Deadline	Report to the Committee				Launch of the Reporting	June Deadline	Report to the Committee
& Africa		Capacity-building begins with the launch	Capacity-building until the deadline					Capacity-building begins with the launch	Capacity-building until the deadline	
<b>Section II</b> Asia and the Pacific			Launch of the Reporting	June Deadline	Report to the Committee				Launch of the Reporting	June Deadline
& Latin America and the Caribbean			Capacity-building begins with the launch	Capacity-building until the deadline					Capacity-building begins with the launch	Capacity-building until the deadline
<b>Section II</b> Europe and North America				Launch of the Reporting	June Deadline	Report to the Committee				Launch of the Reporting
				Capacity-building begins with the launch	Capacity-building until the deadline					Capacity-building begins with the launch
Section II Reflection period						Start Reflection period	Present the reflection to the Committee			

## Annex II Overview of two Option of Reporting timeline in relation to the UNESCO Global Report on Cultural Policies

Option 1: Separate Timeframes for Section I and Section II, one year analysis for Section I, and two regions reporting per year for Section II

Year	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034
Milestones	September MONDIACULT				MONDIACULT				MONDIACULT	
World Heritage Committee	July 47 COM	June/July (TBC) 48 COM	June/July (TBC) 49 COM	June/July (TBC) 50 COM	June/July (TBC) 51 COM	June/July (TBC) 52 COM	June/July (TBC) 53 COM	June/July (TBC) 54 COM	June/July (TBC) 55 COM	June/July (TBC) 56 COM
Sections I and II Arab States & Africa		Launch of the Reporting	June Deadline	Report to the Committee				Launch of the Reporting	Deadline	Report to the Committee
		Capacity-building begins with the launch	Capacity-building until the deadline					Capacity-building begins with the launch	Capacity-building until the deadline	
Sections I and II Asia and			Launch of the Reporting	June Deadline	Report to the Committee				Launch of the Reporting	June Deadline
the Pacific & Latin America and the Caribbean			Capacity-building begins with the launch	Capacity-building until the deadline					Capacity-building begins with the launch	Capacity-building until the deadline
Sections I and II				Launch of the Reporting	June Deadline	Report to the Committee				Launch of the Reporting
Europe and North America				Capacity-building begins with the launch	Capacity-building until the deadline					Capacity-building begins with the launch
Sections I and II Reflection period						Start Reflection period	Present the reflection to the Committee			

**Option 2:** Same timeframe for Sections I and II, reporting on two regions per year