

The World Heritage Newsletter

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Special Session of World Heritage Bureau considers reform agenda

Within the broader context of reform within UNESCO, launched by Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura, a Special Session of the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee was held in Budapest, Hungary, from 2 to 4 October 2000.

Under the chairmanship of Mr Abdelaziz Touri (Morocco), the Special Session considered four main groups of issues: a) statutory meetings, sub-committees, and equitable representation on the Committee; b) representativity of the *World Heritage List*; c) information and document management; and d) other business, including the role of the Advisory Bodies and a call for the reduction in the volume of documents produced for statutory meetings.

Among its recommendations, the Bureau proposed that a feasibility study be prepared examining the implications of a sub-committee system. The Bureau also recognised the urgent need for an integrated information management system and strategies.

The full report of the Special Session of the Bureau may be found on the World Heritage Centre web site at: www.unesco.org/whc/archive/repbur00ss.htm (English) and www.unesco.org/whc/fr/archive/rapbur00ss.htm (French).

The conclusions and recommendations of the Special Session will be presented to the Committee at its twenty-fourth session, to be held in Cairns, Australia, from 27 November to 2 December 2000.

Events to be held during World Heritage Committee session

A Pacific World Heritage Youth Forum on "World Heritage and the Environment" will be held from 23 - 28 November 2000 in Cairns, Australia, concurrently with the 24th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee. The programme will bring together students and teachers from 17 Pacific countries to discuss the role of young people in World Heritage identification, preservation and promotion, and includes on-site exercises at the two World Heritage sites near Cairns: the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics. On 28 November, the students will present their proposed action plan for the Pacific region to the World Heritage Committee.

A Forum exploring "Representation of Indigenous traditions on the World Heritage List", organized by Environment Australia and the local Bama Wabu people, will also be held in Cairns during the Committee session, on 24 November. The Forum, hosted by the local Bama Wabu people, will be attended by indigenous representatives from around Australia, the Pacific, Canada and North America.

New Director for the World Heritage Centre

UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura has appointed Francesco Bandarin as Director of the World Heritage Centre. Mr. Bandarin, an Italian architect and town planner, took up the post on 20 September 2000. He succeeds Mounir Bouchenaki, who was recently appointed UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture.

Active for many years in the field of planning and management of built heritage as well as of cultural heritage conservation, Mr. Bandarin has long been involved in the development of projects for the defence of Venice, his native city. Over the last five years, he has been Director of Special Programmes in the Agency for Jubilee Preparations 2000 in Rome, in charge of design, budgeting and implementation of plans.

Mr Bandarin holds degrees from the University Institute of Architecture, Venice, and the University of California, Berkeley. He is Professor of Town Planning at the University Institute of Architecture, Venice.



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Experts identify potential natural heritage sites in Alpine region

Some 25 experts attended the Regional Thematic Expert Meeting on Potential Natural World Heritage Sites in the Alps, held from 18-22 June 2000 in Halstatt, Austria. The town of Halstatt, inscribed on the *World Heritage List* in 1997, forms part of the Hallstatt-Dachstein Salzkammergut Cultural Landscape, the first cultural landscape in the Alps region to be designated.

The Alpine region, covering seven countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Slovenia, and Switzerland) is an area of unique geological and geomorphological history and natural beauty. However, the region faces serious problems of noise and air pollution, transboundary traffic and lack of international protection, as well as a lack of legal protection of flora and fauna and protected areas.

The Hallstatt meeting, organized by the Austrian Commission for UNESCO and the Austrian environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) Umweltdachverband OGNU, in close collaboration with the World Heritage Centre, sought to identify and address the strengths as well as weaknesses of the Alpine system. Presentations on the general issues and case studies on specific Alpine sites covered not only the natural but also the cultural aspects of the region.

Mont Blanc, a potential site of natural beauty and exceptional combination of landscapes which is shared by three countries, is a good example of the complexity of alpine sites. Its summit is considered the "roof of the Alps", and the cultural values – people sharing the same language of franco-provençal origin and local rituals, traditions and agriculture – have been well-preserved. The mountains have played an important sportive role, as the "cradle of alpinism", as well as representing an area of scientific challenge (mountain research, etc.). However, tourism has increased considerably in recent years, and the protection of the area as a whole is not ensured.

Participants at the Hallstatt meeting included experts from all six States Parties to the World Heritage Convention in the Alpine region as well as representatives from the advisory body IUCN, the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) and several regional NGOs. In its recommendations, the expert group called for closer links with the Alpine Convention, and enhanced national protection. It also encouraged Liechtenstein to ratify the World Heritage Convention.

A total of 35 mountain ranges are included in the *World Heritage List*, as well as eight

individual mountains, comprising approximately 30% of the natural and mixed World Heritage sites. However, the *List* currently includes only two mountain sites, from the Andean and the Himalayan regions. Moreover, the consideration of mountain areas presently ranks high on UNESCO's agenda, in view of the upcoming International Year of the Mountains (2002), proclaimed by the United Nations "to increase international awareness of the global importance of mountain ecosystems" throughout the world.

The Alpine Convention

The Action Plan for the Global Strategy for a representative and credible World Heritage List calls for identification of natural heritage sites in the Alpine region in close co-operation with the Alpine Convention. The Alpine Convention, which came into force in March 1995, was signed by eight States and by the European Community. It aims to contribute to awareness-building about the rich Alpine heritage, to promote its sustainable use, to support initiatives in the region, to enhance a network of protected areas in the Alps to ensure transboundary co-operation and to contribute to the networks of communes and of scientists.

Preliminary evaluation gives high marks to educational resource kit

A preliminary review of evaluations by teachers who have used the educational resource kit "World Heritage in Young Hands" has shown that the kit was considered "useful and comprehensive" and seemed to have "inspired both teachers and students".

The UNESCO Special Project "Young People's Participation in World Heritage Preservation and Promotion", which was launched by UNESCO in 1994, seeks to develop a new educational concept of World Heritage Education in school curricula, and the kit was designed to provide teachers with a concrete tool to help them. After its completion in 1999, the kit was distributed in about 700 schools in 130 countries for experimentation and feedback.

Nearly all evaluations considered that the use of the kit, had led to a "positive change" in students, who were enthusiastic to learn more, and anxious to make "conscious efforts" towards heritage preservation.

Over one-third of the teachers related examples of how their schools had created new material or developed innovative educational approaches to World Heritage Education.

During the discussion on the Alpine Convention, the experts pointed out that there are considerable gaps in its implementation. For example, in addition to the fact that not all protocols have been ratified (and the cultural protocol has not yet been prepared), there is no permanent secretariat and no funding available. However, they noted, the first steps for cross-boundary co-operation have been undertaken.

Recommendations

Two working groups prepared a number of recommendations, addressed to the States Parties of both the World Heritage and the Alpine Conventions, the European Union and the World Heritage Committee.

The experts concluded that the nomination of alpine natural World Heritage sites is an extremely complex process for a number of reasons, including the complexity and diversity of the sites, and the interactions between culture and nature. The existence of other Conventions and legal instruments, as well as the fact that several States Parties share the area, and the existence of various governmental and non-governmental initiatives for the protection and development of the Alps, further complicate the question.

An example of an inventive approach described was an "on-site education programme" organized by a school in Kenya, in which students themselves had become site guides for their parents and friends in an effort to encourage local people to visit heritage sites and take part in their preservation. Students in Italy produced a CD-ROM and a tourist guide, and young people in Peru developed board games and puzzles. Primary school children in Niue are presently working on a booklet called "My Heritage".

The preliminary review, which covered 56 evaluations received from 25 countries in five continents, is a first step in the in-depth evaluation of the entire project that will take place in the latter part of 2000 and in 2001. Apart from a review of the use of the kit, the overall evaluation will focus on the implementation of Project activities such as World Heritage Youth Fora, teacher-training workshops and on-site training activities. The final report will put forward recommendations for the future development of World Heritage educational and participatory activities. The deadline for inclusion in a final review has been extended to mid-December.

Experts reflect on cultural landscapes in Central America

Because of its unique position as an isthmus between North and South America, Central America has played a crucial role in the colonial history of the Americas, and serves as a fitting symbol of the economic, geographic and historic ties between the countries of the Americas. The region is one of the richest cultural "melting pots" in the world, and is characterised by a great diversity of ecosystems.

The Regional Thematic Meeting on Cultural Landscapes in Central America, held in San Jose, Costa Rica, from 26 to 29 September 2000, brought together some 35 heritage experts to reflect on the concept of cultural landscapes as it relates specifically to the region.

Cultural landscapes represent the "combined works of nature and of man" designated in Article 1 of the World Heritage Convention. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal.

The experts made a number of practical recommendations, which will be presented to the 24th session of the World Heritage Committee, to be held in Cairns, Australia from 27 November - 2 December 2000, notably on the importance of analysing the links between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans (canals, roads and routes) throughout history and the impact (positive and/or negative) of the introduction of certain crops (coffee, tobacco, bananas, sugar cane) on the original landscape.

The meeting was organized by the UNESCO Office in San Jose and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, in close co-operation with the national authorities and with financial support from the World Heritage Fund. In addition to the experts from the region, representatives from ICOMOS, IUCN and the World Heritage Centre, members of the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA) and other international or regional institutions also attended.

In many cases, cultural landscapes have been shaped by the economic demands of foreign, often far-away power – for example, the need to construct railways or waterways to transport goods – and today, globalisation means that the

influence of international demand continues to be powerful. A sudden drop in demand or prices for a single crop – bananas, for example – could lead to huge changes not only in the economic landscape of a country, but in its cultural landscape as well, as the infrastructures related to this crop would be affected.

Case studies illustrate importance of intangible heritage

The case studies presented at the meeting illustrated clearly these interrelationships, and drew particular attention to the importance of intangible heritage – history, spirituality and questions of peoples' identity and cultural values.

"The route of the Panama canal as a cultural landscape", is one good example. It can be considered a "macro-landscape", made up of several "micro-landscapes", and it also clearly illustrates the history of colonisation and occupation. The product of 11,000 years of interactions between nature and culture, this potential World Heritage site includes much more than just the canal – it is a "net" of protected areas within a landscape of archaeological remains, hydrological systems, and technological construction with its related industrial architecture. The area surrounding the waterway is protected to secure the water supply necessary for the functioning of the canal, and results in the presence of great natural biodiversity.

Another case study presented the railway between San Jose and Limon, a 277.3 km-long linear cultural landscape which illustrates the history of production and the agroexport system (cacao, coffee, sugar and bananas), technology, architecture and construction works (bridges and tunnels), and the social history (immigration, workforce, etc.) of Costa Rica. The railway line, now out of use, was a transportation corridor which contributed to the evolution of 75 villages, between the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans, and has changed the landscape radically.

The representative of IFLA provided an illustrated presentation of a project of an inventory of cultural landscapes in Central America and the Caribbean, which includes a number of "dynamic landscapes", which are the results not only of general factors, such as geology, geomorphology, and climate, but also of specific conditions, in particular the history of colonisation and revolution.

For more information on cultural landscapes, see the Cultural Landscape Navigator on the World Heritage Centre's web site (<http://www.unesco.org/whc/exhibits/cultland/landscape.htm>).

Military history and slavery evoked at Fortress ceremony

A symposium on "The Historical Fortifications of the Caribbean", followed by an inscription ceremony for Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts and Nevis, brought together local students, members of the business and diplomatic communities and the public at large to reflect on the role of fortifications in the colonial and socio-economic history of the region. Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park, the first fortification and cultural property of the English-speaking Caribbean to be inscribed on the *World Heritage List*, is a powerful symbol of the military – and colonial – history in the region, as well as a reminder of the important role played by slaves in its socio-economic development.

The event, held from 3 to 4 October 2000, presented current scholarship on Spanish, English, French and Dutch fortifications. Archaeological reports on the excavations at Brimstone Hill – especially of the slave quarters – were of particular interest to the local schoolchildren, who were eager to learn more about this often-neglected aspect of their history.

When the World Heritage Committee voted to inscribe the site in 1999, Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park was recognised mainly as "an exceptional and well preserved example of 17th and 18th British military architecture". During the Committee session, however, a number of delegates emphasised the importance of the fortress – which was built by slave labour during a peak period of European colonial expansion – in relation to the transatlantic slave trade (see *The World Heritage Newsletter* No. 23).

For over 300 years Britain, France, Holland and Spain engaged in a battle for supremacy of the Caribbean. The fertile islands, producers of great riches for much of Europe, were well worth defending. Because of its formidable defences, the Brimstone Hill Fortress came to be known as the "Gibraltar of the West Indies".

The result of underlying volcanic activity, Brimstone Hill is also indicative of the geological origins of most of the Caribbean islands. Sulphur-derived gases (from which the Hill got its name) periodically escape via underwater vents off the nearby coast. And, as the surrounding land had been cleared for sugar cultivation three and half centuries ago, many endemic plants and a few rare animals survived on this ecological enclave.

First gathering of cultural heritage experts from all five Central Asian Republics

At the crossroads of the civilizations of the East and West, the Central Asian region is a repository of unique cultural resources, a region of rich cultural interaction with great archaeological and historic interest. Yet, the most representative properties in this region are not yet inscribed on the *World Heritage List*. To date, only three sites from the Central Asian sphere have been designated as World Heritage. Although Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have been signatories to the World Heritage Convention since 1994, 1995, 1992, 1994 and 1993 respectively, the three sites inscribed on the *World Heritage List* from these countries (one in Turkmenistan and two in Uzbekistan) do not adequately represent the cultural diversity and richness of the region.

In response to perceived imbalances in the types of heritage included on the *World Heritage List* and its regional representativity, the World Heritage Centre and the Government of Turkmenistan organized a Global Strategy Expert Meeting in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan from 12 to 17 May 2000 to identify major themes and categories of heritage sites attesting to the cultural-ethnic diversity of the Central

Asian region of steppes, deserts, mountains. During this meeting, the first gathering of cultural heritage experts of all five republics, the following representative themes were identified:

- Centres and Routes of Religious and Cultural Exchange (including: Silk Routes, Medieval Cities, and Sites of Buddhism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity)
- Cultural-Natural Landscapes (Steppe & Nomadic civilizations)
- Ensembles of Monuments testifying to the evolution of architecture
- Ancient and Medieval Civilizations

Among the resolutions of the Expert Meeting, participants called for each Central Asian State Party to draw up a plan of action, both short and long term, for the protection, conservation, restoration and management of Central Asian Cultural Heritage. They also asked that annual regional workshops designed to share and exchange experience on issues of protection, conservation, restoration and management of Central Asian cultural heritage be organized on a rotation basis, with reports of the meetings published in English and Russian.

• **5 to 7 September:** International Roundtable of Mayors of World Heritage Fortress Cities. (Suwon City, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Korean National Commission for UNESCO). In Suwon, Republic of Korea. Information: <http://city.suwon.kyonggi.kr>.

• **2 to 4 October:** Special Session of the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee. Budapest, Hungary.

• **5 October:** World Heritage Dedication Ceremony: Brimstone Hill Fortress National Park, Saint Kitts and Nevis. The Inscription Ceremony will be preceded by a Symposium on "Historical Fortifications of the Caribbean".

• **7 to 12 October:** Interregional Seminar on World Heritage and Youth, Graz, Austria. Information: Austrian National Commission for UNESCO, oeuk@unesco.at.

• **26 to 30 October:** Asia/Pacific World Heritage Site Managers' Workshop. (NZ Department of Conservation, UNESCO World Heritage Centre). At Tongariro National Park, New Zealand. Information: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/cons/meeting.htm>, e-mail: pgreen@doc.govt.nz.

• **23 to 24 November:** 24th Extraordinary Session of the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee, Cairns, Australia.

• **23 to 28 November:** "World Heritage and the Environment": World Heritage Youth Forum for the Pacific (UNESCO, NORAD, Australian government) in Cairns, Australia. Information: j.hage@unesco.org or dodds.raylene.a@edumail.vic.gov.au.

• **24 November:** Indigenous Forum: "Representation of indigenous traditions on the World Heritage List" (Bama Wabu people and Environment Australia). In Cairns, Australia. Information: WHCairns2000@ea.gov.au

• **26 November:** "Australian Initiatives in Natural World Heritage - A Critical Review." (James Cook University, Cairns, QLD, Australia). In Cairns, Queensland, Australia. Information: david.haigh@jcu.edu.au.

• **27 November to 2 December:** 24th Session of the World Heritage Committee, Cairns, Australia.

• **22 to 25 January 2001:** "More than Two thousand Years in the History of Architecture: Safeguarding the structures of our architectural heritage", Bethlehem, International Congress organised by UNESCO and ICOMOS, in partnership with Bethlehem 2000 Project Authority. Information: <http://www.unesco.org/archi2000/>.

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Photo : p. 1: Halstatt-Dachstein Salzkammergut Cultural Landscape

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