

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE
WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

BUREAU OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE

Sixth session

Paris, 21 - 24 June 1982

Item 6 of the Provisional Agenda: Examination of a proposal to establish a programme for monitoring the conditions of sites inscribed on the World Heritage List

1. By letter dated 5 January 1982 addressed to the Secretariat, the authorities of the United States of America have proposed that "the World Heritage Committee establish a formal program for monitoring the condition of sites which have been approved for inscription on the World Heritage List". This proposal is based on the following considerations: "the World Heritage List has grown and diversified over the past few years to the point where it is not possible for the World Heritage Committee to monitor the condition of World Heritage properties through informal contacts and communication alone. One of the important responsibilities of the Committee is to ensure that properties inscribed on the List retain those values that initially qualified them for inscription. In addition, the information gathered through the monitoring process could be used by the Committee in decisions regarding the granting of technical cooperation requests or the inscription of properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger. Such a monitoring program would allow the Committee to more effectively fulfill its responsibilities under the World Heritage Convention."

2. The United States therefore proposes that: "a formal program for monitoring the condition of all World Heritage sites be adopted and implemented by the World Heritage Committee. The Committee, through the work of the Bureau and the Secretariat, could develop a brief, standardized form for use by each country in reporting on properties which they had nominated for World Heritage status. The Committee could request that each country periodically submit a completed status report form, e.g. every two or three years. The Committee could work with IUCN and ICOMOS in compiling a summary status report on the condition of the World Heritage List."

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3. In the United States, the National Park Service employs a monitoring process in the administration of the National Park System. A note on the methodology adopted, prepared on the basis of a Report to the Congress on the State of the Parks - 1980, communicated by the authorities of the USA, as an example of a resource monitoring effort, is attached (Annex I). The full text of the Report will be available for consultation at the Bureau meeting.

4. Since the United States does not serve this year on the Bureau of the World Heritage Committee, the authorities requested the Secretariat to present this proposal to the Bureau at its Spring 1982 session.

Note on the monitoring process used in the administration
of the US National Park System

(based on "State of the Parks - 1980 - A Report to the Congress" prepared by the National Park Service, US Dept. of the Interior, May 1980)

A survey was carried out by the National Park Service to identify :

- (1) the specific threats which endanger park natural and cultural resources;
- (2) the sources of those threats; and
- (3) the park resources which are endangered by the threats.

To this end, a questionnaire was sent to each of the 326 units of the National Park System. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part one provided a checklist of possible threats that may exist within any park area. It identified 73 different threats which were classified into 7 general threat categories :

- Aesthetic Degradation (land development, timbering, etc.)
- Air Pollution (acid rain, hydrocarbon pollutants, etc.)
- Physical Removal of Resources (mineral extraction, poaching, etc.)
- Exotic Encroachment (animals, plants, blasting, etc.)
- Visitor Physical Impacts (campfires, trampling, etc.)
- Water Quality Pollution and Water Quantity Changes (oil spills, toxic chemicals, etc.)
- Park Operations (trails, misuse of biocides, etc.)

Part one was designed to gather data about these threats, i.e. the extent to which each reported threat is adequately documented by research, monitoring or other data; whether the source of each threat is of internal or external origin; and whether each threat is or is not identified in the area's Resources Management Plan. Part two of the questionnaire provided an opportunity for the respondents to quantify the threats by documenting the specific sources of the threats and the resources impacted.

The data collected were analyzed with computer assistance and a series of conclusions drawn. The survey underlined the need for an expanded programme to protect and preserve the resources of the parks.