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MONITORING NATURAL WORLD HERITAGE SITES

by
International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

1. INTRODUCTION

The World Heritage Convention aims to establish "an effective system of collective protection of the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value, organized on a permanent basis and in accordance with modern scientific methods." (Preamble to the Convention). "Each State Party to this Convention recognizes that the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage...belongs primarily to that State." (Article 4). Article 5 suggests a number of steps which States should take to ensure appropriate protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage situated in its territory, including policies, management structures, scientific studies, training, and other measures.

Article 6 recognizes that "such heritage constitutes a world heritage for whose protection it is the duty of the international community as a whole to cooperate." International protection is defined by Article 7 as "the establishment of a system of international cooperation and assistance designed to support States Parties to the Convention in their efforts to conserve and identify that heritage." Articles 15 to 18 establish a Fund for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and Articles 19 to 26 describe the conditions and arrangements for international assistance. The World Heritage Committee is empowered to "carry out such studies and consultations as it deems necessary" before reaching a decision on any request for technical assistance. Finally, Article 27 states that Parties "shall undertake to keep the public broadly informed of the dangers threatening this heritage and of activities carried on in pursuance of this Convention."

At the Sixth Session of the World Heritage Committee, meeting in Paris on 13 to 17 December, it was considered that it would be useful if the Committee could be regularly informed (a) on the state of conservation of the properties; (b) on the measures taken to protect and manage the properties; (c) on the way in which funds allocated under the World Heritage Fund for the safeguarding of sites are used; and (d) details on the conservation methods and techniques followed in the projects concerned.

It was felt, however, that the question of reporting by States Parties required careful study before the Committee could take any decision on this matter, although the principle of yearly reporting was considered to be highly desirable. The Committee therefore requested IUCN and ICOMOS, in collaboration with ICCROM, to prepare for the next meeting of the Bureau, proposals on the contents of the reports which may be requested from States Parties on World Heritage sites on the procedure to be followed for the preparation and submission to the Committee of such reports. In this connection, the organizations were requested to take account of the different types of cultural and natural properities in the various regions of the world.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

2.1. Reporting or monitoring? It is important that there be a very clear understanding of what is being attempted. It is suggested that "monitoring" be the objective of this reporting exercise, defined simply as "measurements taken according to a standard methodology over a period of time, so that status and trends may be detected." The monitoring system should provide the information which will lead to the improved management of World Heritage properties.

It should be noted that appropriate monitoring procedures are standard parts of most international instruments, including the Law of the Sea, the Ramsar Wetlands Convention, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, and the Migratory Species Convention.

2.2. Guidelines. The following are several guidelines to ensure that the monitoring system will provide the information required by the Committee, while ensuring that questions of national sovereignty are not at issue, and that no inappropriate burden is placed on State Parties.

2.2.1. The monitoring system should be primarily self-monitoring, whereby States report annually on their own sites; comparisons are most appropriate when made between over time for the same site, or between planned and actual achievement for the site.

2.2.2. The reports should be summarized by the World Heritage Secretariat for presentation to the Committee.

2.2.3. The reports should be used primarily for information, including for the public; the Committee should also use the reports as a basis for assessing Technical Cooperation requests.

2.2.4. In the long run, the annual reports could provide an important source of information to all State Parties on the effective management of World Heritage Properties.

2.2.5. The reports should be made annually, but should not place an undue burden on the State Party; the reports should therefore be simple, but with ample scope for additional voluntary information.

3. CONTENTS OF ANNUAL REPORTS

3.1. The World Heritage Secretariat should send out a form, designed in cooperation with ICOMOS and IUCN, to the Responsible Authority for each World Heritage Property. This form should be completed and returned to the Secretariat within two months. The form should contain at least the following:

1. State Party:
2. Name of World Heritage Property:
3. Date added to the World Heritage List:
4. Responsible Authority:
5. Technical cooperation requested:
 - Amount:
 - Date:
 - Description:
 - Results:
6. Number of visitors for the year:
 - 6a. Percent change from previous year:
7. Budget for the year:
 - 7a. Percent change in budget from previous year:

8. Does the site have a management plan? Yes No
9. If no, is a plan in preparation?
10. If yes, when was the management plan prepared?
11. What period does the management plan cover?
12. What objectives are described for the site?
13. (more details on management)
14. How many people work at the site during this year?
 - 14a. Percent change from previous year:
15. How many personnel are from each of the follows levels:
Professional/Technical:
Maintenance
Protection:
Other:
16. How are personnel being trained?
17. Does the site have a special education programme? Describe.
18. What threats does the site face?
19. What is being done to counteract these threats?

4. HANDLING THE DATA COLLECTED

IUCN has established the Protected Areas Data Unit as part of the Conservation Monitoring Centre; this Unit is compiling information on all protected areas, including World Heritage Sites. Such information can help form the basis of a more detailed monitoring system.

(State what ICOMOS is doing and how this could relate to monitoring)