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CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE  
WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Bureau of the World Heritage Committee

Fourteenth Session

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Room XVI

**ITEM 4 of the Provisional Agenda : Monitoring of the state of conservation of the cultural properties inscribed on the World Heritage List and related technical problems**

1. At its eleventh session, the World Heritage Committee decided to implement, on an experimental basis, a system for monitoring the state of conservation of the cultural properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. According to this decision, the questionnaire entitled "Information Update on the cultural properties inscribed on the World Heritage List" was sent, at the beginning of 1988, to those States Parties on whose territory the first fifty cultural properties inscribed on the World Heritage List are situated.
2. At its twelfth session, i.e. at the end of the first year of implementation of the system, the Committee examined the results obtained at the conclusion of this first phase. Although the results were encouraging, it appeared that it was, nevertheless, premature to draw final conclusions regarding the viability of the system. Therefore, the Committee decided to prolong the experiment for another year, while modifying the calendar for receiving and processing the questionnaires. The second series of questionnaires was to be sent early 1989. In order to give more time to the States Parties to answer the questionnaires in a more detailed manner, the deadline for the reception of the answers by the Secretariat was fixed at the end of 1989. In early 1990, the answers were to be examined by the Secretariat, and then by ICOMOS. The conclusions were to be presented to the Bureau of the Committee in June 1990.
3. At the date of drafting the present document, out of the 23 countries concerned with the second phase of the monitoring system, only 11 had responded to the questionnaires, i.e. for 22 out of 50 properties, namely less than 50 %, a percentage even lower than for the first phase (70 % in 1988). These answers will be available for consultation during the session of the Bureau.
4. In some cases, the answers received provide elements of information which are not negligible, for instance concerning recent archaeological discoveries, restoration works carried out, new publications on sites or the extension of buffer-zones by acquisitions of land by the States.

5. Very often, however, the answers do not address very important questions regarding the sites, which, in reality, are the problems which the Committee should study, e.g. : difficulties related to the preservation of the integrity of the environment; changes in the attribution of properties, such as those with the appearance of museums on sites, which tend to shadow the sites themselves; problems raised by tourism and the over-visitation of sites and, as a consequence, evolution of the hotel infrastructures, parkings, etc.

6. Consequently, it is proposed that the 'information update questionnaire' henceforth be transmitted to the States together with a detailed letter clearly explaining which type of information the Committee actually wishes to receive, particularly on questions related to tourism, environment and development mentioned in the above paragraph 5.

7. At the conclusion of the first two years of implementation of the monitoring system of cultural properties, it is clear that, though the questionnaires make it possible to gather some useful information, their use, in its present form, does not allow the Secretariat to fulfill its role in a satisfactory manner, i.e. to ensure that the integrity of the sites is respected, particularly in the case of mixed properties or cultural properties including natural areas.

8. At its thirteenth session, the Committee considered that the system underway was both cumbersome and not fully satisfactory, especially in comparison to the system for monitoring natural sites, and that the system did not enable the Committee to assume this important function efficiently. It was suggested that the role given to ICOMOS and ICCROM be reviewed, and more use be made of these organizations specialized in cultural heritage conservation, while of course using the structures which already exist in the field, as well as the expertise of the members of the Secretariat.

9. Therefore, the Secretariat envisages to study the optimal ways to enable the Committee to fulfill its role regarding the monitoring of the cultural properties inscribed on the List, through a better utilization of the existing networks (national committees of ICOMOS, ICCROM, representatives of Unesco in the countries, etc.) and by strengthening the contributions of field experts.

10. The participation of such networks would enable the Committee to be better informed of the state of conservation of those properties which deserve specific attention in view of the dangers which threaten their authenticity or integrity. The questionnaires, covering 50 properties selected according to their date of inscription, would continue to be sent out. The use of networks, however, would be confined to those sites where specific dangers have been identified, irrespective of the cause of the dangers (climatic changes, use for tourism, economic development, etc.), as it is in the case of the monitoring of natural properties.

11. This improvement in the system would make it possible to better coordinate the monitoring of the state of conservation of the sites inscribed and the granting of technical assistance, two actions which would benefit by being more linked.

12. The members of the Bureau are invited to give their views on the means to improve the monitoring system and to give their opinions on the suitability to launch, in 1991, a third series of questionnaires.