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**UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION**

**CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF
THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

**World Heritage Committee
Thirty first Session**

**Christchurch, New Zealand
23 June – 2 July 2007**

Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda: Report of the Secretariat on its activities

INF.5C: Progress Report on the African World Heritage Fund

This report summarizes progress on the establishment of the African World Heritage Fund, as requested by Decision **29 COM 11.C2**.

I. Background

1. The African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) was created in May 2006 to support the effective conservation and protection of natural and cultural heritage of outstanding universal value in Africa.¹ The Fund, which is a Trust registered under South African law, is the result of work undertaken at and following the 28th session of the World Heritage Committee (Suzhou, 2004) by the Africa Group at UNESCO to develop a strategy for dealing with the challenges faced by many African countries regarding the implementation of the 1972 *World Heritage Convention*. These challenges were brought fully to light by the *Africa Periodic Report*, presented at the Committee's 26th session (Budapest, 2002). Whereas that exercise dealt with the countries forming the geo-political region of Africa defined by UNESCO - essentially sub-Saharan Africa – the AWHF will be open to all countries covered by the African Union and who are State Parties to the *Convention*.
2. An initial contribution by the Government of the Republic of South Africa of ZAR20 million (approximately USD 2.7 million) towards the target endowment of USD10 million was quickly complemented by pledges to the value of a further USD 1 million from the Governments of India, Norway, the Netherlands, Israel, Gabon and Algeria. Many other countries expressed a firm intention to contribute to the Fund during a special information session held during the 30th session of the Committee in Vilnius, Lithuania.

II. Progress since the 30th session of the Committee (Vilnius, 2006)

3. A small Secretariat at the Department of Arts and Culture has been established to service the interim Board of Trustees (BoT) comprised of the representatives to UNESCO of Benin, Egypt, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. The Board, which will serve for a term of two years, met for the first time from 29 to 30 November 2006 to define a road map for the first two years of activity, including the setting up of operational structures, fundraising activities and the start up of grant making operations. The Board of Trustees has elected Mr Themba Wakashe, Chairperson of the 29th session of the World Heritage Committee, as its first Chairperson. A second meeting of the Board of Trustees is scheduled to take place on 26 and 27 March 2007 in order to finalise, inter-alia, operational and reporting frameworks for the Fund and to appoint a Director, who should be expected to be in post by mid 2007. The Board of Trustees has also indicated a wish to explore the possibilities for the Fund to become a Category 2 Institute under the auspices of UNESCO². Other key appointments to be made in the coming months include an investment manager for the Fund (based on an Africa wide competitive tender) and a professional Fundraiser.
4. UNESCO and the African Union have been designated as permanent observers to the Board of Trustees. The role of UNESCO, represented by the World Heritage Centre, will be to offer advice and to ensure that the objectives and actions of the AWHF are fully in line with those of the World Heritage Committee. Consideration is being given to including the African Development Bank in the group of permanent observers in order to reinforce the links between conservation and development. Other institutions may be invited as Observers on an ad hoc basis.

¹ Documents *WHC-05/29.COM/11C.2Rev* and *WHC-06/30COM*. INF11F may be consulted for further background about the development of the Fund up to its launch in May 2006.

² Document 33C/19 Principles and Guidelines for the Establishment and Functioning of UNESCO Institutes and Centres (Category 1) and Institutes and Centres under the Auspices of UNESCO (Category 2)

5. The AWHF will begin functioning operationally on 1 April 2007, housed at and using the systems of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA). A Memorandum of Understanding between DBSA and AWHF sets out the precise terms of the collaboration. The accounts of the Fund will be audited by the Auditor General of the Republic of South Africa.
6. The World Heritage Centre is supporting the interim Secretariat of the AWHF in its work until key posts have been filled. This support includes the provision of a consultant to work on the preparation of the Activity Plan for the Fund to be presented to the Board of Trustees in June 2007 and the organisation of two regional consultation meetings – one each for Anglophone and Francophone countries – to feed into the Activity Plan. The first steps towards the elaboration of this plan were taken during the first meeting of the BoT in November 2006 when it discussed a preliminary set of proposals, prepared by the World Heritage Centre, of model projects and activities to be supported by the Fund, including preparatory and technical assistance, as well as grants for capacity building programmes. The BoT has expressed a particular interest in transboundary projects as a tool to reinforce the role of the Fund in Africa and for bringing together member state and technical staff around themes of common interest. The BoT has also expressed an interest in exploring the scope for integrating the Funds' activities with those of other African heritage programmes such as Africa 2009.
7. Fundraising efforts for the AWHF were accelerated by the announcement on 7 February 2007 of a contribution of USD 1 million by the People's Republic of China, bringing the total pledged or contributed to date to USD 4.7 million. While these resources will permit the Fund to commit and cover initial expenditures on recruitment etc., they are not yet sufficient to ensure its sustainable functioning. A priority task for the Fundraiser will be to develop a Fundraising strategy based on three main needs: the constitution of an endowment to support fixed expenditures; operating expenditures; and project support and grant making. These resources will need to be generated and sustained on the basis of a mixture of member state contributions; donor funding and partnerships; and income generated by the endowment. This may need to include proposals for refining the mechanisms for member states laid out in the Feasibility study for compulsory annual contributions according to GDP.
8. A special lunchtime information session during the 31st session of the Committee in Christchurch, New Zealand, will present the results of the first months of operation of the Fund.³
9. Decision 29.COM.11C.2 invited the AWHF, once established, to report to the World Heritage Committee on a regular basis on its activities and discuss with the Committee its orientation and strategy. It is therefore proposed that a working document on progress covering the first full year of operation be presented to the Committee's 32nd session.

³ This is foreseen for 13h00 on Sunday 24 June 2007.