Distribution limited

WHC-95/CONF.203/7
Paris, 29 September 1995
Original: English

UNITED NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE
WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE
Nineteenth session

Berlin, Germany

4-9 December 1995

Item 9 of the Provisional Agenda: Balanced representation of the natural and cultural heritage on the World Heritage List

Background: At its nineteenth session the Bureau recalled that the Committee at its eighteenth session had noted the imbalance of the cultural and natural heritage in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Continuous concern about this imbalance was expressed by the Delegate of Germany and reference was made to a number of specific examples of how this imbalance manifest itself in the implementation of the Convention, including the high number of cultural nominations, the lack of a global strategy for natural heritage and the lack of balance of specialists representing States Parties at Committee and Bureau sessions. Therefore, the Bureau has included an agenda item on the balanced representation of natural and cultural heritage on the World Heritage List at the nineteenth session of the World Heritage Committee.

Framework of the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines: The World Heritage Convention is intended to protect both the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value. Although the Convention and its implementation relies on the separate definition of cultural heritage and of natural heritage (Articles 1 and 2 of the Convention), the Convention does not give precedence to the inclusion of cultural heritage on the World Heritage List over that of natural heritage or vice versa. The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention include reference to the need to maintain a reasonable balance between natural and cultural heritage, in paragraph 6 (iii) in the general principles for the establishment of the World Heritage List:

> "Efforts will be made to maintain a reasonable balance between the numbers of cultural heritage and the natural heritage properties entered on the List".

The World Heritage List: Of the 440 properties presently included in the World Heritage List, a total of 97 have been inscribed as natural properties while 326 have been inscribed as cultural properties. 17 of the 440 properties have been inscribed as "mixed" cultural and natural properties. Two of these "mixed" properties were also inscribed in the World Heritage List as cultural landscapes of associative value in conformity with the revised cultural criteria adopted by the Committee at its sixteenth session in 1992. The number of both natural and of "mixed" properties included in the World Heritage List appears by all standards to be low.

Overview of previous discussions of the Committee and Bureau: The question of an imbalance existing between the number of cultural and natural nominations to the World Heritage List was raised as early as the second session of the Bureau in May 1979 - only one year after the first properties were inscribed in the World Heritage List. At that time the Bureau noted a "marked" imbalance between the number of cultural and natural nominations and cited a number of reasons for this. These reasons included "publicity and information", "institutional factors in States Parties" and the "much greater variety of cultural properties". In addition, the Bureau noted that although there were only a few natural properties nominated, they were "generally of vast size". The Bureau noted its concerns and encouraged States Parties to nominate natural properties.

The concept of "universal value" and the need to establish "standards that would be applied in future for determining the properties to be admitted to the World Heritage List" were also discussed at the second session of the Bureau. IUCN "drew attention to the terms of the Convention which foresee that each State Party should submit to the Committee an inventory of properties situated in its territory which it considers as having outstanding universal value in terms of the criteria established by the Committee". It was noted that "universal value" was difficult to define and that even using comparative surveys it was more difficult to select cultural places than natural places for inclusion in the World Heritage List. The Bureau noted that IUCN interpreted "universal value" strictly, deeming that only "the best property of its kind" should be included in the List. The Bureau noted that "such a selection was much more difficult in the cultural field where several properties of the same family might have intrinsic value".

At its third session, the World Heritage Committee discussed the balance between natural and cultural properties based on a report by the "working group on natural criteria" which was concerned about the relatively low number of natural properties so far included in the World Heritage List. The working group also noted that the delegations of States Members at the third session of the Committee did not include a sufficient number of specialists in the natural heritage field which reduced the Committee's ability to evaluate properly natural properties. In order to improve this situation, the working group made two specific recommendations to the Committee:

(i) that in future a quorum for a meeting of the Committee should require, in addition to a majority of States Parties at least five delegates among the delegations with expertise in natural heritage; and

(ii) that in allocating funds for assistance to States, not more than 60% should be allocated to either cultural or natural properties".

The Committee shared the concern of the group. It considered, however, that it would not be feasible to introduce such a rule on the quorum for meetings of the Committee. The responsibility for ensuring balanced representation lay with each State Party of the Committee. The Committee requested the Secretariat to renew its efforts to ensure that the authorities in each State Party responsible for the natural heritage were fully informed of the activities undertaken under the Convention and of the meetings of the Committee.

At its fourth session, the Bureau expressed its concern that "an overall balance should be ensured between the two fields in implementing the Convention and that, in particular, the composition of the World Heritage List should reflect that balance". The Bureau noted that "because of the intrinsic difference which exists between cultural and natural properties, and the fact that the territorial size of sites varies largely, the importance attached to either cultural or natural properties cannot be evaluated by a simple numerical comparison of inscriptions on the List." In addition, the Bureau "requested the Secretariat to pursue its efforts to ensure that the authorities responsible for the conservation of the natural heritage are fully informed of the activities undertaken under the Convention".

The Committee at its fourth session took note of the report of the working group that had been established to examine measures to improve the balance between the cultural and natural heritage in the implementation of the Convention. The Committee agreed with the report and adopted the five recommendations of the working group:

"1) Preparatory assistance to States Parties should be granted on a priority basis for:

(i) the establishment of tentative lists of cultural and natural properties situated in their territories and suitable for inclusion in the World Heritage List;

(ii) the preparation of nominations of types of properties underrepresented in the World Heritage List.

2) States Parties to the Convention should provide the Secretariat with the name and address of the governmental organization(s) primarily responsible for cultural and natural properties so that copies of all official

correspondence and documents can be sent by the Secretariat to these focal points as appropriate. All States Parties to the Convention as of 5 September 1980 are asked to provide this information to the Secretariat by 31st December 1980. New States Parties are requested to do so as soon as possible after the deposit of their instrument of ratification, acceptance or accession.

3) States Parties to the Convention should convene at regular intervals at the national level a joint meeting of those persons responsible for natural and cultural heritage in order that they may discuss matters pertaining to the implementation of the Convention. This does not apply to States Parties where one single organization is dealing with both cultural and natural heritage.

4) The Committee, deeply concerned with maintaining a balance in the number of experts from the natural and cultural fields represented on the Bureau, urges that every effort be made in future elections in order to ensure that:
(i) the chair is not held by persons with expertise in the same field, either cultural or natural, for more than two succeeding years;
(ii) at least two "cultural" and at least two "natural" experts are present at Bureau meetings to ensure balance and credibility in reviewing nominations to the World Heritage List.

5) States Parties to the Convention should choose as their representatives persons qualified in the field of natural and cultural heritage thus complying with Article 9, paragraph 3 of the Convention.

Indicative inventory of natural sites: In 1982 IUCN published The World's Greatest Natural Areas, an Indicative Inventory of Natural Sites of World Heritage Quality in which it listed 219 natural sites. One of the stated purposes of the inventory was to stimulate the submission of nomination forms for the natural sites listed. As such the inventory had, and continues to have, the potential to assist in promoting nominations of natural properties for inclusion in the World Heritage List. It is to be noted that with environmental degradation, global development and population pressures, it makes it more and more difficult to identify natural sites which meet the criteria of both outstanding universal value and the conditions of integrity.

Evaluation of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention: In the years leading up to the twentieth anniversary of the Convention in 1992, the Committee commissioned an evaluation of the implementation of the Convention. As part of this process considerable analysis of the composition of the World Heritage List took place. The imbalance between the number of cultural and natural nominations to, and inclusions in, the World Heritage List was noted. In 1992, the sixteenth session of the World Heritage Committee adopted *Strategic Goals and Objectives for the future implementation of the World Heritage*

Convention. The second of these goals referred to the need to "Ensure the continued representativity and credibility of the World Heritage List". Although the question of balance between natural and cultural nominations is not explicitly mentioned, a balanced World Heritage List may be interpreted as being fundamental to the goal of ensuring a representative and credible World Heritage List as presented in the second goal.

Discussions concerning the composition of the World Heritage List have focused on imbalances in representation of cultural heritage in the World Heritage List. In response, the Committee adopted new categories of **cultural landscapes** at its sixteenth session in 1992 which opened the World Heritage List for this type of property. Both advisory bodies, IUCN and ICOMOS, are involved in evaluations of cultural landscapes under the lead of ICOMOS. At the same time, at the sixteenth session of the World Heritage Committee, revised criteria for natural heritage were adopted. The Committee decided to delete the references to "man's interaction with nature" and "exceptional combinations of natural and cultural elements" from the natural heritage criteria and to accommodate cultural landscapes completely under cultural criteria, as actually stipulated in the Convention itself.

The issue of the imbalance in the representation of cultural heritage was also taken up by a meeting of experts on the "Global Study" which was held in June 1994. The results were presented as "Global Strategy" to the eighteenth session of the World Heritage Committee and its Bureau. The Committee, at its eighteenth session in Phuket (Thailand) in 1994 broadened the scope of the Global Strategy to also address imbalances in the representation of natural properties in the World Heritage List.

Conclusion: The above overview suggests that the World Heritage List may not be fully balanced in its representation of natural properties. Since its first sessions, the Committee has not ceased to express its concerns about the imbalance of cultural and natural heritage. Therefore, at its eighteenth session the Committee launched the process to also prepare a Global Strategy for a more balanced representation of natural properties. The Global Strategies for both natural and cultural heritage will already become useful conceptual frameworks, to assist the Centre and the States Parties in redressing the current concerns.

Action by the Committee:

The Committee, in the light of earlier discussions may therefore wish:

- to invite States Parties to nominate types of sites presently underrepresented on the World Heritage List;
- to invite States Parties to be represented by both cultural and natural heritage specialists attending the World Heritage Committee and its Bureau;
- to request States Parties to communicate regularly to the Centre updated addresses of the national institutions primarily responsible for cultural and natural heritage;

- to ask the World Heritage Centre to undertake efforts to strengthen the links to natural heritage institutions in States Parties to the Convention;
- to request the Centre to work on an overall global strategy for natural heritage in close cooperation with IUCN;
- to urge UNESCO to establish the post of at least one senior specialist for natural heritage in the World Heritage Centre;
- to encourage IUCN to undertake a review of the publication "The World's Greatest Natural Areas. An Indicative Inventory of Natural Sites of World Heritage Quality (1982)" in close cooperation with the World Heritage Centre;
- to ask both advisory bodies to adopt strict and objective evaluation procedures to keep the World Heritage List at a manageable size;
- to commend the French authorities for their efforts to host a small natural heritage specialists meeting on the "notion of integrity";

Table: Development of the World Heritage List

Year	Cultural	Natural	Mixed	Total	%
1978	8	4	-	12	33,33
1980	42	13	1	56	23,21
1985	129	47	7	183	25,68
1990	245	78	14	339	23,00
1995	327	96	17	440	21,81