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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 7.3 of the Provisional Agenda: Issues related to the state of conservation of World Heritage properties: “Expert Meeting on Benchmarks and Chapter IV of the *Operational Guidelines*” (Paris, 2-3 April 2007)

SUMMARY

This document contains the summary report, conclusions and recommendations of the “Expert Meeting on Benchmarks and Chapter IV of the *Operational Guidelines*”(Paris, 2-3 April 2007), requested by the World Heritage Committee in Decision **30 COM 9**.

Draft Decision: 31 COM 7.3, see Point III.

I. EXPERT MEETING ON “BENCHMARKS AND CHAPTER IV OF THE OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES”

I.1 Background to the meeting

1. The World Heritage Committee at its 30th session (Decision **30 COM 9**) accepted the offer of the Netherlands to host a meeting of experts to elaborate on Chapter IV of the *Operational Guidelines*, including, but not limited to developing criteria for determining adequate protection and management, the format for the state of conservation reports, standards for establishing and measuring benchmarks for conservation, criteria for the removal of properties from the List of World Heritage in Danger, and criteria for deletion of properties from the World Heritage List.
2. The meeting grew out of recognition that the Committee’s decisions about inscribing or removing sites from the List of World Heritage in Danger appeared to be inconsistent and not well grounded in specific and measurable factors tied to the state of conservation of a site.
3. The meeting was prepared after an extensive consultation process between a core group, comprising the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies, and experts from the Netherlands. The agenda (Annex I), list of participants and background document for the expert meeting were prepared through a collaborative effort. A background document provided information on the context of the meeting and the use of benchmarks in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. All documents are available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/396/> .
4. The meeting took place from 2 to 3 April 2007 in Paris, France, and brought together natural and cultural heritage experts from 14 States Parties from all regions ranging from researchers involved in monitoring of World Heritage sites to site managers.
5. The participants were welcomed by the head of the Dutch Delegation to the World Heritage Committee and the Deputy Director of the World Heritage Centre, who provided the background and objectives of the meeting. The Advisory Bodies also briefly presented their position papers and reflections on benchmarks and chapter IV of the *Operational Guidelines* (see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/396/>).

I.2 Case study presentations

6. Subsequently, case studies from eight natural and cultural World Heritage sites on how (ascertained and potential) threats to the outstanding universal value of the properties were dealt with were described by site managers/relevant experts (see presentations at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/396/>). The four cultural case studies were Timbuktu (Mali), the Historic Centre of Riga (Latvia), Group of monuments at Hampi (India) and the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras (Philippines). The four natural case studies were from the Everglades National Park (United States of America), Ichkeul National Park (Tunisia), Garamba National Park (Democratic Republic of the Congo) and the Great Barrier Reef (Australia). The case studies covered properties inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger, properties removed from this list, as well as properties under threat.

7. The following key issues emerged from the case study presentations:
- a) The need for clear statements of outstanding universal value, including qualifying conditions of integrity and/or authenticity for each property on the World Heritage List;
 - b) The need to be able to objectively assess when enough progress has been made to take a property off the List of World Heritage in Danger;
 - c) Cooperation among all stakeholders within the State Party is imperative for the conservation and rehabilitation of a property;
 - d) Restoration and rehabilitation of both natural and cultural properties are long term processes;
 - e) Economic activities can take place in a property as long as they do not infringe on its outstanding universal value or integrity/authenticity;
 - f) The scale of a property (and the nature and extent of the threats) has implications for the management of change and the property's long-term survival;
 - g) For certain cultural properties, and in particular living cultural landscapes and cities, the maintenance of the outstanding universal value depends on social issues such as cohesion and rapid cultural change;
 - h) Natural ecosystems are dynamic and constantly evolving which needs to be taken into account in considering threats and the desired state of conservation of a property;
 - i) The involvement of all stakeholders, including local populations, in addressing threats is essential and transparency of decision making and sound governance is crucial;
 - j) Threats may also come from developments outside the property.

I.3 General discussion

8. The case-study presentations were followed by a general discussion that generated the terms of reference for the working groups. The general debate centred around the following statements and questions:
- a) The meeting should further elaborate on the whole conservation process from nomination to possible deletion from the World Heritage List not just on danger listing;
 - b) The meeting should contribute to objective and consistent decision making by the World Heritage Committee and State Parties;
 - c) All sites need a Statement of outstanding universal value as a prerequisite for any inscription, reporting, monitoring, management or conservation action;
 - d) Currently, the Statements of outstanding universal value are not yet properly developed, particularly for authenticity and integrity;

- e) Many threats reported to the World Heritage Committee are linked to integrity issues;
- f) There is a clear need for a model of Statement of outstanding universal value;
- g) It is imperative to agree on it to give States Parties and the World Heritage Committee tools for objective decision-making;
- h) Specific attributes or features of the property which carry its outstanding universal value need to be identified in order to have clear reference points for establishing threats at a property;
- i) Stakeholder involvement and local values have to be taken into account and respected;
- j) Different aspects and values of the property may need different levels of protection;
- k) 'Symptoms' and 'underlying causes' of threats need to be identified. Site managers should try to prioritize them;
- l) An overall monitoring framework is needed – linked both to reactive monitoring and Periodic Reporting. Reactive monitoring missions need to give clear guidance on corrective measures and timeframes.

I.4 Working groups

- 9. Two Working Groups on cultural and natural heritage were established to further reflect on these issues. In particular, the participants discussed questions of linking monitoring to outstanding universal value, developing more useful and relevant Statements of outstanding universal value, linking qualifying conditions of authenticity and/or integrity to those statements, desirable state of conservation and thresholds for Danger Listing and deletion from the World Heritage List.
- 10. The working groups reported back to the plenary, where the outcomes of the two separate groups were compiled into one set of recommendations. These recommendations were subsequently presented to a wider audience.

II. CONCLUSIONS OF THE EXPERT MEETING ON “BENCHMARKS AND CHAPTER IV OF THE OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES”

Preamble

- 11. The *World Heritage Convention* has now been operational for 35 years. However, the majority of sites do not have a clear Statement of outstanding universal value nor any officially approved description of the specific features or attributes of the property which support its outstanding universal value. As the outstanding universal value is the essence of every World Heritage property, every effort should be undertaken to establish and explicitly recognize the outstanding universal value of all properties on the World Heritage List.

12. Clear Statements of outstanding universal value are the core of the monitoring framework that each site needs and a prerequisite for objective and consistent decision-making by the World Heritage Committee, the State Parties and other stakeholders. Most of the tools and processes for a comprehensive monitoring framework are in place, but have not always been properly applied or linked.
13. Developing statements of outstanding universal value for all existing properties will entail a great deal of retrospective work. This work should not be done as a separate process but rather as part of the continuum of processes that are already in place, like Reactive Monitoring missions, state of conservation reporting and Periodic Reporting. In order to make headway on this important task, the experts recommended that addressing these issues should be given priority by the Committee, hence the recommendation to call a pause in nominations.

Recommendation 1 – The World Heritage Committee should formally adopt a monitoring framework for World Heritage properties which is rooted in the outstanding universal value of the sites. This framework should not be looked at in isolation but be a reference point in all World Heritage processes.

14. The monitoring framework is an essential tool in both the State Party's and Committee's decision-making processes. As the outstanding universal value is the core essence of each property, this framework should be rooted in the outstanding universal value. Furthermore, it should be applied to all World Heritage processes. The monitoring framework consists of various existing elements such as the statement of outstanding universal value (including the qualifying conditions of authenticity and/or integrity), the desired state of conservation with a focus on the specific features which give the site its outstanding universal value, indicators and corrective measures when necessary. Most of these elements are already required by the *Operational Guidelines* but are not sufficiently applied or linked. Monitoring and managing a site, reporting on the state of conservation and all other relevant actions should clearly relate to the outstanding universal value, through the monitoring framework.

Recommendation 2 – A state of conservation baseline should be established for each property at the time of inscription in order to be able to assess limits of acceptable change over time.

15. The inclusion or removal of a property on the List of World Heritage in Danger and deletion of property from the World Heritage List are a judgment call by the Committee. However, providing better information through a monitoring framework will guide the Committee in its decision-making and facilitate this judgment. Recognizing the dynamic nature of many World Heritage properties, particularly large ecosystems, the establishment of limits of acceptable change linked to a state of conservation baseline data is crucial. The mechanisms are already there to monitor sites, namely the state of conservation reporting process and Periodic Reporting. The Committee needs to have confidence that the site is progressing in the right direction, and that the outstanding universal value is being maintained. Decisions should focus on the values of the property, not the threats.

Recommendation 3 – In order to link outstanding universal value to the “Present State of Conservation” and “factors affecting the property” the *Operational Guidelines* need to be slightly modified.

16. It was noted that most of the mechanisms are already in place, but it is a matter of applying them effectively or linking them into an overall monitoring framework. In order to make the link between outstanding universal value and state of conservation more

apparent, it is necessary to insert this link in Annex 5 (Format for nominations) of the *Operational Guidelines*, under 4 (a) Present State of Conservation and 4 (b) Factors affecting the property.

Recommendation 4 – A model and/or format should be developed for the Statement of outstanding universal value that should include the qualifying conditions of authenticity/integrity, specific attributes or features of the property which carry its outstanding universal value and the desired state of conservation.

17. Further technical guidance is needed in preparing Statements of outstanding universal value. In this regard ICCROM offered to use the allocated funds for preparing a focused guidance manual, including examples. Furthermore, the formats for state of conservation reporting need to be adapted (see Model Format in Annex II). Examples of how to apply the monitoring framework using case studies should be developed and best practice identified and disseminated.

Recommendation 5 – Monitoring frameworks should be first applied to properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

18. States Parties should be asked to prepare draft statements of outstanding universal value prior to any reactive monitoring mission to the properties, with assistance provided by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies. Furthermore, the monitoring framework and the statements of outstanding universal value should be included in the next cycle of Periodic Reporting. This will not require any new process but should be incorporated into existing procedures.

Recommendation 6 – All stakeholders should be involved in the preparation of the reports in order to ensure realistic and achievable outcomes.

19. The experts felt strongly that site managers and stakeholders should be involved in preparing all reports (from the nomination documents, to the state of conservation and Periodic Reports) to ensure participation in values definition, as well as achievable conservation goals. The statements of significance developed in North America in 2006 with the participation of the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies, the two States Parties and all site managers, as a pilot project following up on the periodic reporting process, may provide a model for developing one part of the statement of outstanding universal value.

Recommendation 7 – When the Committee decides to inscribe a site on the World Heritage List, there should be a clear statement of outstanding universal value with authenticity and/or integrity, as well as a desired state of conservation.

20. At the time of inscription the baseline for management and monitoring has to be clearly defined. This would allow for an objective tool to measure changes over time. Even though this may require more time of the Committee at the front end, it will eventually save time in all subsequent processes.

Recommendation 8 – The term ‘benchmark’ should be avoided as it creates confusion with other terms already used in the World Heritage system (e.g. corrective action, corrective measures).

21. The term ‘benchmarks’ is not needed to assure objective and consistent decision-making by the Committee. Implementing existing instruments through a monitoring

framework and collaboration at international, national and local levels are effective tools for achieving the desired state of conservation of properties on the World Heritage List.

Recommendation 9 – A pause in inscription of sites on the World Heritage List for one year (2009) should be established in order to allow for the implementation of the above mentioned recommendations.

22. The experts noted the implications of such a decision, but underlined that the existing tools should be fully applied in the interest of conservation of World Heritage properties and the overall credibility of the *World Heritage Convention*.

III. DRAFT DECISION

Draft Decision: 31 COM 7.3

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-07/31.COM/7.3,*
2. *Recalling Decisions **29 COM 7C** and **30 COM 9** adopted at its 29th (Durban, 2005) and 30th (Vilnius, 2006) sessions respectively,*
3. *Thanking the Government of the Netherlands for having hosted the meeting of experts, which took place from 2 to 3 April 2007 in Paris, as well as all the experts who contributed to it,*
4. *Noting the results and recommendations of the expert meeting,*
5. *Requests the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to integrate the concept of a monitoring framework into the next revision of the Operational Guidelines and to ensure cross referencing for all World Heritage processes;*
6. *Specifically requests for the revision of the Operational Guidelines to ensure the link between outstanding universal value and the format for nominations (Annex 5: 4a) on present state of conservation and 4b) on factors affecting the property);*
7. *Further requests the States Parties, the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre to establish limits of acceptable change in all state of conservation reports to facilitate sound decisions, specifically for inclusion in / removal of properties from the List of World Heritage in Danger;*
8. *Urges the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre to provide technical guidance on how to draft Statements of significance / outstanding universal value and requests ICCROM to use the funds, already allocated, for a focussed guidance manual, in consultation with IUCN and ICOMOS, to be published by the end of 2007;*
9. *Noting the prioritised implementation strategy with focus on the application of the monitoring framework to properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger, requests States Parties with properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger to prepare a draft Statement of outstanding universal value for these properties, and*

10. Further requests all States Parties to prepare a draft Statement of outstanding universal value for their properties prior to the arrival of a reactive monitoring mission, and to ensure that the statements of outstanding universal value be prepared in advance for the next cycle of Periodic Reporting;
11. Requests that stakeholders be involved in preparing all reports required under the World Heritage Convention (nomination documents, state of conservation reports, periodic reporting) in order to ensure full participation in the definition of the values and desired state of conservation of a property;
12. Recalls the requirement that at the time of inscription the Committee decision should entail a clear Statement of outstanding universal value with authenticity and/or integrity and the desired state of conservation;
13. Notes confusion around the term “benchmarks” and requests instead the use of the terms “desired state of conservation” and “corrective measures” in all state of conservation documents relating to the List of World Heritage in Danger, and adopts the format for state of conservation reports in Annex II;
14. Decides to suspend the inscription of properties on the World Heritage List until the 33rd session of the Committee in 2009 in order to allow for proper implementation of all recommendations.

Annex I - Agenda of the expert meeting

Monday 02 April 2007							
08.30 – 09.30	Registration						
09.30 – 11.00	<p><u>Session 1: Opening Session</u></p> <p>Chair: Mr Rick van der Ploeg (Chair Dutch Delegation to the World Heritage Committee) Rapporteur: Mr Guy Debonnet (World Heritage Centre)</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Welcome and background of the meeting: Outputs expected from the Expert Workshop</td> <td>Mr Rick van der Ploeg</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Welcome and briefing on the meeting: World Heritage Committee Decision 30COM 9 and background paper of the World Heritage Centre</td> <td>Mr Kishore Rao (Deputy Director of the World Heritage Centre)</td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Input from the Advisory Bodies: key points from their position papers</i></td> <td>ICCROM / ICOMOS / IUCN</td> </tr> </table> <p>Discussion: what are we working towards?</p>	Welcome and background of the meeting: Outputs expected from the Expert Workshop	Mr Rick van der Ploeg	Welcome and briefing on the meeting: World Heritage Committee Decision 30COM 9 and background paper of the World Heritage Centre	Mr Kishore Rao (Deputy Director of the World Heritage Centre)	<i>Input from the Advisory Bodies: key points from their position papers</i>	ICCROM / ICOMOS / IUCN
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<i>Input from the Advisory Bodies: key points from their position papers</i>	ICCROM / ICOMOS / IUCN						
11.00 – 11.30 Coffee break							
11.30 – 13.00	<p><u>Session 2: Lessons Learned / site managers of cultural sites</u></p> <p>Chair: Mr George Abungu (Kenya) Rapporteur: Ms Mechtild Rössler (World Heritage Centre)</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;"></td> <td> Presentation of case studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timbuktu; - Historic Centre of Riga; - Group of Monuments at Hampi; - Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras. </td> </tr> </table>		Presentation of case studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Timbuktu; - Historic Centre of Riga; - Group of Monuments at Hampi; - Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras. 				
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13.00 – 14.00 Lunch Break							
14.00 – 15.30	<p><u>Session 3: Lessons Learned / site managers of natural sites</u></p> <p>Chair: Mr Kishore Rao (World Heritage Centre) Rapporteur: Ms Carol Westrik (the Netherlands)</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;"></td> <td> Presentation of case studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Everglades National Park</i>; - Ichkeul National Park; - Garamba National Park; - Great Barrier Reef. </td> </tr> </table> <p>Questions and discussion</p>		Presentation of case studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Everglades National Park</i>; - Ichkeul National Park; - Garamba National Park; - Great Barrier Reef. 				
	Presentation of case studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Everglades National Park</i>; - Ichkeul National Park; - Garamba National Park; - Great Barrier Reef. 						
15.30 – 16.00 Coffee Break							
16.00 – 17.30	<p><u>Session 4: General discussion / preparation of the working groups</u></p> <p>Chair: Ms Sabine Gimbrère (the Netherlands) Rapporteur: Ms Susan Denyer (ICOMOS)</p>						
19.00 – 21.30 Dinner							

Tuesday 03 April 2007			
09.00 – 11.15	<p>Session 5: Working groups <i>(WORKING GROUPS WILL BE COMPOSED ON MONDAY 3 APRIL 2007)</i></p> <p><i>WORKING GROUP 1: CULTURAL HERITAGE</i> CHAIR: MR CHRISTOPHER YOUNG (UK) RAPPORTEUR: MR JOE KING (ICCROM)</p> <p><i>WORKING GROUP 2: NATURAL HERITAGE</i> CHAIR: MR DAVID SHEPPARD (IUCN) RAPPORTEUR: MS SUE STOLTON (UK)</p>		
11.15 – 11.45 Coffee Break			
11.45 – 13.00	<p>Outcomes working groups and agreement on results</p> <p>Chair: Mr Rick van der Ploeg RAPPORTEUR: MR STEPHEN MORRIS (USA)</p>		
13.00 – 15.00 Lunch Break			
15.00 – 16.45	<p><u>Presentation of Recommendations & Discussion</u></p> <p>Chair: Ms Christina Cameron (Canada) Rapporteur: Mr Stephen Morris (USA)</p>		
16.45 – 17.00	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 60%;">Concluding remarks</td> <td>Mr Rick van der Ploeg Mr Francesco Bandarin (Director World Heritage Centre)</td> </tr> </table>	Concluding remarks	Mr Rick van der Ploeg Mr Francesco Bandarin (Director World Heritage Centre)
Concluding remarks	Mr Rick van der Ploeg Mr Francesco Bandarin (Director World Heritage Centre)		
17.00- 18.00	Reception		

Annex II - State of Conservation Format

Name of World Heritage Property (State Party) (Id. number)

Year of inscription on the World Heritage List

1980

Criteria

(i) (ii) (iii)

Year(s) of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger

1995-1998

Threats to the outstanding universal value for which the property was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger

- a) ...
- b) ...

Benchmarks for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger

Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger

- a) ...
- b) ...

Corrective measures identified and progress towards mitigating threats to the outstanding universal value

- a) ...
- b) ...

Timeframe for the implementation of the corrective measures

Previous Committee Decisions

28 COM ; 29 COM ; 30 COM

International Assistance

Total amount provided to the property: USD

UNESCO Extra-budgetary Funds

Total amount provided to the property: USD

Previous monitoring missions

Main threats identified in previous reports

Current conservation issues

Draft Decision

