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# World Heritage

# 31 COM

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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 17 of the Provisional Agenda: Reflection on the election of members of  
the World Heritage Committee**

## SUMMARY

Following Decision **30 COM 18B**, adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 30th session (Vilnius, 2006), all States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* were asked to comment on Document *WHC-06/30.COM/18B*, giving some elements of reflection on the election of the members of the Committee. The present document compiles all the comments and presents some proposals in line with these comments.

**Draft Decision: 31 COM 17**, see Point IV.

## I. Background

1. At its 13th session (UNESCO, 2001), the General Assembly of States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* adopted a Resolution (**13 GA 9**) for an equitable representation within the World Heritage Committee, based on the proposals made by a working group established by the Committee at its 24th session (Cairns, 2000). This Resolution also amended Rules 13.1 and 13.8 of the Rules of Procedures of the General Assembly.
2. Resolution **13 GA 9** invites States Parties voluntarily to reduce their mandate from 6 to 4 years and discourages States Parties from seeking consecutive mandates. The Resolution also confirms the allocation of “a certain number of seats” for States Parties with no property on the World Heritage List.
3. At its 7th extraordinary session (UNESCO, 2004), the World Heritage Committee adopted a Decision (**7 EXT.COM 15**), setting up a new mechanism for the election of its members, which was put into place for the election of 12 new Committee members during the 15th session of the General Assembly of States Parties (UNESCO, 2005). On this occasion, the General Assembly requested the World Heritage Committee to initiate a process to discuss possible alternative mechanisms to ensure balanced geographical and cultural representation in the Committee, a less time-consuming and less complicated voting system, and better focus on important issues in the proceedings of the General Assembly.
4. Following this request, the World Heritage Committee decided at its 30th session (Vilnius, 2006) (Decision **30 COM 18B**), that States Parties should be invited to post written comments on Document *WHC-06/30.COM/18B* and that the outcomes should be presented at its 31st session in 2007.

## II. Analysis of the States Parties’ written comments

5. The majority of the 19 States Parties which have sent their comments to the World Heritage Centre on Document *WHC-06/30.COM/18B* have based their analysis on the three measures which were adopted in Resolution **13 GA 6** (see Paragraph 2).
6. As Figures 1, 2 and 3 below indicate, an overwhelming majority of the 19 States Parties believe that these three measures have had a positive impact on the procedures for electing members of the World Heritage Committee. Indeed, 79% of States Parties who have sent their comments indicate that discouraging Committee members to seek consecutive mandates was a positive step, and for 84% of the States Parties, the voluntarily reduction of the mandate from 6 to 4 years, and reserving one seat to a State Party with no property on the World Heritage List are very well perceived.
7. Some States Parties have said that these three measures appropriately address the issues and that they would like to see these three measures having a “more binding character” in the future.

Fig. 1: Measure 1: Voluntary reduction of the term of office from 6 to 4 years w as a good measure

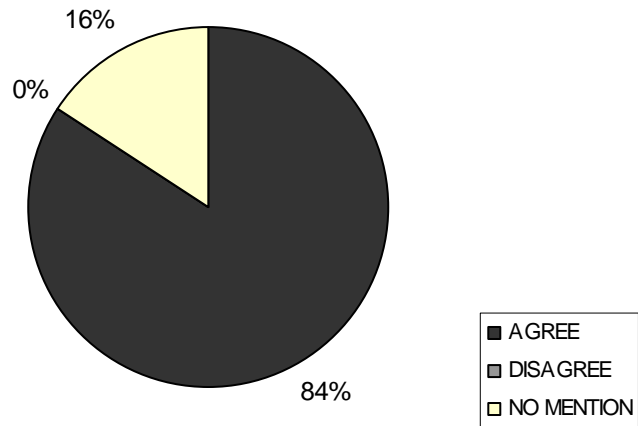


Fig. 2: Measure 2: Discouraging outgoing members from seeking consecutive terms w as a good measure

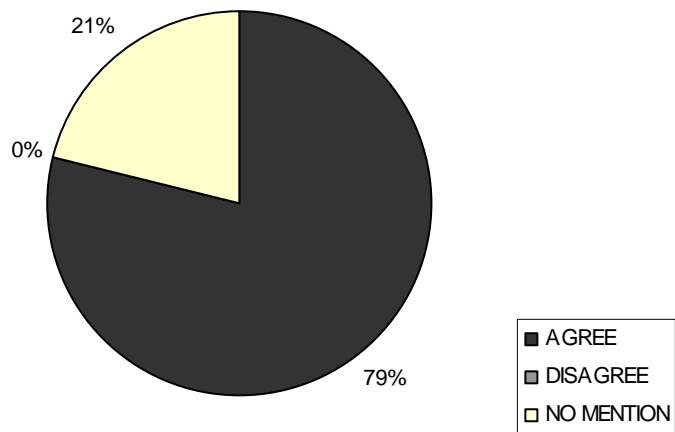
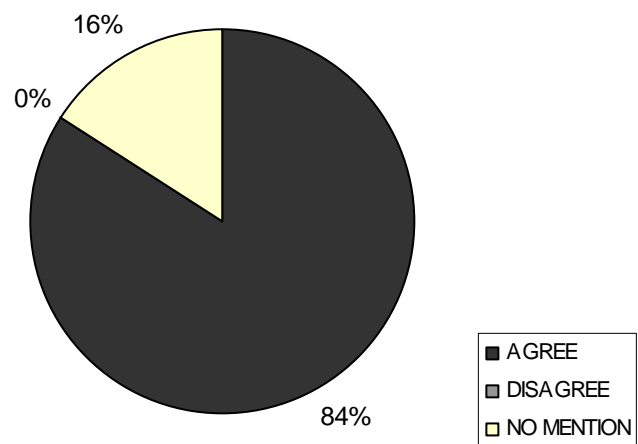
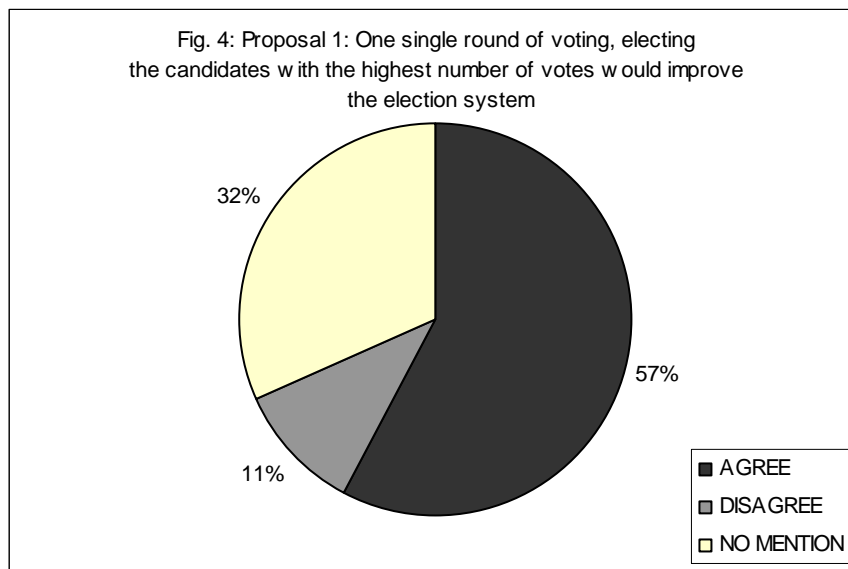


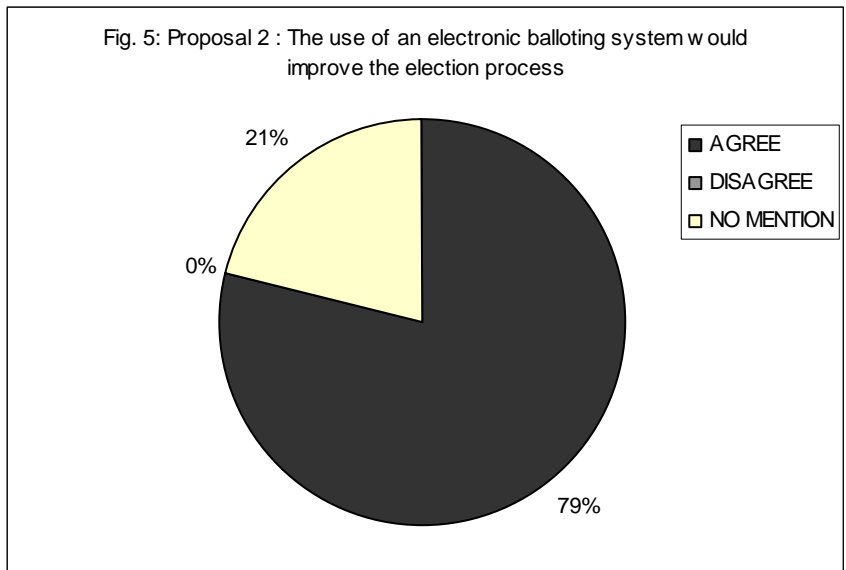
Fig. 3: Measure 3: One reserved seat for a State Party w ithout properties on the List w as a good measure



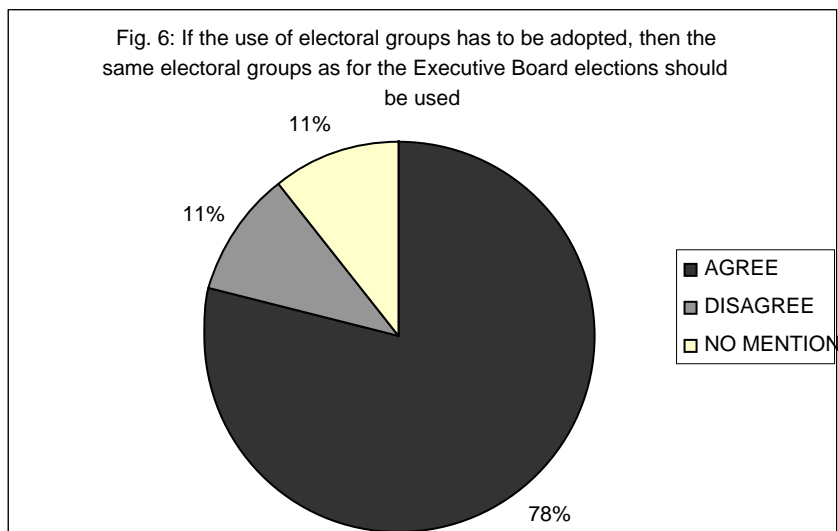
8. But, States Parties contributing to this analysis agree that, even though some important improvements have been made over the past few years, the current election system is too time-consuming, too complex and disturbs/disrupts the proceedings of the General Assembly.
9. A clear trend in the comments of States Parties was a desire to reduce as much as possible the time spent on the election procedures during the General Assembly in order to allow more time for discussion on policy questions.
10. In order to solve these outstanding issues, various proposals were made by the States Parties. There are presented below.
11. Figure 4 below indicates that 57% of the States Parties who commented on Document *WHC-06/30.COM/18B* believe that having one single round of voting, with the candidates having the highest number of votes being elected, would be an interesting idea to explore.



12. However, 11% of the respondents have expressed their concern over this measure, indicating that, in order to obtain an equitable representation of the regions of the world in the Committee, time was needed between voting rounds for discussions among Delegations.
13. In order to accelerate the voting procedure, a high number of States Parties (79%) have expressed interest in taking advantage of the evolving information technology, such as electronic balloting system (see Figure 5 below).
14. However, the Committee may wish to note that, to date, only one room at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris is equipped with an electronic facility (Room XI, Fontenoy).



15. Furthermore, the electronic balloting system available in Room XI only allows voting on a Yes / No / Abstention basis, which is not suitable for the election of Committee members, unless on a roll-call basis. This could prove time-consuming since the electronic voting would have to take place for each candidate. Indeed, States Parties would have to vote Yes/No/Abstention for each of the candidates to the election as Committee members, and for each voting round.
16. Only a few comments dealt with the issue of achieving an equitable representation within the Committee: among them, three States Parties support the use of electoral Groups, and two do not wish to change the current way of obtaining representation.
17. However, a large majority of the States Parties which sent their comments indicate that, should the Committee decide to use electoral groups for the election of the World Heritage Committee members in the future (see Figure 6 below), they recommend using the same electoral Groups as those used for the election of the Members of the UNESCO Executive Board (Groups I, II, III, IV, Va and Vb).



18. Finally, one State Party was of the opinion that the Article 9 paragraph 3 of the *Convention*, which states that “States members of the Committee shall choose as their representatives persons qualified in the field of the cultural or natural heritage” should constitute the prevailing criteria in the election process rather than the region from which the experts come.

### III. Proposals on the election of the Committee members

#### A. METHOD OF CALCULATING THE ELECTION RESULTS

19. There are two possible methods of calculating the results of the election: with the current required majority, or with the highest number of votes (“plurality”):

Option A.1 Required majority (Maintaining the current method as defined in Rule 14.8 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly)

20. As indicated in the provision of Rule 14.8 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly of the States Parties of the *Convention* :

*“Those States obtaining in the first ballot the required majority shall be elected, unless the number of States obtaining that majority is greater than the number of seats to be filled. In that case, the States obtaining the greatest number of votes, up to the number of seats to be filled, shall be declared elected. If the number of States obtaining the majority required is less than the number of seats to be filled, there shall be a second ballot. If the number of States obtaining the majority required is still less than the number of seats to be filled there shall be a third and, if necessary a fourth ballot, to fill the remaining seats. For the third and fourth ballots, the voting shall be restricted to the States obtaining the greatest number of votes in the previous ballot, up to a number twice that of the seats remaining to be filled.”*

Option A.2 Plurality

21. In the case of **plurality**, the election should consist, in principle, of only **one round**, as are elected to the World Heritage Committee those candidates who obtain the **highest number of votes** up to the number of seats to be filled. If two or more candidates obtain the same number of votes, and as a result, there are still more candidates than seats to be filled, there shall be a second ballot restricted to those candidates. If in this second ballot, two or more candidates obtain the same number of votes; the Chairperson of the General Assembly shall decide the candidate to be considered elected by drawing lots.
22. As 57% of the States Parties having sent a written comment considered that having one single round of voting based on the highest number of votes would be an interesting idea to explore (see paragraph 11 above), a change in the system of majority could be envisaged.
23. Any change should be reflected within the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly of States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* by the amendment of the Rule 14.

## B. METHOD TO ENSURE AN EQUITABLE REPRESENTATION OF THE DIFFERENT REGIONS OF THE WORLD

24. Based on the above comments received by States Parties and precedent existing in the Organization, three main options can be proposed for the consideration of the World Heritage Committee:

OPTION B.1: Maintaining the current system of election of the members of the World Heritage Committee

OPTION B.2: Using a predefined distribution of seats among the regions, using the electoral grouping system in use for the election of the members of UNESCO's Executive Board, in proportion to the number of States Parties to the *Convention* in each of these Groups

OPTION B.3: Using a predefined distribution of seats among the regions, using the electoral grouping system in use for the election of the members of UNESCO's Executive Board, in proportion to the number of States Parties to the *Convention* in each of these Groups, with at least three seats attributed to each Group.

25. These three options are presented thereafter :

### OPTION B.1: Maintaining the current system of election of the members of the World Heritage Committee

26. The current system of election of members of the World Heritage Committee is defined in the Rule 14 of the Rules of procedure of the General Assembly of States parties to the *World Heritage Convention*. Its characteristics are:

- The principle of "*an equitable representation of the different regions and cultures of the world*" as stipulated in the Article 8.2 of the *World Heritage Convention*
- No electoral groups
- Qualified majority (more than half of States Parties present and voting)
- In practice, several election rounds usually take place, allowing some "political" adjustments.

27. At the request of New Zealand (Decision 7 **EXT.COM 15**), many improvements were brought to the organization of the election at the 15th General Assembly of States parties (UNESCO, October 2005):

- The elections took place **in a separate room** from the Plenary so the **debates were not disturbed**;
- The polling station was **equipped with all voting facilities** (four ballot boxes);
- A better organization with a **pre-scheduled timetable** for the election rounds.

28. In the current system, consultation among States Parties takes place between two rounds of voting, in order to ensure an equitable representation of the different regions of the world in the Committee. As a result, some States Parties usually withdraw their candidature to the election as Committee member to the benefit of another State Party of the same region.

OPTION B.2: Using a predefined distribution of seats among the regions, using the electoral grouping system in use for the election of the members of UNESCO's Executive Board, in proportion to the number of States Parties to the Convention in each of these Groups

29. This option is based on the system used for electing members of the Executive Board as well as members of the Intergovernmental Committee for the 2003 Convention. Its main rationale is to predefine the number of seats allocated to each Group in proportion to the number of States Parties to the *Convention* in each of these Groups. The definition of "Groups" is that used for the election of members of the Executive Board, hereafter called "electoral Groups".
30. This option should be considered with two possible sub-options, depending on whether the seat reserved for a State Party with no property inscribed on the World Heritage List falls under the geographical representation or not.
31. The two following proposals present the calculations based on 21 Members of the Committee, and based on 20 Members of the Committee + 1 Reserved seat.

*Option B.2.1: Calculations based on 21 Members of the Committee*

32. For the election of the 21 Members of the World Heritage Committee, a ratio has been calculated in proportion to the number of States Parties to the *Convention* for each Group (see distribution and calculations in Annex 1).
33. According to these calculations, the distribution of the seats among the six electoral Groups would be today as follows:

- Group I:	Western Europe and North America	27 States Parties	3 seats
- Group II:	Eastern and South-eastern Europe	25 States Parties	3 seats
- Group III:	Latin America and the Caribbean	32 States Parties	4 seats
- Group IV:	Asia and the Pacific	38 States Parties	4 seats
- Group V(a):	Africa	43 States Parties	5 seats
- Group V(b):	Arab States	18 States Parties	2 seats
34. This option would have the main advantage of allowing that the **negotiations within each electoral Group take place prior to the elections**. As each electoral Group knows exactly the number of seats it is renewing, it is possible to have a situation whereby each Group presents a number of candidates equal to the number of seats to be filled ("clean slate"). In such case, it could be envisaged that the candidates are considered elected without having recourse to a formal vote.
35. The disadvantage of this option is that the distribution of seats within each electoral Group will have to be adjusted according to the future ratifications/signatures.
36. These changes should be reflected within the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly of States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* by the amendment of the Rule 14.



*Option B.2.2: Calculations based on 20 Members of the Committee + 1 Reserved seat*

37. According to the Rule 14.1 of Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, the Committee has till now reserved **one seat** for a State Party who has no property on the World Heritage List. It could be argued by Committee Members that this reserved seat should be excluded from the electoral Groups.
38. In this case, the ratio would be:  $184:20 = 9,20$  and the distribution of the 20 seats among electoral groups of membership would be as follows:
- |              |                                  |                   |         |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|---------|
| - Group I:   | Western Europe and North America | 27 States Parties | 3 seats |
| - Group II   | Eastern and South-eastern Europe | 25 States Parties | 3 seats |
| - Group III  | Latin America and the Caribbean  | 32 States Parties | 3 seats |
| - Group IV   | Asia and the Pacific             | 38 States Parties | 4 seats |
| - Group V(a) | Africa                           | 43 States Parties | 5 seats |
| - Group V(b) | Arab States                      | 18 States Parties | 2 seats |
39. This option has the same advantages of the ones stipulated in Option B.2.1 but the distribution of seats is a disadvantage for the Latin American and Caribbean Region (3 seats instead of 4 seats).
40. As the Committee could decide to have more than one reserved seat as Rule 14.1 states “a certain number of seats”, it is proposed to amend this Rule of procedure to definitively fix the number of reserved seat to ONE reserved seat only.
41. Other options could be envisaged, such as a combination of Options B.2.1 and B.3 (only 2 electoral Groups (in the present circumstances) would be expected to “give up” one seat in favour of electoral Group Vb, and one seat would be reserved for a State Party having no property on the World Heritage List). But this would require a preliminary round of discussion.

OPTION B.3: Using a predefined distribution of seats among the regions, using the electoral grouping system in use for the election of the members of UNESCO's Executive Board, in proportion to the number of States Parties in each of these Groups, with at least three seats attributed to each Group.

42. This option is also based on the system used for electing members of the Executive Board as well as members of the Intergovernmental Committee for the 2003 Convention. Its main rationale is to predefine the number of seats allocated to each Group in proportion to the number of States Parties to the *Convention* in each of these Groups.
43. Based on the election of the members of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the election of Members of the Committee would be conducted on the basis of the electoral Groups of UNESCO but **with at least three seats** attributed to each Group.
44. This option contributes to ensure a better “equitable representation of the different regions of the world” than the current system as it guarantees a minimum of three seats per electoral Group. It has in addition the advantage to follow the same model of another UNESCO Convention in the field of Culture (the 2003 Convention).

45. This option represents an advantage for the Arab States (3 seats instead of 2 seats), it is to other regions' disadvantage since there are three electoral Groups which can be expected to have one seat less (Groups III, IV and Va) as all of them have more than 3 seats. From where this "additional" seat is to come would have to be decided by the Committee.
46. These changes should be reflected within the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly of States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* by the amendment of Rule 14.

## IV. Draft Decision

### **Draft Decision: 31 COM 17**

*The World Heritage Centre,*

1. Having examined Document WHC-07/31.COM/17,
2. Recalling Decision **30 COM 18B**, adopted at its 30th session (Vilnius, 2006),
3. Taking note of the States Parties' comments on Document WHC-06/30.COM/18B,
4. Encourages the Director-General to equip one of the UNESCO Headquarters meeting rooms with a more flexible electronic balloting system, allowing the selection of several candidates at once;

#### **Option A.1**

5. Recommends to the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention to maintain the current method of obtaining the results of the election, as defined in Rule 14.8 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly of States Parties;

or

#### **Option A.2**

5. Recommends to the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention that the States Parties obtaining in the first ballot the highest number of votes would be elected as members of the World Heritage Committee, up to the number of seats to be filled and also recommends to amend the Rule 14 of Procedure of the General Assembly of States Parties accordingly;

#### **Option B.1**

6. Recommends to the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention to maintain the existing election system whereby the Committee makes efforts to ensure the equitable representation of the different regions of the world through consultation among States Parties between the voting rounds.

or

**Option B.2.1**

6. Recommends to the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention to introduce the system of the electoral Groups as used for the election of the members of the UNESCO Executive Board into the election of the World Heritage Committee members and that the membership in the Committee shall be distributed among these electoral Groups in proportion to the number of States Parties to the Convention in each of these Groups and also recommends to amend the Rule 14 of Procedure of the General Assembly of States Parties accordingly.

or

**Option B.2.2**

6. Recommends to the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention to introduce the system of the electoral Groups as used for the election of the members of the UNESCO Executive Board into the election of the World Heritage Committee members and that the membership in the Committee shall be distributed among these electoral Groups in proportion to the number of States Parties to the Convention in each of these Groups, taking into account “one reserved seat” for a State Party having no property on the World Heritage List and also recommends to amend the Rule 14 of Procedure of the General Assembly of States Parties accordingly.

or

**Option B.3**

6. Recommends to the General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention to introduce the system of the electoral Groups as used for the election of the members of the UNESCO Executive Board into the election of the World Heritage Committee members and that the membership in the Committee shall be distributed among these electoral Groups in proportion to the number of States Parties to the Convention in each of these Groups, with a minimum of three seats attributed to each Group and also recommends to amend the Rule 14 of Procedure of the General Assembly of States Parties accordingly.

## Annex 1

### Distribution of the 184 States Parties within the six electoral groups

Group	I	II	III	IV	V (a)	V (b)	TOTAL
1.	Andorra	Albania	Antigua and Barbuda	Afghanistan	Angola	Algeria	
2.	Austria	Armenia	Argentina	Australia	Benin	Bahrain	
3.	Belgium	Azerbaijan	Barbados	Bangladesh	Botswana	Egypt	
4.	Canada	Belarus	Belize	Bhutan	Burkina Faso	Iraq	
5.	Cyprus	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bolivia	Cambodia	Burundi	Jordan	
6.	Denmark	Bulgaria	Brazil	China	Cameroon	Kuwait	
7.	Finland	Croatia	Chile	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Cape Verde	Lebanon	
8.	France	Czech Republic	Colombia	Fiji	Central African Republic	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	
9.	Germany	Estonia	Costa Rica	India	Chad	Mauritania	
10.	Greece	Georgia	Cuba	Indonesia	Comoros	Morocco	
11.	Iceland	Holy See <sup>1</sup>	Dominica	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Congo	Oman	
12.	Ireland	Hungary	Dominican Republic	Japan	Côte d'Ivoire	Qatar	
13.	Israel	Latvia	Ecuador	Kazakhstan	Democratic Republic of the Congo	Saudi Arabia	
14.	Italy	Lithuania	El Salvador	Kiribati	Eritrea	Sudan	
15.	Luxembourg	Montenegro	Grenada	Kyrgyzstan	Ethiopia	Syrian Arab Republic	
16.	Malta	Poland	Guatemala	Lao's People Democratic Republic	Gabon	Tunisia	
17.	Monaco	Republic of Moldova	Guyana	Malaysia	Gambia	United Arab Emirates	
18.	Netherlands	Romania	Haiti	Maldives	Ghana	Yemen	
19.	Norway	Russian Federation	Honduras	Marshall Islands	Guinea		
20.	Portugal	Serbia	Jamaica	Micronesia (Federated States of)	Guinea-Bissau		
21.	San Marino	Slovakia	Mexico	Mongolia	Kenya		
22.	Spain	Slovenia	Nicaragua	Myanmar	Lesotho		
23.	Sweden	Tajikistan	Panama	Nepal	Liberia		
24.	Switzerland	The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Paraguay	New-Zealand	Madagascar		
25.	Turkey	Ukraine	Peru	Niue	Malawi		

<b>Group</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>V (a)</b>	<b>V (b)</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
26.	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Uzbekistan	Saint Kitts and Nevis	Pakistan	Mali		
27.	United States of America		Saint Lucia	Palau	Mauritius		
28.			Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Papua New Guinea	Mozambique		
29.			Suriname	Philippines	Namibia		
30.			Trinidad and Tobago	Republic of Korea	Niger		
31.			Uruguay	Samoa	Nigeria		
32.			Venezuela	Solomon Islands	Rwanda		
33.				Sri Lanka	Sao Tome and Principe		
34.				Thailand	Senegal		
35.				Tonga	Seychelles		
36.				Turkmenistan	Sierra Leone		
37.				Vanuatu	South Africa		
38.				Viet Nam	Swaziland		
39.					Uganda		
40.					United Republic of Tanzania		
41.					Togo		
42.					Zambia		
43.					Zimbabwe		
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>184</b>
Ratio : 184: 21= 8,76	27 : 8,76= 3,08	26 : 8,76= 2,9	32 :8,76= 3,6	38 :8,76= 4,33	43 : 8,76= 4,9	18 :8,71= 2,05	
<b>Seats</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>21</b>

<sup>1</sup> The Holy See is not a Member State of UNESCO.