

Conclusions of the Vienna 2007 Meeting for Follow-up on Periodic Reporting for Western European Sub Region and Austria's neighbouring States Parties:

With guidance of the World Heritage Centre, the representatives of 6 States parties of the Western European sub-group (Austria, Belgium, France representing also ICOMOS, Germany, Switzerland) and 5 of Austria's neighbouring states (Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Hungary and Albania*) met in Vienna and Wachau from 2 to 4 May 2007. The representatives illustrated, through a series of short presentations, their respective achievements in the field of management and follow up action with regard to the periodic reporting process and their approach to establishing or revising their Tentative Lists. Taking into consideration the results of the previous meetings in Berlin 2005 and Paris 2006 and on the basis of their shared experiences they agreed on several issues:

Revision of Tentative Lists

With some exceptions Tentative Lists still mirror tendencies shown by the previous inscriptions from the respective states on the World Heritage List. Therefore a revision of Tentative Lists is desirable to redress this imbalance and fully takes into account the World Heritage Committee's aspiration to broaden the representivity of the World Heritage List both from thematic and geographic perspectives.

A detailed description of each country's Tentative List was presented during the meeting. Discussion took place about the possibility of preparing transnational serial nominations in the European region and encouraging an international rather than a national approach to nominations and to find a better scale for sites of universal value. The meeting participants decided to dedicate the next meeting to be held at the end of year 2007, to this theme.

Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

To reflect the original intention of the World Heritage Committee and to improve the credibility and homogeneity of the World Heritage List it is needed to provide a statement of outstanding universal value for each inscribed site as part of the first phase of the periodic reporting exercise. If necessary, statements should be elaborated or revised. The Statement of outstanding universal value must be prepared by State Parties, in close cooperation with Advisory Bodies, and further approved by them. Participants suggested that more precise guidelines need to be prepared by a small working group (Advisory Bodies, World Heritage committee, one or two focal points) in order to give a common framework (size of the text, content, informations' hierarchy etc.). Special attention should be given to the deadline (1 February 2008) for the completion of the first cycle of periodic reporting of the sites inscribed before 1998.

Links between Periodic Reporting and other process

Special attention should be given to link reactive monitoring and periodic reporting with the revision of the statements of significance/outstanding universal value. Necessary changes of justification for inscription, boundaries, and denomination might become evident.

Integration of World Heritage into National Legislation

With few exceptions hardly any country has integrated World Heritage in its legislation. Since more information (best practice) on this topic seemed desirable to all participants, a meeting (preferably in near future) should give special attention to this question.

Improvement and Elaboration of Management Plans

Management Plans being the basic instrument for the care and maintenance of World Heritage Sites, special attention should be given to their role as instruments to address the issue of protection of visual integrity outside of buffer zones. Both the electronic tool and the elaboration of new site maps which were presented by France should be mentioned in this connection. Switzerland, in collaboration with Israel, is considering an expert meeting for early spring 2008 in Davos/Switzerland, which could help clarifying open questions, following Committee's Decision 30 COM 9.

Networking of Focal Points

Participants stressed the need for further cooperation of Focal Points on actual topics as management plans and legislation for instance and the development of the Focal Point network. The practice of inviting the Focal Points of neighbouring states regardless of their membership in the respective sub-group was explicitly welcomed and has proved to be effective.

Future Success of World Heritage Convention

The meeting acknowledged the World Heritage Convention as one of the most successful of UNESCO's family of conventions. Future success of the Convention does not only depend on the credibility and balance of the World Heritage List but on the unparalleled recognition it provides to the most important heritage of the world. Therefore it should be kept in mind that the development of other regionally or thematically orientated instruments with similar orientation may have inflationary effects.

Since some items of the ambitious agenda of the meeting could not be dealt with for time reasons, to obtain further guidance on the format for revised statement of universal value, to develop an effective methodology for harmonizing Tentative Lists and to consider further examples of legislation for the protection of World Heritage in the respective States Parties, the participants expressed their wish for a further follow-up meeting before the deadline of the conclusion of the first cycle of Periodic Reporting.

Vienna, May 2007