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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
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للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

World Heritage

16 GA

Distribution limited

WHC-07/16.GA/3A
Paris, 12 October 2007
Original : English/French

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

**SIXTEENTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION
OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

Paris, UNESCO Headquarters
24 - 25 October 2007
Room XI

**Item 3 of the Provisional Agenda : Elections to the World Heritage
Committee**

**Reflection on election procedures of World Heritage Committee members
and on the distribution of seats to ensure an equitable representation of
the different regions and cultures of the world.**

SUMMARY

By its Resolution adopted at the 15th session (UNESCO, 2005), the General Assembly requested that the Secretariat propose to the 16th session of the General Assembly (UNESCO, 2007) one or more alternatives with a view to ensuring an equitable representation of the different regions and cultures of the world within the Committee, and a less time-consuming and less complicated voting system in order to focus on important issues in the proceedings of the General Assembly.

Draft resolution : 16 GA 3A, see Item III

I. BACKGROUND

1. At its 13th session (UNESCO, 2001), the General Assembly of States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* adopted Resolution **13 GA 9** for an equitable representation within the World Heritage Committee. This resolution invites States Parties to voluntarily reduce their mandate from 6 to 4 years and discourages States Parties from seeking consecutive mandates. It also confirms the allocation of « a certain number of seats » for States Parties having no property inscribed on the World Heritage List.
2. At its 15th session (UNESCO, 2005), the General Assembly requested the Secretariat, in cooperation with the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee, to initiate a process to discuss possible alternative mechanisms to ensure a balanced geographical and cultural representation within the Committee, as well as a speedier and less complex voting system (see Annex 1). The General Assembly also requested that these alternatives be presented to its session in 2007.
3. Following this request, the World Heritage Committee, by its Decision **30 COM 18B**, decided at its 30th session (Vilnius, 2006) to invite States Parties to submit written comments concerning document WHC-06/30.COM/18B. The results were presented at its 31st session (Christchurch, 2007) in document WHC-07/31.COM/17.

II. ALTERNATIVES THAT MIGHT BE ENVISAGED

4. Document WHC-07/31.COM/17 provides non-exhaustive proposals of different alternatives to the current election procedures and presents statistically the comments received from the States Parties. These alternatives are set out according to two perspectives, as follows :
 - a) Method of calculation of the majority : required majority (half the voting States Parties + 1) or plurality (highest number of votes obtained).
 - b) Method aiming to guarantee an equitable representation of the different regions and cultures of the world, with different options, including recourse to the system used by the electoral Groups with a predefined distribution of seats for each of the Groups.
5. These different alternatives are presented in detail to this session in Information Document WHC-07/16.GA/INF.3A. The General Assembly might wish to discuss these alternatives or any other alternatives and, based on discussions, take an appropriate decision on the Resolution.
6. In accordance with the terms of Decision **31 COM 17**, the comments expressed by States Parties during the 31st session of the Committee (Christchurch, 2007) are presented herebelow.

III. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS DURING THE 31ST SESSION (CHRISTCHURCH, 2007)

7. A recurring comment from States Parties concerns the fact that only 19 States Parties contributed comments to Document WHC-06/30.COM/18B, which does not provide a representative sample of the viewpoints of the 183 States Parties to the *Convention*. Furthermore, only three States Parties of the 19 who responded were in favour of a

change in the present election procedures.

8. Moreover, the States Parties indicated that the delay between the reception of Document WHC-07/31.COM/17 and its examination by the Committee had not allowed the delegations to make the necessary consultations on this matter. Therefore, the Committee agreed that a satisfactory decision for all the regions was premature and that continued reflection should be pursued on this issue.
9. The Committee further recalled the need to ensure the professional competence of its members with regard to cultural and natural heritage in order to guarantee the best possible functioning of the Committee.
10. At the close of discussions at the 31st Committee session, the Committee in Decision **31 COM 17**, paragraph 10, expressed its willingness to discuss, if need be, the creation of a consultative group at the 8th Extraordinary session of the the World Heritage Committee in October 2007 at UNESCO Headquarters, which could present its results to the World Heritage Committee at its 32nd session (Québec, July 2008).

IV. DRAFT RESOLUTION

Draft resolution : 16 GA 3A

The General Assembly,

1. *Having examined Documents WHC-07/16.GA/3A and WHC-07/16.GA/INF.3A,*
2. *Recalling Resolution **15 GA 9**, adopted at its 15th session (UNESCO, 2005), requesting to initiate a « process to discuss possible alternatives to the existing system of elections to the World Heritage Committee » before its 16th session,*
3. *Also recalling the discussions held during its 31st session of the World Heritage Committee (Christchurch, 2007),*
4. *Reiterating the need to ensure a more equitable representation of the different regions and cultures of the world, as well as a fair rotation in the composition of the Committee,*
5. *Emphasizing the need to envisage a less complex and less time-consuming voting method to better focus on other important issues for discussion,*

OPTION 1 :

6. *Decides to maintain the current election system as stipulated in Article 14 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention.*

OPTION 2 :

6. *Decides to continue the examination of possible alternatives to the current election system and to this end, invites the World Heritage Committee to set up a consultative body to carry out an in-depth analysis of the different alternatives proposed in Document WHC-07/16.GA/INF.3A ;*
7. *Further decides to inscribe this item on the agenda of its 17th session (October-November 2009) to examine possible modifications to its Rules of Procedure.*

OPTION 3 :

6. *Decides to modify the election procedures of World Heritage Committee members and to amend Article 14 of its Rules of Procedure as follows :*
(the amendments will be proposed at the session in the light of discussions).

Resolution 15 GA 9 adopted by the General Assembly of States Parties on the voting mechanism at its 15th session (UNESCO, 2007)

The General Assembly of States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* requests the Secretariat, in cooperation with the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee, to initiate before the General Assembly in 2007, a discussion process on possible alternatives to the existing election system to the World Heritage Committee.

The alternative or alternatives presented to the General Assembly in 2007 should ensure an equitable representation of the different regions and cultures of the world within the Committee, a more rapid and less complicated voting system and allow focus on important issues in the proceedings of the General Assembly.