Four years ago, in April 2000, the United Kingdom hosted a workshop in Canterbury to begin redrafting the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. The aim was to improve the logical sequence of the different parts of the document, and to transform the Guidelines into a more user-friendly document for all those who work with the conservation of World Heritage properties.

Today I am pleased to inform you that the revised Guidelines have now been submitted to the Chairperson of the 27th session of the World Heritage Committee for approval. The revised Guidelines will, I hope, promote a greater understanding and application of the World Heritage Convention. They should form the basis for high standards in the identification, nomination and effective protection and monitoring of World Heritage properties throughout the world.

During the process of revising the Guidelines, a legal and policy review of the procedures for the inclusion of properties on the List of World Heritage in Danger and the possible deletion of properties from the World Heritage List was undertaken. This culminated in the 6th Extraordinary Committee in March 2003 deciding to maintain existing provisions for in-Danger listing and deletion whilst adding a new emphasis on consultation with States Parties.

Over recent years, the revision of the Guidelines involved a number of lengthy formal written consultations with States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, several drafting group meetings and close collaboration with the Advisory Bodies, ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN. I wish to thank all of those involved in this intensive period of discussion and drafting.

With new Operational Guidelines underway, the World Heritage Centre is now working to prepare the 28th session of the World Heritage Committee to be held in Suzhou, China from 28 June - 7 July 2004 (http://whc.unesco.org/suzhou).

As a first step in the preparation of this important Committee session, the World Heritage Centre recently organized an Information Meeting for all States Parties to the Convention at which the Chairperson of the World Heritage Committee Mr Zhang Xinsheng (China), the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO and the Suzhou authorities made presentations. These presentations can be viewed at the following web site: http://whc.unesco.org/archive/infomtg_110304.pps

I look forward to seeing many of you at the Committee session in Suzhou in a few months time.

Francesco Bandarin, Director, World Heritage Centre

Social and ecological problems faced by contemporary societies, which were built in large part without regard for environmental viability, constitute a crucial ultimatum for humanity: to learn how to develop while preserving the environment.

The UNESCO WHC stand was aimed at promoting the World Heritage conservation message both to the tourism professionals and to general public. The stand presented the partnerships between the WHC and the tourism industry, displayed their contributions, and worked toward strengthening relations with existing partners. The World Heritage sustainable tourism programme was introduced to potential partners. The stand was also used as a venue to showcase the current United Nations Foundation tourism project and local products it has developed.

A series of presentations was aimed at informing about World Heritage and the "value-added" that working with World Heritage can bring to the tourism industry. The 14 presentations, attended by some 250 people, covered such topics as ‘World Heritage sites and Sustainable Tourism’, ‘World Heritage and Local Communities’, ‘The Value Added of World Heritage’, ‘World Heritage Tours: A New Market?’, and ‘How Can You Help Conserving World Heritage Sites?’. They were open to the general public (including academics, students and journalists) during the first three days and then to the tourism trade (eco-tourism and cultural tourism specialists in particular) during the last two days.

The 113-m² stand was deemed by many as one of the most elegant, matching perfectly the image of UNESCO and World Heritage and giving them high visibility. Ten remarkable photographs showing the beauty and diversity of World Heritage sites were displayed, along with interactive computers, and two plasma screens showing films by the Tokyo Broadcasting System (Japan) and by Südwest Rundfunk (Germany).

The WHC stand at the ITB was a platform to show partners’ activities in World Heritage conservation, build new partnerships and reinforce networks. The Fair also enabled the WHC to study tourism market trends in order to design innovative and attractive partnership solutions while satisfying World Heritage conservation needs.

Tour operators were particularly interested in finding out how to become a partner of UNESCO. There was also much interest in the different partnerships already developed. Others expressed the need for ancillary items, such as DVDs, CD-ROMs and promotional materials that they could adapt to their requirements.

The success of this year’s event will be confirmed by the willingness of existing partners and new partners to join the WHC on the stand next year.

In April, a two-year US$780,000 project ‘Conservation Action in the Yucatan Coastal Environment: Sian Ka’an World Heritage Site’ was endorsed by UNEP. Funding is provided by the United Nations Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, and The Coca-Cola Company.

This project will consolidate conservation gains made at the Sian Ka’an Biosphere Reserve World Heritage site. The site, located just south of Cancun, on Mexico’s Caribbean coastline, is under tremendous development pressure with over two million visitors to the coast last year.

The project targets the 1,500 hectares of privately-owned land within the World Heritage site boundaries. A set of clear environmental policies concerning these lands was adopted by the State Party in 2002, paving the way for environmental regulation. Project activities include supporting the implementation of a legally-approved Coastal Zone Development Regulations.

The project provides for the acquisition of a tract of private land for conservation. Best practices for residential waste management and eco-tourism will also be promoted. Monitoring activities are to be developed as well as support for the Mesoamerican Reef Action Planning process.

This conservation project will be carried out mainly by Amigos de Sian Ka’an, a long-standing NGO closely associated with this World Heritage site.

In February, a three-year US$3,135 million project ‘Promoting Marine Conservation through World Heritage in the Eastern Tropical Pacific’ was signed, with funding from the Global Conservation Fund (grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation) and the United Nations Foundation.

This is the first project in the tripartite partnership between Conservation International, the United Nations Foundation and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

The main goal of the project is to establish a marine conservation and sustainable development corridor linking marine protected areas in the Eastern Tropical Pacific within the exclusive economic zones of Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Panama.

The project will strengthen site-level marine protected areas conservation efforts by working with national agencies and participating NGOs to develop site-specific programmes of work.

Another objective of the project is to contribute to a regional co-operative framework in which the four participating countries are beginning to coordinate their marine conservation efforts. It will also review all international and regional agreements relating to marine conservation and synthesise the pertinent components of these agreements in an effort to make them more accessible to site managers, government agents and NGOs working in marine conservation.

Finally the project will support States Parties in their efforts to nominate marine sites to the World Heritage List. The region already has two marine sites: the Galápagos Islands, Ecuador and the Cocos Island, Costa Rica. Panama’s Coiba and Colombia’s Malpelo are sites proposed for nomination.

For the first time the UNESCO World Heritage Centre had a stand at the International Tourism Fair (ITB 2004), held in Berlin, Germany (12-15 March). Apart from the WHC, three sites managers from Guatemala and Mexico were present on the stand to promote their sites to tour operators and potential tourists. Other partners were: Accor, Auctionalia, EF Educational Tours, Earthwatch, Ecotourism Australia, the International Hotels and Restaurants Association, the Grand Circle Foundation, GTZ, Jet Tours, LTU Touristik GmbH, Maison de la Chine et de l’Orient, Organización Mundo Maya, RARE, Rezidor SAS, The Nature Conservancy, UNEP and the United Nations Foundation.

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Modern Heritage in Africa

The third Regional Meeting on Modern Heritage, which took place in the modernist city of Asmara in Eritrea (4 - 7 March), was organised by the WHC, in collaboration with the Government of Eritrea and Africa 2009 (mAAN, modern Asian Architecture Network), and the Swedish National Heritage Board, with financial support from the Government of the Netherlands. It brought together 20 experts in the field of heritage conservation, including experts in modern African heritage and modern heritage in general.

The meeting was officially opened by H. E. Mr. Osman Saleh, Honorable Minister for Education and Chairperson of the Eritrean National Commission for UNESCO. Formal addresses were given by H. E. Mr. Samareh Russum, the Lord Mayor of Asmara, and Ron van Oers, representative of the WHC.

Representatives from various African countries presented case studies of modern heritage from their countries. These studies involved modernist cities, including garden cities with designed landscapes, urban planning schemes, ensembles consisting of built heritage from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and individual buildings. Some were part of the process of tentative listing and preparation of a nomination file, while other case studies emphasised ideas around perceptions of what modern heritage is in an African context.

There was much discussion on such topics as whether modern heritage means exclusively colonial heritage, or includes vernacular heritage as well. Participants tried to determine what period covers Africa’s modern heritage and to what extent history and identity are linked to modern heritage on the continent.

They considered the extent to which local communities should be involved in the determination of whether their heritage is part of modern heritage, and concluded that it is extremely important in an African context that the community appropriate the heritage as its own.

The meeting also looked at how skills and the continuity and development of design modes in a local context are important to community acceptance of modern heritage.

Representatives determined that modern heritage in Africa is the human-made environment of approximately the past 200 years, including its historical and intangible associations. It was further felt that in light of different experiences of the past the onus should be on African States Parties, including African communities, to determine how they wished to define modern heritage in their own unique context.

The meeting appealed to Africa 2009 to actively engage countries that request assistance in the revision of existing or creation of new legislation. It also encouraged States Parties to carry out nationwide inventories and establish national heritage lists, for inclusion on the Tentative List. Governments were also urged to increase awareness in local communities, as well as consult with them for the management of heritage in general and modern heritage in particular. Heritage authorities were encouraged to build private-public sector partnerships in the conservation of heritage.

A World Heritage Centre team held meetings in Washington D.C. (17-18 March) with officers of the World Bank in order to discuss the state of collaboration in the field of cultural and natural heritage in different regions. The WHC team also met with the National Geographic Society and with the World Bank in order to discuss the state of collaboration in the conservation of heritage.

Discussions were then held with WHC representatives and WHC staff to discuss collaboration on culture and development. Following the first two events a number of joint activities had been studied and initiated. Discussions then focused on the assessment of ongoing co-operation on culture and development.

A short programme was held with Jan Johnson, Vice-President for Environmentally Sustainable Development, to discuss current collaboration in the field of cultural and natural heritage, and to outline a future agenda for strengthening the conservation of World Heritage sites within the World Bank programme and project activity.

Discussions were then held with World Bank regional team leaders in charge of South and South-East Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, Latin America and Africa. World Bank and WHC representatives acknowledged that substantial progress has been made during the past year of co-operation on the common platform of projects and initiatives.

A final meeting was attended by Maryvonne Fleiss-Fraissard, Director of the Urban Transport and Infrastructure Division, and Mark Hillebrand, Manager of the Cities Alliance Program. The main areas of co-operation agreed upon were in Morocco, Lebanon, Tunisia, Iran, China and Peru for cultural heritage, and Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Laos PDR and Viet Nam for natural heritage. A number of joint training and workshop activities were planned. The subject of co-operation in the implementation of the Bank’s Cultural Heritage Safeguard Policies was also discussed.

The issue of awareness-raising inside the Bank, with the help of UNESCO, was highlighted. The Bank is interested in co-operating with UNESCO in the definition of specific guidelines for project preparation and implementation, and in promoting staff exchanges with UNESCO. The possibility of developing joint activity with the Cities Alliance Program, focusing on a limited number of case-studies of common interest was also discussed.

In a meeting with Leonard Good, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Small Grants Program managed by UNDP was discussed, as well as the prospect for future development of GEF activities encompassing World Heritage mixed and cultural sites. A brochure, presenting all the projects in World Heritage sites currently supported by GEF, is to be produced.

In a meeting with the National Geographic Society and the World Bank, the WHC discussed the Camino Inca Programme and other areas of possible co-operation.

Representatives suggested that a network of African experts on modern heritage be established and called for a follow-up meeting to be held in order to expand on the deliberations of this workshop and to formulate strategies for modern heritage in Africa.

World Heritage in Danger

Angkor (Cambodia)

Angkor is one of the most important archaeological sites in South-East Asia. Stretching over some 400 sq. km, including forested area, Angkor Archaeological Park contains the magnificent remains of the different capitals of the Khmer Empire, from the 9th to the 13th century. These include the famous Temple of Angkor Wat and, at Angkor Thom, the Bayon Temple with its countless sculptural decorations.

The site of Angkor was inscribed simultaneously on the World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 1992, in consideration of the serious threat posed to the site by long-term civil disturbances including the abandonment of the site during and after political and military upheavals and the plundering of sculptures. Angkor is now properly managed thanks to the Authority for the Protection of the Sites and Management of the Region of Angkor (APSARA), created in 1995. It is not anymore threatened by looting, but its surroundings and other Angkorian temples located in remote areas are still under constant threats. Meanwhile tourism pressure is growing, with the number of tourists between 2001 and 2002 increasing by 23% to almost 270,000 annually.

The monuments of Angkor are in varying states of conservation. Since 1992, more than fifteen major conservation and restoration projects have been undertaken at the site. However, given the great size of the property, there are still many monuments in need of attention.

Angkor has received aid from the World Heritage Fund for preparatory assistance and technical co-operation. Restoration projects have been funded by international partners, including the Japanese Funds-in-Trust to UNESCO, the French Funds-in-Trust to UNESCO, the Italian Funds-in-Trust to UNESCO and the French tour operator Accor Group. Today, the scope of international efforts to safeguard Angkor make this site the largest conservation workshop in the world. Almost 600 people working for various international organisations are actively taking part in on-site conservation activities.

At its 27th session in Paris in June 2003, the World Heritage Committee examined the state of conservation of Angkor as a site inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. The Committee recommended that the Cambodian authorities strengthen cooperation between APSARA, the Region of Siem Reap and the provincial authorities to improve preventive measures against on-site looting and theft, and that they provide a report on the state of conservation of the property, to be examined by the 28th session of the World Heritage Committee in 2004.

28th Session of the World Heritage Committee, Suzhou, China.
Information: http://whc.unesco.org/suzhou

The World Heritage Review's 35th Anniversary gala dinner in Camelot, Dunhuang, Gansu Province, China.

Dung Khoa Dong, Director of the Conservation of Grotto Sites, and Linh Dao Trung, Deputy Director of the Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road. Second International Conference on Conservation of Ancient Sites on the Silk Road, Uyghur Autonomous Region of Xinjiang, China.
Information: dri@fadu.uba.ar or info@vcm.xw.uba.ar. Website: www.fadu.uba.ar

22 to 25 June
The World Heritage Centre's 28th Regional Conference, North West European Region, 'Preservation and World Heritage Cities, Integration by Rehabilitation', Bamberg, Germany.
Information: http://www.ovpm.org

28 June to 3 July
Information: http://www.getty.edu/conservation

28 June to 7 July
28th Session of the World Heritage Committee, Suzhou, China.
Information: http://whc.unesco.org/suzhou

For more information:
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E-mail: whc@unesco.org
Website: www.unesco.org

July
12 to 14 May
International Conference of Conservation and Management of World Heritage Sites in the Planning and Development of Eco-cultural Tourism in Viet Nam, organized by the Viet Nam National Commission, the UNESCO Viet Nam Office, and the Hans Seidel Foundation.
Information: http://www.unesco.org.vn

22 to 25 May

28th Session of the World Heritage Committee, Suzhou, China.
Information: www.fadu.uba.ar

28 June to 3 July
Information: dri@fadu.uba.ar or info@vcm.xw.uba.ar. Website: www.fadu.uba.ar

28 June to 7 July
28th Session of the World Heritage Committee, Suzhou, China.
Information: http://whc.unesco.org/suzhou

The World Heritage Review No. 35, April 2004. The leader article in this issue focuses on World Heritage Vineyard Landscapes in several of Europe’s wine-producing regions. Other articles feature Wooden Churches of Southern Little Poland, built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with highly ornamented interiors; Quebrada de Humahuaca in Argentina, the first cultural landscape in Latin America to be listed as World Heritage; Persepolis, colossal ruins of the ancient capital of the Achaemenid Empire, still standing in today’s Islamic Republic of Iran; and the Old Towns of Djenné, an adobe-built settlement in Mali.
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