



## World Heritage: Thinking Ahead ...Taking Action

**IUCN's response to the conclusions of the meeting on "The World Heritage Convention: Thinking Ahead" between the Director-General of UNESCO, States Parties to the World Heritage Convention and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee**

Held on 2nd and 3rd October 2012, UNESCO HQ, Paris  
IUCN response dated: 10 June 2013

The Director-General of UNESCO convened a two-day brainstorming meeting titled "Thinking Ahead", on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention. IUCN's Director General and Director, World Heritage Programme participated in this meeting.

IUCN welcomes the initiative of the Director General of UNESCO and the report of the meeting issued subsequently by UNESCO. Below IUCN notes its response to each of the conclusions of the meeting. We also note in Annex 1 IUCN's original submission to the meeting.

### 1. Tentative Lists:

***1.1 Meeting Conclusion: The Advisory Bodies should be engaged with the States Parties in the very first step of the nomination process i.e. in the preparation and assessment of Tentative Lists, and their regional harmonisation. This would ensure that only those sites that have the potential to meet the criteria for outstanding universal value, and contribute to filling the gaps on the World Heritage List are added to national tentative lists.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** Along with many recommendations, we consider this implies the need for a more collaborative relationship between IUCN and States Parties. As a first step to make this proposal operational IUCN would welcome approaches from interested States Parties to request input to their Tentative Lists. We consider that regional workshops between States Parties and Advisory Bodies to focus on defining and prioritising Tentative Lists would be a practical means to address this request. We also consider additional guidance on Tentative Lists, translated into regional languages, and some case study examples with interested States Parties would be valuable. Regarding the final sentence, we note that the expectation that new sites fill gaps is a secondary consideration to the principal need to focus on sites that are of Outstanding Universal Value.

***1.2 Meeting Conclusion: Tentative Lists that have been developed through such a rigorous screening process could be considered for some form of recognition, perhaps through a re-branding of the term "Tentative List" into "national inventory of significant/potential World Heritage sites" or as the "World Heritage candidate list".***

**IUCN partly agrees with this conclusion.** The caveat is that unless the Tentative List itself is of high quality, the branding of the List will not necessarily address any major issues. We agree that Tentative List is a terminology that could be improved, but care is needed to ensure that the nature of this list remains clear and unambiguous.

IUCN also considers that the identification of Tentative Lists also needs to be better linked to the identification of areas seeking other UNESCO or other international recognition. A key point regarding all upstream measures is that they should not prejudice the evaluation processes and the rigour called within the Operational Guidelines.

## 2. Nominations:

**2.1 Meeting Conclusion:** *The support provided under the “upstream process” should be further strengthened, and also formalised within the Operational Guidelines to make it uniformly applicable to all needy countries.*

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** In order to make it operational there is a need to both define the relevant procedures and to find the time and resources to introduce them. IUCN is concerned that there is currently no availability of budget to make the upstream process operational in the next biennium. We support the idea that the upstream process, if made operational and transparent, would be prioritised to enable support to flow into regions, States Parties, and different categories of heritage that are not adequately represented on the World Heritage List. In this way the upstream process could also seek to result in a more reasonably balanced global list of sites than at the present time.

**2.2 Meeting Conclusion:** *Provide focussed capacity building for preparing nominations, including through the organisation of the nominations development course as implemented in the Africa region, and by involving national and regional institutions and UNESCO Category 2 Centres.*

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** This is one of the conclusions that could be put into immediate effect, with the support of the Category 2 Centres, building on the successful model that has been developed by the African World Heritage Fund and to which IUCN is contributing time and funding. This programme aims to provide quality capacity building in partnership with UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies. One area of particular need is in relation to serial sites, especially those of a trans-boundary nature, where initiatives would be better coordinated with the Advisory Bodies to ensure more effective results, and lower costs.

**2.3 Meeting Conclusion:** *As foreseen in the “upstream process”, a phased approach to nominations should be adopted that would comprise a first stage of assistance to establish the potential of the site to meet the criteria for outstanding universal value, followed by the next stages of support in the elaboration of the nomination dossier, and to ensure that the required conditions of integrity, authenticity and management requirements are fulfilled.*

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** This relates to the aspiration of making the upstream process made operational within the processes of the World Heritage Convention, as discussed above and below.

**2.4 Meeting Conclusion:** *A first-stage rigorous and critical national-level feasibility study process is necessary before it is decided to take nominations forward.*

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** This appears to be part of a more structured support for Tentative Lists, but would focus on specific nominations. States Parties could put this conclusion into immediate effect, and IUCN would be willing to assist interested States Parties in designing appropriate feasibility studies for their future nominations. National feasibility studies should be undertaken, guided by the regional scale assessments noted in point 1.1 on Tentative Lists above.

**2.5 Meeting Conclusion:** *There is a need to reconsider the time-lines for submission and evaluation of nominations and their consideration by the World Heritage Committee, which are currently too short to allow adequate dialogue, including also the possibility of slowing down the submission of nominations.*

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** This also relates to how the upstream process could be made operational within the processes of the World Heritage Convention (see comments above). A clear implication of introducing more successful upstream processes will be to allow at least one additional year for the evaluation.

***2.6 Meeting Conclusion: An effective dialogue should be maintained between the Advisory Bodies and relevant authorities and experts in the States Parties during the entire process of evaluation of nominations.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** IUCN seeks to maintain such a dialogue already in its processes, but considers additional opportunities are needed and suggests a small group of interested States Parties and the Advisory Bodies meet to consider this. Two practical options would focus on allowing the Advisory Bodies to communicate their conclusions to States Parties sooner than the current UNESCO deadline of only six weeks before the World Heritage Committee, and creating a specific opportunity for dialogue between States Parties and Advisory Bodies prior to meetings of the World Heritage Committee. These measures would also imply an extended timeframe for nominations.

IUCN notes that dialogue during the process of evaluation, whilst welcome, will always be less effective than dialogue initiated earlier, to discuss the feasibility of a nomination from the outset.

***2.7 Meeting Conclusion: Better communication, dialogue and transparency between the Advisory Bodies, the Secretariat and the States Parties can help resolve issues before the results of evaluation of nominations are presented to the World Heritage Committee.***

**IUCN agrees fully with this conclusion.** The challenge is to put this into practical effect. A clear understanding of how the evaluation takes place, who is involved in which stages, and their timings is part of that transparency. Additional efforts to ensure that there is effective communication during field missions is fundamental in order to avoid misunderstandings. A number of the measures above would contribute to this aspiration.

### **3. Conservation of properties:**

***3.1 Meeting Conclusion: The long-term preservation and state of conservation of sites should be given primacy in the work under the Convention, supported by a proactive approach to monitoring World Heritage Sites by the Advisory Bodies, as recommended by the recent Evaluation of the Global Strategy.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** As noted already to the World Heritage Committee, IUCN is introducing new site monitoring systems to its work which, amongst other goals, will introduce a more proactive approach to monitoring. This is oriented to engaging IUCN Members in supporting sites facing challenges, and also celebrating sites that have a good outlook for their future conservation. IUCN will continue to keep the World Heritage community aware of and engaged in this work. The new system has been piloted already in 2011 in the Arab States and will come online during 2013-14, including through a global report on the *State of Natural World Heritage* to be published in early 2014. IUCN notes that clear priorities for such efforts need to be established, notably for sites included on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

***3.2 Meeting Conclusion: All parties should promote a more positive use of the monitoring processes of the Convention to lead to solutions to conservation issues. The List of World Heritage in Danger (LWHD) in particular should be used to encourage international cooperation for ensuring the early removal of properties from this list.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** In relation to monitoring processes, IUCN considers that a focus on the use of broad strategic environmental assessments and issue specific environmental impact assessments would be the most effective means to give this conclusion practical effect.

IUCN also fully agrees with the conclusion in relation to the List of World Heritage in Danger, and considers that a clear further priority for the World Heritage Committee should be to ensure that all sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger (LWHD) have clear Desired States of Conservation set for their removal from the LWHD, accompanied by costed action plans which should be priorities for support from the World Heritage Fund, from States Parties, and for extra-budgetary fundraising.

***3.3 Meeting Conclusion: Consideration should be given to separating within the LWHD treatment of properties that are faced by developmental threats and neglect of management, where States Parties are more able to act quickly, and those suffering from natural and man-made disasters, including wars and conflicts, where long-term support is required.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** The difference in circumstances noted is very pertinent, and could easily be recognised in debates considering the LWHD. Such distinctions would also be made clear through the definition of the suggested costed action plans, and the consistent use of Desired States of Conservation for the removal of the property from the LWHD.

***3.4 Meeting Conclusion: In the interest of transparency, Advisory Bodies and the Secretariat should be encouraged to consult with the State Party concerned, prior to proposing a property on the LWHD, in order to seek consensus and identify the actions required that will be supported by including a property on the LWHD.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** IUCN notes that such consultation should however not be seen as limiting with the clear role of the World Heritage Committee to consider the inclusion of sites on the LWHD. Linked to the previous point, such a consultation could also distinguish clearly the types of actions that are required to address the threats that lead to conclusions for inclusion of sites on the LWHD.

***3.5 Meeting Conclusion: The Advisory Bodies should be enabled to provide direct technical support to States Parties for assessing and mitigating the impact of developmental projects on properties at the earliest possible opportunity, in order to reconcile conservation with development and to find practical solutions to pressing social and economic development issues while safeguarding the OUV of the property.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** A focus on Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) & Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is strongly required within the World Heritage Convention. IUCN notes however that a key issue is that at present the scale of demands for engagement in such assessments is greatly beyond the capacity available to the World Heritage Convention. Amongst all of the conclusions, IUCN considers this is of the highest priority given its potential for positive results.

The primary responsibility for improvements in the World Heritage Convention in this area rests with improved practices by States Parties. Thus, it is essential to note that this aspect, focused on the Advisory Bodies, will only be effective if it is set within the larger context of supporting States Parties to systematically use EIA and SEA to proactively consider the protection of World Heritage Sites in relation to the possible impacts of development and infrastructure projects.

***3.6 Meeting Conclusion: There is a need to make use of the Convention as an engine for promoting sustainable development, focussing on local communities and incorporating poverty reduction aspects into management programmes.***

**IUCN partly agrees with this conclusion.** IUCN considers a much better understanding of the contribution of heritage to sustainable development is needed, and that there is clearly scope to make a larger contribution to sustainable development goals through World Heritage. This is a fundamental issue and requires much further and deeper consideration.

IUCN's agreement with this conclusion is based on the understanding that such focus would not undermine the fundamental goal of the World Heritage Convention related to the protection of natural and cultural heritage. We consider that it is important that the Convention focuses more on opportunities to support rights-based approaches and sustainable development objectives in a manner consistent with the protection of Outstanding Universal Value (i.e. without threatening the values for which the site is protected). It is also important to be realistic, as many World Heritage Sites are not capable of performing a role as an engine of sustainable development, thus the language used in this objective needs to be carefully considered to ensure clarity and avoid misinterpretation.

***3.7 Meeting Conclusion: Transparency, dialogue and consultation in Convention processes by all parties is also a critical part of better enabling communities to participate as partners in the Convention, and secure benefits associated with listing of Sites on the World Heritage List.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** This conclusion is also noted by recent meetings of representatives of communities and indigenous peoples that have taken place during the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the World Heritage Convention in 2012. IUCN would recommend a review between UNESCO and Advisory Bodies to put in the public domain all relevant documentation of the Convention, including the reports to the World Heritage Committee, and also nomination documents when they are accepted as complete and are under evaluation.

***3.8 Meeting Conclusion: Open dialogue, transparency and ongoing communication between the Advisory Bodies, the Secretariat and the States Parties are essential in all processes relating to monitoring the state of conservation of World Heritage properties.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** The challenge is to put this into practical effect. IUCN recommends a small group of interested States Parties, the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies considers the means to do so.

## **4. Capacity building:**

***4.1 Meeting Conclusion: There is need to focus capacity building activities especially on institutional strengthening at the national level in States Parties (including in relation to legal systems for protecting heritage) while also continuing to target efforts on building the capacity of national professionals and youth. There is need to develop targeted national capacity building strategies for this purpose.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** IUCN is already working in this area, in particular in partnership with ICCROM, and sees this as a very high priority. This is a key requirement to address gaps in the implementation of the Convention constructively. This goal should have a much greater profile in the work of the World Heritage Convention, and could be linked to part 1 of the Periodic Report. IUCN would be interested to work with a group of pilot States Parties, UNESCO and the other Advisory Bodies to consider how to put this proposal into practical effect. IUCN would favour linking activity on this to the work of other UNESCO Conventions/Programmes, and also to other international conventions, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity. Within IUCN we will be seeking to ensure that World Heritage capacity building is more explicitly recognised in our work supporting the CBD and through the role of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas.

***4.2 Meeting Conclusion: Make better use of national and regional training institutions and expertise, as well as UNESCO Category 2 Centres and relevant UNESCO Chairs in all capacity building activities.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** To make this operational it would be helpful for all Category 2 Centres and UNESCO Chairs working on World Heritage to have consistent and coordinated programmes of action.

***4.3 Meeting Conclusion: More practical guidance should be provided on all aspects of World Heritage conservation through training, resource manuals and sharing of best practice, in a wide range of languages and supported by appropriate training materials.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** The challenge here relates to setting priorities, and IUCN would favour a clear prioritisation on the resource manuals to make the greatest impact, including translating them into a range of languages, and providing training materials that can be used consistently in national and regional meetings. This links to the above comment on capacity building.

***4.4 Meeting Conclusion: A thesaurus of technical terms used in the implementation of the Convention should also be developed.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** The Convention has indeed got a complicated jargon of its own that could be better explained, and ideally simplified.

**4.5 Meeting Conclusion: *New Committee members should be given comprehensive induction training, soon after their election, and not just through the half-day orientations session that is organised a day before the World Heritage Committee session.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** This would be a practical recommendation that would be better adapted to the needs of the Committee than the current Orientation session, which whilst welcome, comes too late in the cycle to be effective. IUCN recommends this as a short-term priority for action by UNESCO.

## **5. Roles of Advisory Bodies and Secretariat:**

**5.1 Meeting Conclusion: *Further clarify the distinct roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Bodies (expertise, independent technical and analytical functions) and the Secretariat (regulatory and technical functions).***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** It was apparent from the meeting in October 2012 that the distinction between the Advisory Bodies and the Convention Secretariat (the World Heritage Centre) is not sufficiently clear. IUCN considers this is due to the Centre providing the type of technical advice that is the defined task of the Advisory Bodies. The below recommendations also help to make precise several issues to be addressed in redefining roles between the Centre and the Advisory Bodies. We consider that the Centre and Advisory Bodies should work with a small group of States Parties to redefine their roles to address the points below.

**5.2 Meeting Conclusion: *The Secretariat should play a much stronger role in consistently reminding the World Heritage Committee of the Operational Guidelines, Rules of Procedure and its own past decisions.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** In line with the above comment, we consider that the Secretariat has the core responsibility to oversee and advise on technical procedures, and that the key issues of credibility facing the Convention rely on a strong and consistent role of the Secretariat to advise the World Heritage Committee. This is a recommendation that UNESCO should prioritise, and will also address the need for a clear differentiation of roles between the Secretariat and the Advisory Bodies.

**5.3 Meeting Conclusion: *The Secretariat should serve as a facilitator between the States Parties and Advisory Bodies.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** We consider that redefining the role of the World Heritage Centre as a facilitator, maintaining a neutral view in relation to technical matters, would be a positive means to clearly define its role, as complementary to the role of the Advisory Bodies. In order to facilitate this change, we consider that the Advisory Bodies should therefore take the sole lead in the technical analysis related to SOC reports and mission reports, which would also result in significant efficiencies in relation to these processes. The Advisory Bodies and States Parties would then need to work more closely together to prepare for the World Heritage Committee. In situations where there is disagreement the World Heritage Centre could facilitate discussions that could address issues and work towards a consensus to be recommended to the World Heritage Committee.

**5.4 Meeting Conclusion: *The Advisory Bodies and Secretariat should function in a fully transparent manner, and should communicate clearly both current practices and scope for improvements.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** As noted above, the means to ensure this function should be the subject of a more detailed reflection. Improved practices should be defined and reported in the relevant item (Item 5) of the World Heritage Committee.

**5.5 Meeting Conclusion: *The Advisory Bodies should make use of national and regional expertise, and ensure balanced geographical representation in their staff and experts chosen. The Advisory Bodies have already begun a series of capacity building activities towards this end.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** As noted this is already the subject of a programme of work by the Advisory Bodies, which has resulted in significant improvements in regional balance during the last three years. Switzerland, which has particularly supported this work, is thanked for this support.

***5.6 Meeting Conclusion: Resources are required to enable the Advisory Bodies and Secretariat to respond with greater promptness to the requests of States Parties, especially in relation to issues which require resolution between the sessions of the World Heritage Committee.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** As also noted below, lack of resources is a key issue, and will need to be addressed to put into effect many outstanding matters. Amongst the different needs there is a clear requirement to increase the World Heritage Fund to maintain budget for international assistance focused on conservation.

## **6. Role of the Committee and governance**

***6.1 Meeting Conclusion: The growing discrepancy between expert advice and decisions of the World Heritage Committee is negatively impacting on the credibility of the Convention.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** We are pleased to see this strongly recognised as a conclusion of the meeting, and consider that addressing this discrepancy is central to the credibility and ongoing success of the World Heritage Convention. We note our recommendations in the paper submitted to the meeting in this regard.

***6.2 Meeting Conclusion: The World Heritage Committee should follow the Operational Guidelines and the rules that it has itself established. In case of any departure from them, the Committee must record the reasons for doing so.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** As noted in our submission to the meeting, we consider that a key issue is the increasing frequency with which the Committee does not follow the Operational Guidelines, which unless addressed will undermine the credibility and legitimacy of the World Heritage Convention. IUCN also believe that this recommendation is consistent with other calls for more transparent processes and decision making.

***6.3 Meeting Conclusion: Different geographical regions should be equitably represented on the World Heritage Committee.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** Addressing this is a political rather than technical matter, but we consider it highly important.

***6.4 Meeting Conclusion: There is a need to significantly enhance the role of local communities, indigenous peoples and the civil society in all processes of the Convention.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** We note the specific proposals made in our submission to the meeting in this regard. A key point is the need for the World Heritage Committee to adopt new standards and processes that will implement accepted international norms in relation to the recognition of rights of indigenous peoples.

## **7. Resource constraints:**

***7.1 Meeting Conclusion: Many of the points above related to tentative lists, upstream processes, technical advice on development projects, and capacity building have important resource implications. The necessary financial resources will need to be found in order to support these activities if they are to be fully implemented.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** This is clearly a factual matter, given the significant reduction in UNESCO's budget. Furthermore it is the critical matter to address in order to make progress on many of the proposals herein. We note specific comments on this matter in our paper to the meeting.

**7.2 Meeting Conclusion: States Parties must contribute adequate funds on a voluntary basis for effective implementation of the Convention.**

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** This is a matter for the States Parties to consider. We note that measures that would invite States with a high GDP and a large number of World Heritage Sites to shoulder a greater level of the costs of the Convention would seem logical.

**7.3 Meeting Conclusion: Create an innovative funding mechanism for financing the work of the Convention and ensuring sustainability of the World Heritage Fund.**

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** We consider that this is a clear need, without which many/most of the aspirations for a more effective Convention will not be achieved. Thus there appears to be a need for new and creative skills from expert fundraisers, brand experts to consider opportunities. As per our proposals to the meeting, we consider that this needs a coordinated approach and clear top-level accountability from World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies.

**7.4 Meeting Conclusion: In view of resource constraints, the World Heritage Committee must prioritise and adopt an incremental approach to implementing priorities, and many of the requested actions, such as the introduction of the upstream process, will not be possible given current levels of resourcing.**

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** We recommend that a prioritised, phased and costed plan will be required to implement the above proposals.

**7.5 Meeting Conclusion: The Committee should consider the possibility of reviewing Article 16 of the Convention to enhance the limit of assessed and voluntary contributions of the States Parties.**

IUCN considers this is a matter for States Parties to the World Heritage Convention to consider, but it is not clear that the wording of Article 16 is an impediment to supplementary voluntary contributions.

## **8. Road map for follow-up**

### **8.1 Meeting Conclusion:**

***In closing, the Director-General welcomed the open and frank dialogue on critical issues at the eve of the 40th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention in Kyoto, November 2012. She proposed to bring these issues forward to the 37th session of the World Heritage Committee (June 2013) and to the General Assembly of States Parties (November 2013). She warmly thanked the Advisory Bodies for the in-depth reflection in their non-papers and all States Parties for their contributions which offer concrete and practical suggestions for the future of this important instrument.***

***It was agreed that the report of the UNESCO External Auditor on the Evaluation of the Global Strategy and the PACT Initiative and the implementation plan prepared for its conclusions provides a very good framework and road-map to follow-up on the various suggestions that were made at the meeting. This is further complemented by the implementation plan prepared to follow-up on the Global Strategy and Action Plan, which was adopted by the General Assembly of States Parties. It was also agreed to harmonise the two implementation plans for better efficiency and to avoid duplication of effort. States Parties may also consider the preparation of a corresponding National Strategy and Action Plan for implementation of the Convention within their countries.***

**IUCN agrees with this conclusion.** It is welcome to have a range of instruments available to implement positive change in the World Heritage Convention, and IUCN suggests that these should be integrated into a single approach to ensure transparency, accountability, and enable the effective distribution of resources. IUCN reiterates thanks to the Director General of UNESCO for the initiative of this meeting and looks forward to participating in the further steps to follow up its conclusions.

IUCN  
14<sup>th</sup> June 2013



# A Future for World Heritage

## Challenges and responses to assure the credibility of the World Heritage Convention International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), September 2012

In its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year the World Heritage Convention is rightly celebrating its successes. As is the case for any organization, there are challenges that need to be addressed, and an anniversary is a good time to do that. As we look to the future of the Convention, we note that, along with its many achievements, there are growing concerns regarding its performance, credibility, sustainability and long-term viability. The Convention, in the view of IUCN is at a crossroads, and warnings of serious departure from its original objectives from many sources, including the most senior levels of UNESCO, seem, so far, to have gone unheeded. The Convention conveys the highest expectations for the protection of our common cultural and natural heritage. UNESCO has been entrusted to provide the home for the Convention which has its own, independent governing body, supported by a professional Secretariat. The Convention now faces a central challenge to function in the increasingly politicised world of UNESCO.

If the Convention is to remain a relevant instrument, it needs to implement the reforms that its own External Evaluation of 2011 has identified. Its governing Committee needs to follow its own Operational Guidelines. The Advisory Bodies, including IUCN, need to be fully transparent in their work, and need to work in new ways to achieve dialogue with State Parties, and with all stakeholders in World Heritage that will lead to success across all listed World Heritage Sites. Additional resources are required to meet these needs.

IUCN was instrumental in the establishment of the Convention and has been its advisor on natural heritage since its founding. We are fully supportive of the World Heritage Convention, and ready to engage with our 1,000-plus State and NGO members, and 10,000-strong global expert network, in new ways to meet these major challenges. IUCN's World Conservation Congress has just taken place in Jeju, Republic of Korea, and included an extremely vibrant debate on World Heritage, with no less than 18 different events. The IUCN Congress adopted a number of motions related to World Heritage, including an overall resolution on Strengthening the World Heritage Convention which is attached as an annex to this non-paper. We commend these resolutions to UNESCO, and they underline our future contribution to the Future of the World Heritage Convention, and the commitment of IUCN members to the Convention.

The World Heritage Convention should be a beacon for conservation, for culture and for nature, as called for in the 2011 External Evaluation of the Convention's Global Strategy, which States Parties have welcomed and adopted. We are convinced that the Convention has a bright future if necessary reforms to ensure its effectiveness are put in place. Concerned to ensure that the Convention remains relevant in the years ahead, we note four principal challenges and propose recommendations to address them below.

### **1. The Credibility Challenge: Upholding the standards of the World Heritage Convention**

A central challenge to the Convention is a lack of consistency in observing the Operational Guidelines and Rules of Procedure of the Convention by the World Heritage Committee. The Convention is a standard-setting instrument which must not compromise its own standards. With a loss of standards, Parties will be disappointed and frustrated that the enhanced reputation of having a World Heritage site they expect is not achieved, and the support that World Heritage status can offer to them could become meaningless. UNESCO must, as an absolute priority, support and guide the Committee to follow consistently its own rules and guidelines. This is a prerequisite to other necessary reforms of the Convention.

- **Recommendation 1:** *Clear accountability for the World Heritage Committee is required. UNESCO should monitor and publish annually results of the compliance of Committee decisions with the Operational Guidelines and Rules of Procedure, and report these to the General Assembly of the Convention.*
- **Recommendation 2:** *The World Heritage Centre should be strengthened in order to focus on its core Secretariat role, and provide strong and consistent advice to the WH Committee on the observation of the Operational Guidelines and the Rules of Procedure, and should be held accountable for its performance in doing so.*

## **2. The Implementation Challenge: Prioritising strategic actions for a more effective World Heritage Convention.**

The World Heritage Convention has long required an effective, modern long-term strategy, led by conservation. There has been a long, rich and fruitful debate on the *Future of the Convention*, informed by many meetings and position statements. Despite this effort, the Convention has remained inconsistently managed, with limited memory of past decisions within its governing bodies, and a tendency to reinvent and review strategy and policy, but with little consistent implementation. The 2011 External Evaluation has considered the issues facing the Convention comprehensively and has recommended clear action. The Evaluation's findings have been adopted by the General Assembly to the Convention, together with an agreed Strategic Action Plan. They should be acted on as a priority.

- **Recommendation 3:** *UNESCO should prioritise its work to ensure a full and effective response to the External Evaluation of the World Heritage Convention's global strategy. The World Heritage Centre should be accountable for assuring that this response is delivered, including through strengthening its staffing of nature heritage specialists, recognising that the Advisory Bodies and other technical partners may be better placed than UNESCO to deliver many of the required actions.*

## **3. The Results Challenge: Better dialogue for better conservation results.**

The current nomination and the subsequent evaluation process for potential new sites are important, but cannot, on their own, provide adequate conservation solutions for World Heritage Sites. In addition, the monitoring of listed sites focuses primarily on reacting as problems occur rather than considering solutions from the outset. Under the present system, unnecessary confrontations occur when difficult issues facing listed and potential sites, are brought directly to the Committee. The Convention should, therefore, establish additional processes to support the efforts of the Advisory Bodies to provide early proactive advice to individual States Parties on the conservation needs of their listed sites and on the sites they are considering nominating. Better results also require the greater involvement of civil society, and communities associated with World Heritage sites, and mechanisms to assure and empower their input into the Convention, and to fully realise and respect their rights, are required.

- **Recommendation 4:** *The Convention should do much more to increase the capacity of actors at both sites and at State levels, including communities and NGOs. We should measure our results in this vital area. States need support to establish better governance, legal systems and institutions in order to avoid potentially damaging projects affecting World Heritage sites as a priority, and deliver sustainable development that protects World Heritage sites. The Convention should also deliver much greater opportunities for communities and NGOs to participate in, and benefit from, the inscription of World*

*Heritage sites and ensure that the listing and conservation of World Heritage Sites is based on the respect for the rights of communities, including indigenous peoples, in line with international norms.<sup>1</sup>*

- **Recommendation 5:** *The World Heritage Committee should assure rich participation of observers, NGOs and communities in its meetings, addressing the extreme lack of such voices as present. It should provide them with many more opportunities to participate, give them space and visibility in the meeting room, and increase the time provided for observers to speak in the Committee’s debates.*
- **Recommendation 6:** *The new Strategic Action Plan for the Convention should include as a priority, proactive monitoring of listed sites by the Advisory Bodies, as recommended in the External Evaluation, and this should be a means of mobilising action for conserving listed World Heritage sites. Early and coordinated advice by IUCN and ICOMOS to ensure the quality of tentative lists and other so-called “upstream processes” should become a core process in the Convention. The regional networks of the Advisory Bodies (including IUCN’s regional offices and expert Commissions) should be fully involved in delivering this new proactive approach.*
- **Recommendation 7:** *A review of opportunities to increase transparency and dialogue within the work of the Convention should be undertaken. New forums for the more difficult issues should be created, prior to these being put before the World Heritage Committee for decision. Specific issues to be considered include:*
  - *Use of Environmental Assessment tools and provision of effective management plans as priorities for listed sites;*
  - *The potential benefits of extending the evaluation process for nominated sites that are recommended for deferral, referral or non-inscription to allow time for issues raised to be properly considered.*

#### **4. The Budget Challenge: Securing adequate resources for the World Heritage Convention.**

Lack of resources for the Convention is a long standing problem, and the recent major decrease in UNESCO resources is a major concern. The budget of the World Heritage Convention is woefully limited. The lack of adequate and consistent support to sites included on the List of World Heritage in Danger is the most obvious example of a key constraint in the workings of the Convention. The World Heritage system currently appears to face an impossible challenge given the growing requests for additional work, quality, dialogue, and at the same time seeing a double figure decline in the available resources.

- **Recommendation 8:** *A new approach to budgeting and prioritising the work of the World Heritage Convention as a whole is needed within UNESCO. There is the need to provide and manage, via the World Heritage Committee, a budget from all sources (the World Heritage Fund, regular programme, State Party and other external funding) that addresses agreed priorities and that does not seek to do more, for less. There should be focus not just on “doing things”, but doing things well.*
- **Recommendation 9:** *UNESCO should act in concert with the Advisory Bodies to raise additional funds for World Heritage, focused on the key needs of the Convention. Director level accountability within the World Heritage Centre and the World Heritage Programmes of all three Advisory Bodies should be expected to address this critical issue, and ensure that the joint leverage of UNESCO and its three key partners in the Convention is realised.*

<sup>1</sup> The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2012 adopted resolution WCC-2012-Res-047-EN: [Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in the context of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention](#) on this matter, and this will be circulated to the World Heritage Committee when the WCC decision motion has been issued as amended.

**IUCN, September 2012.** This “non-paper” has been prepared at the request of the Director General of UNESCO for the meeting on “The World Heritage Convention: Thinking Ahead”, to be held in UNESCO, Paris, 3 October 2012. In addition to this paper IUCN has previously contributed papers to the Future of the Convention process, and reports annually to the World Heritage Committee, and those reports provide further analysis on the challenges and opportunities facing the Convention, including matters of substance for its future strategy for conservation and for achieving a balanced and representative World Heritage List.

**WCC-2012-Res-047-EN: Strengthening the World Heritage Convention**

RECALLING Resolution 1.67 *World Heritage Convention* adopted by the 1st IUCN World Conservation Congress (Montreal, 1996), and other relevant IUCN Resolutions and Recommendations;

WELCOMING the 40th Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention taking place in 2012, that near universal recognition of the Convention has been achieved, and that the recognition of natural heritage on the World Heritage List has grown to more than 211 natural and mixed World Heritage Sites;

RECOGNIZING the specific and unique formal mandate IUCN holds within the World Heritage Convention as the Advisory Body for natural heritage, and also IUCN's own mandates and objectives as an international conservation organization that relate to World Heritage;

COMMENDING the World Heritage Committee, the State Parties to the Convention, and UNESCO and its World Heritage Centre, for significant conservation successes over the 40 years of the operation of the Convention and recognizing the important role of IUCN and the other Advisory Bodies named in the Convention, ICOMOS and ICCROM, in these successes;

RECOGNIZING the significant contribution of World Heritage Sites to the conservation of protected areas, noting that natural and mixed World Heritage Sites, and World Heritage cultural landscapes together provide coverage of over 10% of the land and aquatic areas included within the protected areas estate globally;

CONSIDERING that the potential benefits of World Heritage extend far beyond the sites which have been listed, and that these areas and those responsible for them should play a leadership role in developing, establishing and demonstrating global standards for management of protected areas and act as "flagships" in terms of raising public awareness, capacity building and finding solutions to conservation issues;

CONSIDERING that there is a need to strengthen recognition of the rights of local communities and indigenous peoples with respect to Convention processes, in line with agreed international norms, and secure environmentally sustainable and equitable benefits from World Heritage Site designation, as part of sustaining the leadership role of the World Heritage Convention;

CONCERNED that the World Heritage Convention, notwithstanding its record of success, faces significant challenges in its credibility and effectiveness, as notably set out in the conclusions of the evaluation of the Convention's global strategy undertaken by UNESCO's external auditors in 2011, and endorsed by the General Assembly of State Parties to the World Heritage Convention, especially with respect to the protection and management of listed sites as the key priority for the Convention, the achievement of a balanced and credible World Heritage List, adherence to the highest standards for the assessment of the Outstanding Universal Value of sites proposed for inclusion in the World Heritage List, and recognition by signatories to the Convention of their joint responsibility to assure the conservation of all World Heritage sites;

CONCERNED that there continue to be significant pressures on World Heritage Sites, including from major infrastructure and extractive industries, the impacts of conflict, the loss of management capacity and a range of other threats and pressures, that have resulted in a growing number of sites being included in the List of World Heritage in Danger, including some that have seen significant long-term deterioration of their values;

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<sup>2</sup> A full report on the motions approved by IUCN WCC is available here:  
[http://www.iucn.org/knowledge/publications\\_doc/publications/?uPubsID=4864](http://www.iucn.org/knowledge/publications_doc/publications/?uPubsID=4864)

***The World Conservation Congress, at its session in Jeju, Republic of Korea, 6–15 September 2012:***

1. REAFFIRMS its view that the principles of the World Heritage Convention are critical to conservation and therefore calls on the Convention's signatory Parties to ensure that the Convention remains effective;
2. ENDORSES the establishment of effective and equitable governance, conservation and management of all listed World Heritage Sites as the highest priority and benchmark of success of the World Heritage Convention for the ten years to its 50th anniversary in 2022, and commits to support the Convention to develop new mechanisms, strategies and programmes of work to achieve this goal;
3. REQUESTS the World Heritage Committee and all signatory Parties to uphold the highest standards by ensuring the rigorous observation of the Convention's *Operational Guidelines*, by meeting their collective responsibility to protect and manage effectively all World Heritage Sites, by ensuring that the Convention plays a full role in the implementation of the *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020* and the Aichi Targets, and by developing as soon as possible new processes and standards that will ensure that the Convention appropriately recognizes the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities in line with accepted international norms and standards;
4. ALSO REMINDS State Parties to the Convention that there still remain gaps on the World Heritage List for new natural and mixed sites, and cultural landscapes which have the potential to be considered of Outstanding Universal Value, and that the protection of sites that would fill these gaps, their inclusion in national tentative lists, and their nomination to the World Heritage List remains a valid priority, that requires increased support and advice. This includes the specific opportunities to strengthen cooperation between States in ecosystems that require comprehensive and integrated approaches to conservation and management;
5. REQUESTS UNESCO, within available resources, to strengthen further the professional capabilities in natural heritage within the World Heritage Centre, and to cooperate with IUCN to increase IUCN's capacity to support the Convention;
6. CALLS UPON IUCN Members and Commissions to actively engage in supporting the World Heritage Convention, including by continuing to provide proactive support and advice to support IUCN's advice to the Convention on threats, conservation issues and solutions, and on the evaluation of potential candidate sites; and
7. REQUESTS the Director General, within available resources, to:
  - a. Maintain the effectiveness of, and develop further, IUCN's Advisory Body role on World Heritage to ensure that IUCN is able to advise, influence and guide the World Heritage Committee, to monitor and report on its implementation, and to contribute to the *Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020*;
  - b. To regularly report on progress and concerns regarding the implementation of the World Heritage Convention to IUCN, and to strengthen awareness across IUCN and within civil society of the performance and results of the World Heritage Convention, including through global and regional communication strategies;
  - c. In the 10 years leading up to the Convention's 50th Anniversary, to develop and support the application of international IUCN protected area standards and norms to all World Heritage Sites, to support identified measures needed to achieve their conservation, to communicate the status of World Heritage Sites and recognize World Heritage sites that meet global management standards, and to catalyze support to World Heritage Sites in Danger;

d. Establish new regional capacity and support via IUCN Regional Offices, Commissions and Members, and regional and national partners, with the purpose of strengthening IUCN's direct support to States, managers and stakeholders in World Heritage Sites to deliver both biodiversity conservation results, and ensure that World Heritage Sites contribute to the realization of benefits for communities, while respecting and supporting their rights; and

e. Maintain and develop strong and effective working relationships with UNESCO, and its World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS, ICCROM, and other partners to pursue a continuing, strengthened and effective role for the World Heritage Convention as a flagship for best practice in global conservation.