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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 second Session

Quebec City, Canada
2 – 10 July 2008

Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda: Report of the World Heritage Centre on its activities and the implementation of the World Heritage Committee's Decisions

INF.5.C: Thematic Initiative "Astronomy and World Heritage": Integrated Implementation Strategy

SUMMARY

Taking into account the principal objective of the Global Strategy, adopted in 1994 by the World Heritage Committee, which aims to establish a representative and balanced World Heritage List reflecting the diversity of cultural and natural sites of outstanding universal value, as well as in accordance with the Committee's Decision **29 COM 5.1** adopted at its 29th session (Durban, 2005), the World Heritage Centre launched an appeal to States Parties to contribute to the implementation of the Thematic Initiative "Astronomy and World Heritage".

This document, prepared in coordination with the National Focal Points in charge of the implementation of the Initiative, Advisory Bodies and the International Astronomical Union (IAU), proposes an integrated implementation strategy of this World Heritage Initiative aiming to improve the identification, conservation and management of the specific types of properties connected with astronomical observations and traditional astronomical knowledge. The participation of the local communities will take an important part in the implementation of this Initiative.

In order to facilitate the identification and process for the inscription of astronomical properties on the World Heritage List, a cycle of activities "*Astronomy and World Heritage: across time and continents*" will be launched by UNESCO within the framework of this Initiative during the 2009 - International Year of Astronomy proclaimed by the 62nd General Assembly of the United Nations in December 2007.

Draft Decision: 32 COM 5 in Document WHC-08/32.COM/5

This Document should be read in conjunction with Document WHC-08/32.COM/10A.

THEMATIC INITIATIVE “ASTRONOMY AND WORLD HERITAGE”: INTEGRATED IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

I. BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

1. Created by an international multidisciplinary expert group¹ within the framework of the Global Strategy, as a pilot activity for the identification of the sites connected with astronomy, as well as recognized by an expert working group on scientific heritage², the Thematic Initiative on Astronomy and World Heritage, aims to establish a link between Science and Culture towards recognition of the specific properties connected with astronomical observations dispersed throughout all the geographical regions, not only scientific but also the testimonies of traditional community knowledge.
2. Following the World Heritage Committee’s Decision **29 COM 5.1** (Durban, 2005), which requested the Director of the World Heritage Centre to explore further the Thematic Initiative “Astronomy and World Heritage” as a means to promote, in particular, nominations which recognize and celebrate achievements in science, the World Heritage Centre launched an appeal to States Parties to contribute to the implementation of this Initiative. Numerous National Focal Points in charge of its implementation were designated world-wide.
3. This World Heritage Initiative offers to the States Parties a possibility to evaluate and recognize the importance of this specific heritage, in terms of enrichment of the history of humanity, the promotion of cultural diversity and the development of international exchanges.
4. In addition, this Initiative is one of the UNESCO activities launched, in accordance with the Resolution of the 33rd session of the UNESCO General Conference, in support of the 2009 - International Year of Astronomy proclaimed by the 62nd General Assembly of the United Nations in December 2007.

II. OBJECTIVE

5. The Thematic Initiative “Astronomy and World Heritage” provides an opportunity not only to identify the properties connected with astronomy but also of keeping their memory alive and preserving them from progressive deterioration, through the recognition and the promotion of their specific values through inscription on the World Heritage List of the most representative properties.

III. ORIENTATIONS

6. The Initiative will implement activities on the basis of the following orientations and in accordance with the *Operational Guidelines*:
 - Definition of major issues in the identification and inscription of properties relating to astronomy of Outstanding Universal Value;
 - Definition of the priorities for the safeguarding and promotion of these properties in order to open new pathways for cooperation, to mobilize extrabudgetary funds and new partner support;
 - Development of cooperation agreements with States Parties aiming to promote these sites, through the elaboration of serial nominations, as well as to develop conservation and research activities focusing on astronomical heritage;

¹ 2003 – *First presentation of the pilot project “Archaeoastronomical sites and observatories” (UNESCO World Heritage Centre)*

2004 – *First International Expert Meeting on elaboration of the Implementation Strategy of the Thematic Initiative “Astronomy and World Heritage” (UNESCO Venice Office)*

² 2008 – *Expert Workshop “World Heritage: Science and Technology” (London, UK) (see Document WHC-08/32.COM/INF.10 A)*

- Creation of partnerships between scientists and other stakeholders involved in the process of identification, conservation and management of this specific category of properties;
- Strengthen capacity of site managers and technical staff at the regional and national level for the improvement of the management of these sites;
- Raising awareness and sensitizing the public through the dissemination of information and the development of specific projects.

IV. EXPECTED OUTPUTS

7. The Initiative will achieve the following outputs:

- Establishment of an inventory of astronomical sites;
- Preparation of serial nominations of astronomical properties;
- Development of policies for the conservation, the use or the revitalization and the promotion of astronomical properties protected under the Convention;
- Organization of training and awareness-raising activities;
- Setting-up of an active global network for exchange of information and experience.

V. ACTIVITIES

8. Activities under the Initiative will fall into the following domains:

- *Implementation of the World Heritage Global Strategy;*
- *Training, Research;*
- *Promotion / Advocacy/ Partnership.*

VI. STRUCTURE

9. This long-term Initiative will be implemented in the following three broad phases:

- **Phase I** aims at (a) acquiring an in-depth knowledge of the outstanding properties connected with astronomy in all geographic regions through their identification, study and inclusion of the most representative of these properties on the national tentative lists; (b) creating networks of cooperation between scientific communities, governmental bodies and site managers; (c) developing pilot-project on serial transnational nominations.
- **Phase II** aims at (a) promoting the most outstanding of these properties which recognize and celebrate achievements in science, as well as the traditional knowledge of ancient civilizations, through their inscription on the World Heritage List; (b) promoting international cooperation in order to safeguard and promote these properties; (c) providing a platform for capacity building; (d) raising public-awareness.
- **Phase III** aims at (a) fine-tuning the results of the research and capacity building activities; (b) ensuring the sustainability of results; (c) monitoring the ongoing development of pilot projects.

VII. MANAGEMENT

10. The Initiative will be managed by an **International Steering Scientific Committee (ISSC)** composed of officially designated national focal points, Advisory Bodies and International Astronomical Union representatives. The main international and regional institutions having the professional competency to contribute to the activities' implementation will be also involved.

11. The World Heritage Centre will ensure the overall coordination of the Initiative as well as its adherence to the strategic vision. It will regularly report to the World Heritage Committee on progress made. For each region (Arab States, Africa, Asia and Pacific, Europe, North America, Latin America and the Caribbean) one of the involved focal point institutions will be selected as the regional secretariat. IAU will obtain a primary advisory and coordinating role in the implementation of research projects activities. ICOMOS will coordinate all necessary studies on the World Heritage List and the tentative lists aiming at better selecting of these specific sites on the basis both of their outstanding universal value and of their representativity. ICCROM will advise on training activities and develop training materials in collaboration with IAU.
12. In May 2007, the Executive Board of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) unanimously adopted the proposal to establish an official partnership with UNESCO within the framework of this World Heritage Initiative in order to ensure its implementation (the Memorandum of Understanding being finalized). The IAU has presently 64 National Members and over 9700 individual members in 87 countries. Different Commissions of this Union, in particular Commission 41 on History of Astronomy, are actively involved in the advisory activities within the framework of the Initiative.
13. The establishment of collaboration between ICOMOS and IAU in order to provide the necessary expertise to the State Parties for the identification and nomination of properties connected with astronomy on the World Heritage List is in process. The possible creation of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee for Astronomical Heritage is under evaluation.

VIII. PROPOSALS FOR 2008-2010

14. ***Astronomy and World Heritage: across time and continents***³ is a cycle of the World Heritage activities which will be launched within the framework of the World Heritage Initiative on Astronomical Heritage during the celebration of the International Year of Astronomy.

The main objectives are:

- Evaluation of existing thematic national studies;
- Definition of astronomical heritage;
- Definition and categories of properties connected with astronomy;
- Elaboration of the Guidelines proposal on the inscription of properties connected with astronomy on the World Heritage List (revision of Annex 3 of the *Operational Guidelines*);
- Preparation of the possible nominations of astronomical properties on the World Heritage List.

15. The World Heritage Centre received the proposal of Egyptian authorities to organize and host the ***First International Seminar on Serial Transnational Nominations of properties connected with Astronomy***, aiming to evaluate existing thematic national studies and discuss the elaboration of the Guidelines proposal on the inscription of properties connected with astronomy on the World Heritage List.
16. The World Heritage Centre received the proposal of Ukrainian authorities to organize and host the ***International Conference "World's Astronomy Monuments: Preservation and promotion issue"***, aiming to coordinate the preparation of the possible nomination dossier of serial properties connected with astronomy for its inscription on the World Heritage List.

³ *The States Parties wishing to participate in this cycle of Conferences, Seminars, Workshops etc. are invited to transmit to the World Heritage Centre, the complete information on national representatives/participants, as well as all relevant documents (national reports, PPT presentations and, if available, possible nominations project proposals) by **1 October 2008**.*

17. The **International Conference “Astronomy and World Heritage: across time and continents”** could be organized as a main cultural activity of the International Year of Astronomy aiming to promote the importance of the recognition and protection of astronomical heritage.
18. In April 2008, during the first ICOMOS - International Astronomical Union (IAU) working meeting, the possibility of a **Thematic study on the Heritage of Astronomy** was discussed. This thematic study would be developed in the context of the recent interest in the review of the relationship between heritage of sciences, traditional community knowledge and the *World Heritage Convention* (see Document *WHC-08/32.COM/10A*).
19. In addition, the group of the international experts started, in coordination with the World Heritage Centre, and the support of the Starlight Scientific Committee, the elaboration of a project proposal to develop the “Starlight Reserves” concept within the framework of Starlight Initiative launched by the Spanish authorities. An **International Workshop and expert meeting “Starlight Reserves and World Heritage: Scientific, Cultural and Environment Values”** will be hosted by the Fuerteventura Island Government (Spain, end 2008). The overall aim is to discuss the problems of identification of specific categories of natural sites such as “Starlight Reserves” for their possible nominations on the World Heritage List.
20. Financial support is needed to implement the following activities:
- Preparation and editing of a fundraising and marketing brochure (2008-2009);
 - ICOMOS/IAU Thematic study on astronomical heritage (2008-2009);
 - *First International Seminar on Serial Nomination of properties connected with Astronomy* (International Assistance Preparatory request submitted by Egypt);
 - *International Conference “Astronomy and World Heritage: Across Time and Continents”* (financial support to be identified);
 - *International Conference “World’s Astronomy Monuments: Preservation and promotion Issue”* (financial support requested by Ukraine through the UNESCO Participation Programme 2008- 2009);
 - Organization of a consultation meeting of partners for the fine-tuning of the strategy and activities of the World Heritage Initiative on Astronomical Heritage – Meetings of the International Steering Scientific Committee (financial support to be identified).

IX. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

21. The Thematic Initiative “Astronomy and World Heritage” has been developed, since 2003, with the appreciated voluntary contributions from States Parties (Netherlands, United Kingdom), from a scientific organization (*Royal Astronomical Society* of the United Kingdom) and from the UNESCO Office in Venice.
22. Seed money for the World Heritage Initiative will be requested from the World Heritage Fund (Global Strategy), supplemented by voluntary contributions from States Parties and international donors⁴.
23. Budget proposed (in USD):

<i>World Heritage Initiative “Astronomy and World Heritage” activities</i>	<i>Budget (US\$)</i>
1. General support through the World Heritage Fund	30,000
2. ICOMOS/IAU Thematic study on astronomical heritage	20,000
3. 1 st and 2 nd ISSC working meetings (2009-2010)	30,000
4. International Conference in support of the Year of Astronomy	55,000
Total	135,000

⁴ *The States Parties and international partners wishing to provide voluntary contributions to the cycle of “Astronomy and World Heritage: across time and continents” activities accordingly to the budget proposed or, in general, to the Thematic Initiative “Astronomy and World Heritage”, are invited to transmit to the World Heritage Centre their letters of intention by **1 October 2008**.*