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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 first Session

Christchurch, New Zealand
23 June – 2 July 2007

Item 7.2 of the Provisional Agenda: Issues related to the state of conservation of World Heritage properties: Strategy for Reducing Risks from Disasters at World Heritage properties

SUMMARY

As requested by the Committee through Decision **30 COM 7.2** (Vilnius, 2006), this document contains a revised version of the "*Strategy for Reducing Risks at World Heritage Properties*" (presented in its original version in Document *WHC-06/30.COM/7.2*) with a prioritised list of actions. The Document contains also information on other related activities carried out by the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies since July 2006.

Draft Decision: 31.COM 7.2, see Point IV

I. BACKGROUND

1. Following the examination of the Strategy for Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties (Document *WHC-06/30.COM/7.2*), the World Heritage Committee had endorsed its objectives, but requested the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies “to work together, along with other UNESCO mechanisms, to prioritize the proposed actions contained in the Strategy” (Decision **30 COM 7.2**) (Vilnius, 2006).
2. Ten priority action points (two per Objective identified within the Strategy) were therefore identified, out of the many that were included in Table 1 of Document *WHC-06/30.COM/7.2*. These actions points, which were slightly revised, have been selected by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies based on the following three criteria:
 - a) Actions that can be implemented by the World Heritage Committee, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies;
 - b) Actions that respond to specific recommendations made by the Committee in past decisions;
 - c) Actions that balance site-based and global approaches;
3. The priority actions also take into account the outcome of a Workshop on “*Integrating traditional knowledge systems and concern for cultural and natural heritage into risk management strategies*” jointly organized by the World Heritage Centre and ICCROM at Davos (Davos, Switzerland, September 2006), within the framework of the International Disaster Reduction Conference (see more on this in Section III below).
4. A revised, and much shorter, *Strategy for Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties* is therefore presented (see Section II), for the consideration and approval of the Committee.
5. It is important to note that the introductory part of Document *WHC-06/30.COM/7.2* (from page 1 to 7 in the English version) still remains entirely valid. It was not re-included in the present Document to avoid unnecessary waste of paper. Moreover, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies consider that the Actions identified in Table 1 of Document *WHC-06/30.COM/7.2*, which are not reiterated in this revised version of the “Strategy”, would still deserve attention and follow up, although they constitute a lesser priority in the context of the implementation of the *World Heritage Convention*.

II. “STRATEGY FOR RISK REDUCTION AT WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTIES”¹

A. Purpose of the strategy

6. The purpose of this Strategy is twofold:
 - a) To strengthen the protection of World Heritage and contribute to sustainable development by assisting States Parties to the *Convention* to integrate heritage concerns into national disaster reduction policies and to incorporate concern for disaster reduction within management plans and systems for World Heritage properties in their territories; and

¹ World Heritage properties are cultural and natural heritage sites whose significance “is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity”. A list of World Heritage properties is maintained and up-dated every year by an inter-governmental Committee (also known as the World Heritage Committee) in the framework of the *World Heritage Convention*, adopted by the general Conference of UNESCO in 1972. More information on the *Convention* and its List of World Heritage properties are available at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org>

- b) To provide guidance to States Parties, the World Heritage Committee, the World Heritage Centre, and the Advisory Bodies to integrate disaster risk reduction into World Heritage strategic planning and management, including the allocation and use of Emergency Assistance under the World Heritage Fund.

B. Objectives and recommended actions

General Considerations

7. In determining the appropriate means to achieve the Strategy, the following key considerations should be made, which are relevant to all of the objectives and actions:
 - a) Cultural and natural heritage, with their related technologies, practices, skills, knowledge systems and ecosystem's goods and services can play an important positive role in reducing risks from disasters at all phases of the process (readiness, response and recovery), and hence in contributing to sustainable development in general;
 - b) The key to an effective reduction of risks from disasters is advance planning and the building of a culture of prevention;
 - c) In developing plans for reducing risks at World Heritage properties it is essential to give adequate consideration to cultural diversity, age, vulnerable groups and gender perspective;
 - d) Property occupants and users, and concerned communities in general, should be always involved in planning for disaster risk reduction.
 - e) The protection of the Outstanding Universal Value and the integrity and authenticity of World Heritage properties from disasters implies consideration for the associated intangible aspects and movable items that contribute directly to its heritage significance.

Objectives and priority actions

8. In order to achieve the stated purposes of the Strategy, a series of objectives and related actions have been identified. These have been structured around the five main priorities for action defined by the Hyogo Framework for Action², but adapted to reflect the specific concerns and characteristics of World Heritage.
9. The five objectives are the following:
 - a) Strengthen support within relevant global, regional, national and local institutions for reducing risks at World Heritage properties;
 - b) Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of disaster prevention at World Heritage properties;
 - c) Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks at World Heritage properties;
 - d) Reduce underlying risk factors at World Heritage properties;
 - e) Strengthen disaster preparedness at World Heritage properties for effective response at all levels.
10. These objectives correspond to the spirit of Article 5 of the *World Heritage Convention*³, requiring States Parties to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage situated on their

² The most recent and important global policy text on risk reduction is the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters* (HFA), adopted at the UN *World Conference on Disaster Reduction* (WCDR), held from 18 to 22 January 2005 in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan. Taking place 11 years after the adoption of the seminal *Yokohama Strategy (1994)*, and five years after the end of the *UN International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction* (IDNDR, 1990-1999), the HFA sets out the UN-wide strategic plan for reducing risks from disasters over the next decade. The HFA is available at the following Web address: <http://www.unisdr.org/> (March 2006).

³ available at the following Web address: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/175/> (May 2006)

territory. They also fit within three of the four Strategic Objectives established by the World Heritage Committee through its *Budapest Declaration*⁴, namely Conservation, Capacity-Building and Communication.

11. Objectives and related priority actions of the Strategy are shown in **TABLE 1**

TABLE 1. Objectives and Priority Actions

Objectives	Priority Actions
<p>1. Strengthen support within relevant global, regional, national and local institutions for reducing risks at World Heritage properties</p> <p><i>Global actors for disaster reduction should give more consideration to cultural and natural heritage among the issues to be considered when defining their strategic goals and planning their development cooperation activities. At the same time, general disaster reduction strategies at regional, country and local levels must take into account and integrate concern for world cultural and natural heritage in their policies and implementation mechanisms</i></p>	<p><i>Action 1.1</i> Promote cultural and natural heritage, and its potential positive role for disaster reduction as part of sustainable development, within relevant international development institutions, conventions and global forums and with other potential financial partners, as a means of raising support for the protection of heritage from disasters.</p> <p><i>Action 1.2</i> Strengthen policies and funding provisions for disaster reduction within the World Heritage system, for instance by including disaster and risk management strategies in the preparation of Tentative Lists, nominations, monitoring, periodic reporting and International Assistance processes.</p>
<p>2. Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of disaster prevention at WH properties</p> <p><i>The building of a culture of prevention, at all levels, is one of the key elements for a successful disaster reduction strategy. Experience shows that reacting a posteriori, especially as far as heritage is concerned, is an increasingly ineffective way of responding to the needs of people affected by disasters. Training,</i></p>	<p><i>Action 2.1.</i> Develop up-dated teaching/learning and awareness-raising resource materials (guidelines, training kits, case studies and technical studies, glossaries) on disaster reduction for World Heritage, and disseminate them widely among site managers, local government officials and the public at large.</p> <p><i>Action 2.2.</i> Strengthen the capacity of World Heritage property managers and community members, through field-based training programmes, to develop and implement risk management plans at their sites and contribute to regional and national disaster reduction strategies and processes.</p>

⁴ Accessible online at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/budapestdeclaration>

Objectives	Priority Actions
<p><i>education and research, including on relevant traditional knowledge, are the most effective ways of developing a culture of preparedness. This particular area of actions fits entirely within the broader mandate of UNESCO as the UN intellectual arm, in particular for establishing global knowledge networks</i></p>	
<p>3. Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks at WH properties</p> <p><i>The first step to reduce disasters and mitigating their impact is the identification of possible risk factors, including from global agents such as climate change. The vulnerabilities from disasters to World Heritage properties must be therefore identified, assessed in their level of priority and closely monitored, so as to inform the appropriate risk management strategies</i></p>	<p><i>Action 3.1</i> Support risk identification and assessment activities at World Heritage properties, including consideration of climate change impacts on heritage, consideration of underlying risk factors, all necessary expertise and the involvement of relevant stakeholders as appropriate.</p> <p><i>Action 3.2</i> Develop a World Heritage Risk Map at the global level or at regional levels to assist States Parties and the Committee to develop better responses.</p>
<p>4. Reduce underlying risk factors at WH properties</p> <p><i>When a disaster occurs, there are a number of underlying factors that can significantly aggravate its impact. These include land/water and other natural resources management, industrial and urban development, and socio-economic practices. Removing the root causes of vulnerability implies often the identification and reduction of underlying risk factors associated to human activities</i></p>	<p><i>Action 4.1</i> Give priority within international assistance to helping States Parties in implementing emergency measures to mitigate significant risks from disasters that are likely to affect the Outstanding Universal Value, including the authenticity and/or integrity of World Heritage properties.</p> <p><i>Action 4.2</i> Develop social training programmes for communities living within or around World Heritage properties, including consideration of heritage as a resource to mitigate physical and psychological damage of vulnerable populations, particularly children, during and in the aftermath of disasters.</p>
<p>5. Strengthen disaster preparedness at World Heritage properties for effective response at all levels</p> <p><i>The worst consequences of natural or human-made disasters can often be avoided or mitigated if all those concerned are prepared to act according to well conceived risk reduction plans, and the necessary human and financial resources, and</i></p>	<p><i>Action 5.1</i> Ensure that risk management components, with identified priorities, are integrated within management plans for World Heritage properties, as a matter of urgency. For World Heritage cultural properties, the scope of these plans should address ways of protecting the key assets that contribute towards the Outstanding Universal Value and should also include the protection of any significant original archival records that contribute to their heritage value, whether or not they are located within the boundaries of the World Heritage property. For natural properties, such plans should be oriented to</p>

Objectives	Priority Actions
equipment, are available	protect the key values for which the properties were inscribed as well as their integrity.
	<p><i>Action 5.2</i> Ensure that all those concerned with the implementation of disaster reduction plans at World Heritage properties, including community members and volunteers, are aware of their respective roles and are well and systematically trained in the application of their tasks.</p>

III. RELATED ACTIVITIES

12. From 28 August to 1 September, in Davos (Switzerland), the World Heritage Centre and ICCROM organized a one-day workshop on “*Integrating traditional knowledge systems and concern for cultural and natural heritage into risk management strategies*”, with resources from the World Heritage Fund. This event, in which ICOMOS and ICOM representatives also participated, took place within the framework of the International Conference on Disaster Reduction (ICDR), a major event following the World Conference of Disaster Reduction (WCDR) held at Kobe (Japan), in 2005.
13. In line with Decision **30 COM 7.2** (Vilnius, 2006), the session helped disseminate the “*Strategy for Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties*” within this important international forum while promoting the integration of concern for heritage within broader disaster reduction strategies and plans at global, regional and national levels. As proposed within the “Strategy”, the primary purpose of this session was to strengthen ties and exchange experiences between the heritage community and the wider Disaster Reduction sector. The various papers presented and the outcome of the discussions will result in an e-publication edited by ICCROM, which will be made available on the website of the World Heritage Centre, together with the “Strategy” itself and the prioritized list of actions, upon validation by the World Heritage Committee.
14. One of the important results achieved by the session is reflected in the final Declaration (i.e. the “Davos Declaration”) adopted by the ICDR, which includes the following paragraph: “*Concern for heritage, both tangible and intangible, should be incorporated into disaster risk reduction strategies and plans, which are strengthened through attention to cultural attributes and traditional knowledge*”⁵. This constitutes the first reference, within a global policy document on disaster reduction, to the importance of the heritage in the context of disaster risk reduction.
15. Moreover, with respect to the provisions contained in paragraphs 7 and 8 of Decision **30 COM 7.2** (Vilnius, 2006), the World Heritage Centre and ICCROM are preparing a user-friendly resource material to build capacity on disaster reduction at World Heritage properties. This should be finalized within 2007. A revised format for Emergency Assistance requests has been prepared, and is presented for the consideration of the Committee in Document *WHC-07/31.COM/18*.

⁵ Excerpt from the “Davos Declaration”, *International Conference on Disaster Reduction*, ICDR, Davos, Friday 8 September 2006. Accessible in full online at: www.davos2006.ch

16. Finally, in the context of the meeting held at UNESCO Headquarters on 5 and 6 February 2007 to develop a Policy Document on World Heritage and Climate Change, a number of references have been made to the linkages between Climate Change and risk management or reduction. Climate Change, in this context, should be considered as one of the factors that, combined with specific vulnerabilities, can result in significant risks to the conservation of World Heritage properties. The policies and strategies of the World Heritage Committee on the issues of Climate Change and Risk Reduction, therefore, should be consistent and complementary.

IV. DRAFT DECISION

Draft Decision: 31 COM 7.2

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-07/31.COM/7.2,*
2. *Recalling Decision **30 COM 7.2**, adopted at its 30th session (Vilnius, 2006),*
3. *Takes note of the important outcome of the Davos International Conference on Disaster Reduction as reflected in its final Declaration, on the role of heritage within disaster risk reduction;*
4. *Approves the revised Strategy for Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties with its prioritized list of actions;*
5. *Requests the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to ensure that activities in the framework of the Strategy for Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties are consistent and, when appropriate, complementary to the policies and strategies established by the World Heritage Committee on the issue of Climate Change.*