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# World Heritage

# 31 COM

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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 21 of the Provisional Agenda: Other business**

**21C. World Heritage Programme on earthen architecture**

## **SUMMARY**

At its 25th session (Helsinki, 2001), the World Heritage Committee approved the establishment of an earthen architecture conservation Programme to develop policies for the conservation, revitalization and increased awareness of earthen architectural properties and to develop regional and national capacities for site managers and technical experts for enhanced conservation, presentation and management of earthen architectural heritage. This document proposes the implementation of an integrated programme to develop appropriate methods and techniques to improve the conservation and the management of the different types of earthen architecture. A series of pilot projects will help to identify, refine and disseminate those training methodologies that have proved to be most appropriate and best practice in the course of these projects.

**Draft Decision: 31 COM 21C**, see Point XII.

## I. BACKGROUND

1. Since ancient times, people all over the world have used earth as their main building material. Earthen architecture has in a way become a symbolic expression of the human capacity to build, and to make the best use of the resources available in the nearby environment. Today, earthen architectural heritage includes a great diversity of building types, ranging from archaeological sites to living monuments and from groups of buildings to historic towns and some cultural landscapes.
2. In 2006, 105 out of 644 cultural properties inscribed on the World Heritage List incorporated earthen structures, and a considerable number of sites currently inscribed on States Parties' Tentative Lists are partially or wholly built of earth. However, many of these sites are seriously threatened both by natural disasters (e.g. floods and desertification in Timbuktu, Mali; earthquake in Bam, Iran; rains in Chan Chan, Peru; tornadoes in Abomey, Benin) and by social and physical changes to the environment (e.g. degradation of the environment through industrialisation and inappropriate use of modern technology, adaptation to modern comfort, disappearance of traditional conservation practices).
3. Furthermore, about a quarter of the cultural properties inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger are earthen architectural sites. There is an urgent need for the World Heritage Committee to focus on their safeguarding both through development and dissemination of best conservation practices and through capacity building at State Party level. Implementation of these activities should be supported by agencies specialised on earthen architecture and involve research projects, pilot activities in the field, publications on the results, awareness raising and promotional activities.
4. In the past, global initiatives such as Gaia and Terra projects (with CRATerre-ENSAG, ICCROM, and Getty Conservation Institute) sought to develop knowledge as well as training programmes for the preservation of earthen architectural heritage. A UNESCO Chair for "Earthen Architecture, Building Cultures and Sustainable Development" was awarded to CRATerre-ENSAG with the mandate to increase the general knowledge about earthen architecture and to develop training opportunities throughout the world.
5. Since its approval by the World Heritage Committee in 2001, the earthen architecture conservation Programme has carried out a range of projects including: technical assistance to Timbuktu for the preparation of the conservation plan; a conservation project for the safeguarding of the Royal Palaces of Abomey, conservation activities at the archaeological site of Chan Chan, and training and restoration projects in Central Asia. What is now needed is an integrated approach in all regions of the world for the formulation of appropriate conservation methods, techniques and policies for the sustainable conservation of earthen architectural heritage protected under the *World Heritage Convention*, and for a comprehensive collection and evaluation of the results and knowledge obtained.
6. The proposed programme will involve the main international and regional institutions with the professional competency to contribute to the Programme's implementation:

- a) **CRATerre-ENSAG** (as the focal point of the UNESCO Chair of “Earthen Architecture, Building Cultures and Sustainable Development”);
- b) **ICCROM** (as the priority partner of the World Heritage Committee in training for cultural heritage and in the development and implementation of the Global Strategy for a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List, the Global Training Strategy);
- c) **ICOMOS**, through its International Committee for earthen architecture (as the priority partner of the World Heritage Committee in the evaluation of properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List, and monitoring the state of conservation of World Heritage cultural properties); and
- d) **Regional training and research institutions** such as the **School of African Heritage of Benin**, and the **Centre for Heritage Development in Africa of Kenya**.

The Programme will be structured and organized on the AFRICA 2009 model.

## II. PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES

- 8. The Programme objectives are:
  - a) To develop appropriate methods and techniques for improving the sustainability of the conservation and the management of the different types of earthen architectural heritage inscribed on the World Heritage List and/or included in States Parties' Tentative Lists;
  - b) To ensure that best practices are broadly disseminated for practical application at properties protected under the *World Heritage Convention*.

## III. PROGRAMME ORIENTATIONS

- 9. The Programme is designed for a period of 10 years and will implement activities on the basis of the following orientations:
  - a) Development of in-depth pilot projects at selected World Heritage and Tentative List sites, including long term follow-up and evaluation in all regions of the world;
  - b) Development of cooperation agreements with States Parties to develop conservation and research activities in the field of earthen architectural preservation;
  - c) Contribution to sustainable development (social, economic, cultural) and poverty alleviation;
  - d) Reinforcement of the capacities of regional institutions around the world to address the conservation problems facing earthen architecture heritage;
  - e) Progressive transfer of the programme management responsibility to the regional training institutions;
  - f) Involvement of local communities and women in particular in programme activities
  - g) Consideration of the fundamental role of scientific research and of the capacity of the UNESCO Chair.

#### **IV. EXPECTED OUTPUTS**

10. The Programme will achieve the following ten outputs by its conclusion in 2017:

- a) Identification and understanding of problems earthen architecture heritage is exposed to in the larger context of sustainable development;
- b) Development of policies for conservation, use or revitalization and valorisation of earthen architecture heritage protected under the *Convention*;
- c) Definition of appropriate methods and techniques of interventions concerning earthen architecture;
- d) Organization of training and awareness activities by regional training institutions;
- e) Elaboration of management and conservation plans for at least 25 earthen architecture World Heritage properties;
- f) Preparation of technical specifications for the restoration of historic towns as well as for the inclusion of modern infrastructures;
- g) Efficient protection and enhancement of at least 15 earthen architecture sites protected under the *Convention*;
- h) Organization of at least 4 capacity building activities in earthen architecture conservation and management by regional training institutions;
- i) Involvement of trained national professionals and other skilled persons in the conservation and management of earthen architecture in all countries with earthen architecture sites;
- j) Setting-up of an active global network for exchange of information and experience.

#### **V. PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES**

11. Programme activities will fall into five domains:

##### ***In situ pilot projects***

12. With the specific objective of developing “best practices” examples, the following activities will be implemented:

- a) Elaboration of conservation and management plans;
- b) Conservation projects for monuments, historic towns and archaeological sites;
- c) Conservation projects for sustainable tourism development;
- d) On-site training for site managers, technicians, artisans, tourist guides;
- e) Elaboration of technical guide lines for restoration and rehabilitation;
- f) In-situ experiments and other research activities;
- g) Close follow-up of implementation with regular technical inputs.

### **Research**

13. Scientific research at laboratory and applied research at site level will be essential in assessing and elaborating the knowledge on conservation of earthen architectural heritage. The following activities are to be implemented:

- a) Laboratory research on raw materials, stabilization, damp migration;
- b) Applied research and documentation;
- c) Experimentation using prototype samples and other methods;
- d) Thematic seminars with site managers and earthen architectural conservation specialists;

### **Training**

14. The Programme will increase opportunities to obtain specialized training on earthen architectural conservation throughout the world and it addresses artisans and heritage professionals. The following activities are envisaged:

- a) Organization of thematic courses;
- b) Assistance to Regional institutions in developing training on earthen architecture at different levels (vocational, basic, university, Post graduate);
- c) Preparation of teaching material for dispatch to and use by the UNESCO earthen architecture Chair network.

### **Promotion / Advocacy**

15. Promotion and advocacy activities will seek to ensure better recognition of earthen architecture both at an international and national level. However, particular attention will be paid to local communities. The following activities will be implemented:

- a) Publication of a series of technical books on earthen architecture in general and on World Heritage earthen architecture in particular (management plans, preventive conservation, etc.);
- b) Organization of exhibitions and participation in festivals;
- c) Organization of regional workshops on conservation of earthen architecture;
- d) Organization of international conferences on earthen architecture and partnership for Terra conferences organized by the Getty Conservation Institute.

## **VI. PROGRAMME STRUCTURE**

16. The Programme will be structured in 4 phases:

### **Phase 1 (2007-2008): Preparation**

- a) A partners consultation meeting for the determination of the Programme strategy for Africa, Arab States, Latin America, Europe and Central Asia;
- b) A logical framework seminar for the preparation of a detailed project document with a realistic work plan aiming at prioritizing and introducing coherence into the development of the various components of the Earthen architecture programme;
- c) Preparation of a fundraising and marketing document on the Programme;
- d) Analysis of the World Heritage List: inventory of properties with earthen materials assets, identification of typologies, state of conservation and threats, indicators for measuring speed of decay;
- e) Support for the participation to the Terra Conference (organized by Getty Conservation Institute in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS, ICCROM, AFRICA 2009) to promote the earthen architecture conservation.

**Phase 2 (2009-2010): Pilot Phase in Africa and Arab States**

- a) 2 regional meetings and 2 training workshops for site managers and decision-makers from Africa and Arab States on earthen architecture preservation;
- b) In situ conservation projects in Africa and Arab States addressing specific typologies and focusing on rehabilitation and management;
- c) Preparation of nomination dossiers for inscription on the World Heritage List;
- d) Laboratory research for restoration techniques;
- e) Development of a strategy to ensure an effective transfer of the Programme management to Regional training Institutions;
- f) Promotion and advocacy (books and technical guides).

**Phase 3 (2011-2014): Consolidation phase**

- a) 2 regional meetings and 2 training workshops for site managers and decision-makers on earthen architecture preservation (Latin America, Central Asia);
- b) *In situ* conservation projects addressing a specific typology and focusing on applied research and experimentation on restoration;
- c) Studies for setting-up of monitoring mechanisms;
- d) Preparation of curricula for training and educational activities in earthen architecture;
- e) Elaboration of best practices guides for earthen architecture conservation and sustainable management;
- f) Publications of series of technical books;
- g) Launching of progressive decentralization of the management: transfer of training and in-situ project activities to regional training institutions.

#### **Phase 4 (2015-2017): Final phase**

- a) Regional meetings for site managers and decision-makers on the results achieved;
- b) In situ conservation projects addressing a specific typology and focusing on applied research and experimentation on restoration;
- c) Transfer of earthen architecture conservation curricula to Universities and Regional training institutions;
- d) Synthesis of the results achieved, evaluation, conclusions, recommendations;
- e) Finalization of the publications.

#### **VII. PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT**

- 17. The programme will be managed by a steering committee composed of representatives of the main programme partners.
- 18. The World Heritage Centre will ensure overall coordination of the Programme as well as its adherence to the strategic vision. It will regularly report to the World Heritage Committee on progress. For each programme region (Arab States, Africa, Latin America, Central Asia) one of the involved training institutions will be selected as the regional secretariat. CRATerre-ENSAG will obtain a primary advisory and coordinating role in the implementation of in situ and research projects activities, and it will report back to the steering committee. ICCROM will advise on training activities and will develop training materials in collaboration with CRATerre-ENSAG. ICOMOS will coordinate all necessary studies on the World Heritage List and the tentative lists aiming at better monitoring earthen architectural sites. A scientific counselor with expertise in the field of earthen architecture conservation, recruited by the World Heritage Centre, will assure daily coordination of the work between the World Heritage Centre, Programme partners, World Heritage site managers and representatives of States Parties to the *Convention*.
- 19. The details of the management of the Programme will be decided during the preparation phase and after the partners' consultation meeting in 2008. Until then the World Heritage Centre will assure Programme coordination and management.

#### **IX. PARTNERS TO BE INVOLVED IN THE ACTIVITIES**

- 20. In addition to the major partners of the Programme, several other institutions such as the Getty Conservation Institute, the World Monuments Fund and other international NGOs will collaborate during specific activities. National institutions in charge of Cultural Heritage and local Government authorities will also be involved wherever possible.

#### **X. FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

- 21. Seed money for the Programme will be requested from the World Heritage Fund, supplemented by international donors, by national heritage and training institutions, as well as by the local authorities and communities.

#### **XI. PROPOSAL FOR THE BIENNIUM 2008-2009**

- 22. Financing from the World Heritage Fund during the biennium 2008-2009 could enable to realize the following activities of Phase 1 of the Programme:

- a) Organization of a consultation meeting (logical framework workshop) for the fine-tuning of the programme strategy and activities;
- b) Finalization of the project document and preparation of a fundraising and marketing brochure;
- c) Support participants to attend the 10th International Conference on the study and conservation of earthen architecture to be held in February 2008 in Bamako, Mali;

Budget proposed as follows (in USD):

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Budget</i>
1. Organization of a consultation meeting	20,000
2. Project document and fundraising brochure	20,000
3. Preparation and support for the 10th Terra Conference in Bamako, Mali	40,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>80,000</b>

## XII. DRAFT DECISION

### **Draft Decision: 31 COM 21C**

*The World Heritage Committee,*

1. Having examined Document WHC-07/31.COM/21C,
2. Welcomes the proposal to implement an integrated programme of activities in support of earthen architectural heritage;
3. Decides to allocate USD 80,000 from the World Heritage Fund as seed money for the implementation of Phase 1 of the Programme (namely, USD 40,000 from the 2006-2007 budget, and USD 40,000 from the 2008-2009 budget);
4. Encourages the World Heritage Centre to seek extra budgetary funds for the implementation of the proposed Programme activities;
5. Also encourages potential donors and States Parties to provide financial support for the implementation of the Programme activities;
6. Requests the Director of the World Heritage Centre to prepare a report on progress achieved in the implementation of the Programme for examination by the World Heritage Committee at its 32nd session in 2008.