

THE ARAB REGIONAL CENTRE FOR WORLD HERITAGE (ARC-WH)

I. MANDATE

The Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH) was established by the General Conference of UNESCO at its 35th session in 2009. The main objective of ARC-WH is to assist States Parties in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Arab States region along three major axes: information, assistance, and financial and logistic support.

II. PROGRESS ON INSTITUTIONAL ESTABLISHMENT

Following the Royal Decree 53/2010 which was issued on 16th December 2010, the two legislative chambers ratified the agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Bahrain. As of 23rd December 2011, all formalities related to the Agreement were completed upon the receipt of the letter of enforcement by UNESCO.

Following the entry into force of the Agreement, the first meeting of the Governing Board was held on 28 April 2012 for the approval of the internal regulations, recruit the founding team of the Centre and approve the first year work plan.

Bahrain is committed to the establishment of ARC-WH, by providing premises for the Regional Centre in its capital Manama and financially supports its functions.

III. PROGRAMMES

In the follow-up to the second cycle of Periodic Reporting, ARC-WH was identified as a key actor by the Arab States to disseminate information, facilitate capacity-building activities and provide financial assistance. Therefore ARC-WH referred to the action plans that have been developed by the State Parties in the Regional Meeting held in Rabat (March 2011) as a main source for the development of its activities. Moreover, ARC-WH has coordinated with the World Heritage Centre (WHC) to implement short-term priority initiatives.

ARC-WH has organized, facilitated, or financed a number of projects and activities throughout the year 2012, which included:

- Capacity building – ARC-WH continued its support to the WHC's regional programme in training a core expert group on the World Heritage Convention held at the WHC in October 2012. In addition, ARC-WH also supported the Advisory Bodies Regional World Heritage Workshop held in Tunisia on November 2012, which was aimed at experts from the Maghreb, who were introduced to the Convention through theoretical and practical exercises. Throughout the year, ARC-WH has also conducted training workshops on national levels, such as the National Workshop on World Heritage and Site Management in Oman, which was held on October 2012, in cooperation with ICCROM.
- Natural heritage – The Periodic Reporting has identified the importance of focusing on natural World Heritage within the Arab region, which ARC-WH has reflected within its programmes during 2012. ARC-WH joined an IUCN mission in November 2012 to Socotra, Yemen, through which an evaluation of the management plan was undertaken, and means of cooperation between the authorities in Yemen and ARC-WH were identified. ARC-WH has also hosted the Iraqi Marshlands Nomination File Preparation Workshop on December 2012, in coordination with UNESCO Iraq Office, IUCN and the WHC. This workshop aimed at identifying key elements within the nomination file, both

natural and cultural, and was part of series of workshops envisaged to engage Iraqis in the nomination process.

One of the key activities organized by ARC-WH in cooperation with the WHC was the Arab Regional Focal Points Meeting, held in Bahrain on December 2012, which brought together 19 focal points, the Advisory Bodies and programme specialists from the UNESCO field offices and other resource persons. This workshop was a great opportunity to build on the Rabat meeting (March 2011), as new proposals and ideas were exchanged. The meeting resulted in a number of projects proposed by the WHC through the support of ARC-WH for the year 2013, which were approved by the Governing Board in its Second Meeting held in Bahrain on December 2012. These projects are:

- National workshops on the establishment of a National Committee for World Heritage – Two State Parties
- National workshop to assess the Tentative List of Yemen
- National workshop on the selection of the Criteria – Palestine
- Revision of the Tentative List of Iraq to include natural sites
- Regional meeting on Cultural Landscapes – Focus on Oases / Deserts
- Regional meeting on the application of the UNESCO Recommendation on Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) in the Arab States
- Regional meeting on the role of local communities at WH Sites – Banc d’Arguin (Mauritania)
- Expert meeting to follow-up on the thematic programme: “Modern urban and architectural heritage of the Arab World” – UNESCO HQ’s
- Regional Meeting of World Heritage Focal Points – November or December 2013
- Missions to two World Heritage Sites in the Arab Region (which haven’t been through the State of Conservation process since a long time or for which updated information is not available)

IV. FOCAL POINT

The focal point designated for ARC-WH is:

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