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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-sixth session

**Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation
24 June– 6 July 2012**

**Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda: Reports of the World Heritage Centre and
Advisory Bodies**

5C. World Heritage Convention and Sustainable Development

SUMMARY

This document provides information on the developments related to the issue of World Heritage and sustainable development since the last session of the Committee. In particular, the document contains information on the outcome of the Consultative Expert Meeting on World Heritage and Sustainable Development which was held at Ouro Preto (Brazil) from 5 to 8 February 2012, at the request of the World Heritage Committee.

Draft Decision: 36 COM 5C, See Section III

I. MAIN DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE 35TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE

A. Progress in the implementation of the Paraty Action Plan

1. At its 34th session (Brasilia, 2010), the Committee had welcomed the outcome of an expert meeting on World Heritage and Sustainable Development that had taken place in Paraty (Brazil) from 29 to 31 March 2010, and which had resulted in an Action Plan (see Doc. WHC-10/34.COM/5D).
2. The Paraty Action Plan contained a number of proposed activities, to be implemented through extra-budgetary funding, aimed at mainstreaming a sustainable development perspective into the World Heritage Convention. These included the organization of a consultative expert meeting on World Heritage and Sustainable development (item (d) of the Paraty Action Plan), to be held before the 36th session of the Committee in 2012, which was eventually held in Ouro preto (Brazil), from 5 to 8 february 2012 (see Section II below).
3. At its 35th session (Paris, 2011), the Committee adopted a number of amendments to the *Operational Guidelines* that made reference to sustainable development (item (c) of the Paraty Action Plan), notably in paragraphs 112, 119, 132, as well as in Annex 5, points 4.b and 5.e. These were aimed on one hand at ensuring that any use of World Heritage properties be sustainable with respect to the imperative of maintaining their outstanding universal value (OUV), and on the other hand to affirm, as a principle, the idea that management systems of World Heritage properties should “integrate sustainable development principles”.
4. “World Heritage and Sustainable Development: the Role of Local Communities” is also the official theme for the Fortieth Anniversary of the Convention in 2012, as chosen by the States Parties to the Convention through a broad consultation in 2010/2011 and endorsed by the Committee at its 35th session (Paris, 2011) (Decision 35COM 12D).
5. Over the past months, furthermore, the World Heritage Centre has worked to ensure that heritage be taken into account in the processes leading to the formulation of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development due to take place in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 (also known as Rio + 20), as well as to the new agenda for development that will be adopted in 2015 by the international community (item (e) of the Paraty Action Plan).
6. The integration of heritage into the consultations held in preparation for the Rio + 20 have required the development of a set of arguments – supported by examples - aimed at demonstrating the relevance of cultural and natural heritage in respect to agreed specific sustainable development objectives identified by the stakeholders through hundreds of written submissions and preparatory meetings. These focused on the “green economy”, but included also resilience, sustainable cities, oceans, safe access to water and food and many other “priority areas”.
7. This was done in the framework of the larger initiative led by UNESCO for the promotion of the role of culture in development, which resulted already in two successive Resolutions by the UN General Assembly in 2010 and 2011. The strategic aim of this effort is to enhance the role of culture, and of course heritage, in development approaches to overcome the gaps and weaknesses observed in the past decade in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.
8. Concerning the recommended development of guidance and communication tools on integrating sustainable development in conservation and management strategies (item (f) of the Paraty Action Plan), ICOMOS has published, in January 2011, a “Guidance on

Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties”¹. Building on this, a World Heritage Resource Manual on Environmental Impact Assessment may be developed, if resources become available.

9. With regard to the development of collaborative initiatives among Multilateral Environmental Agreements at pilot sites that have multiple joint designation (items (j) and (k) of the Paraty Action Plan), this has so far been limited by the constraint of funds. However, a number of initiatives linking heritage conservation and sustainable development were carried out by UNESCO within individual World Heritage properties and Man and Biosphere reserves².

B. Other developments

10. The “Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the Convention, 2012-2022”, developed in the context of the reflections on the “Future of the Convention” and adopted by the 18th General Assembly (Paris, 2011), also integrates a concern for sustainable development, notably in the “Vision for 2022”, which calls for the World Heritage Convention to “contribute to the sustainable development of the world’s communities and cultures”, as well as through its Goal N.3 which reads: “Heritage protection and conservation considers present and future environmental, societal and economic needs”, which is to be achieved particularly through “connecting conservation to communities”.
11. Other developments that are related to the topic of sustainable development in a World Heritage context include the elaboration of a UNESCO-wide policy on indigenous people (still ongoing) and the holding of various official and non-official events associated to the Fortieth Anniversary of the Convention, organized by States Parties as well as academic institutions worldwide. Further information on these activities, mostly exploring ways of making communities more aware of, and involved in heritage conservation, is provided in Doc. WHC-12/36.COM/12D.
12. Worthy of mention are also the Paris Declaration on “Heritage as a Driver of Development”³, adopted by the 17th General Assembly of ICOMOS (Paris, 2011), and some of the related resolutions, notably N. 27 (on ensuring that culture and cultural heritage are acknowledged in sustainable development) and N. 30 (called “Our Common Dignity: Rights-based Approaches to heritage management”). The latter, in particular, is associated to an on-going initiative led by ICOMOS Norway aimed to make the human rights dimension more visible in heritage management and sustainable local community development, of relevance also for the World Heritage Convention.

¹ The “Guidance” is accessible online from: http://www.international.icomos.org/world_heritage/HIA_20110201.pdf

² Details on these initiatives are provided within the publication issued by UNESCO for the Rio + 20 Conference, accessible from: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002133/213311e.pdf> (pages 71-73)

³ The Paris Declaration on Heritage as a Driver of Development is accessible online from: http://www.international.icomos.org/Paris2011/GA2011_Declaration_de_Paris_EN_20120109.pdf
The resolutions adopted at the 17th General Assembly of ICOMOS are accessible online from: http://www.international.icomos.org/Paris2011/GA_2011_Resolutions_EN_finaldistr_20120109.pdf

II. OUTCOME OF THE OURO PRETO CONSULTATIVE MEETING

13. At the request of the World Heritage Committee (decisions 34 COM 5D and 35 COM 5E) and as part of the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the Convention, a consultative Meeting on “World Heritage and Sustainable Development” was held in Ouro Preto, Brazil from 5 to 8 February 2012.
14. Taking place nearly two years after Paraty, the Ouro Preto Meeting provided an opportunity to further discuss the general framework and relationship between World Heritage and sustainable development (SD) and particularly its implications for the practice of the Convention. The meeting was hosted by the Brazilian Institute for National Historic and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN) and generously supported by the Brazilian authorities and the Valle Foundation. It gathered some fifty participants, including experts from all regions of the world, Advisory Bodies, Category 2 Centres and Multilateral Environmental Agreements.
15. A Working Document was prepared in advance of the meeting by the World Heritage Centre to orient its discussions, which provided a set of definitions and formulated questions for the meeting to address. In addition, a position paper was submitted by IPHAN. The Proceedings of the Meeting, reflecting the full scope of the discussions and including the two above-mentioned documents, are available online at: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/794/>.
16. The Ouro Preto Meeting noted that preserving heritage and achieving sustainable development – intended as a development that incorporates social and environmental concerns - should not be understood as conflicting goals. The concept of heritage is indeed fundamental to the logic of sustainable development as heritage results from the dynamic and continuous relationship between communities and their environment over long periods of time, and reflects what people value to sustain and improve their quality of life.
17. With regard to cultural heritage, in particular, the Meeting stressed how this is the result of a dynamic interaction where the tangible and intangible dimensions cross over. It thus called for a more inclusive definition of heritage in the World Heritage context, which would place emphasis on its inherent relation to local communities and their wellbeing, and hence to its relevance to the notion and goals of sustainable development. This would also strengthen the operational links between the World Heritage Convention and national heritage policies aimed at improving the lives of local communities, and foster cooperation among countries on heritage conservation in the name of sustainable development.
18. The Meeting acknowledged that, in the current context of changing demographics, growing inequalities and diminishing resources, heritage institutions would need to view conservation objectives within a larger system of social and environmental values and needs encompassed in the sustainable development concept. « Ultimately - the participants in the meeting noted - if the heritage sector does not fully embrace sustainable development and harness the reciprocal benefits for heritage and society, it will find itself a victim of, rather than a catalyst for wider change ».
19. The Meeting further noted that while reference to sustainable development existed within key policy documents of the Convention, such as the recently adopted “Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of the Convention, 2012-2022” , as well as in the current *Operational Guidelines*, this is, for the time being, too general and does not provide sufficient practical guidance to those involved in the protection of World Heritage properties.
20. The participants therefore concluded that there was a need for a specific policy that would integrate a concern for sustainable development within the operational

processes of the World Heritage Convention, to be included in the *Policy Guidance* document that the Committee decided should complement the *Operational Guidelines*. This policy should take into account the outcomes of the Ouro Preto and other meetings that are taking place in the anniversary year across the world as well as of the Rio + 20 Conference, and also integrate all the reflection coming from previous and ongoing discussions on related topics such as communities, climate change, indigenous peoples, human rights, gender, etc. as far as they relate to sustainable development.

21. The aim of such a policy would be three-fold:
 - a) Ensuring that the potential of World Heritage to contribute to sustainable development is fully harnessed;
 - b) Helping practitioners, institutions, communities and networks involved in World Heritage to harness the benefits that engagement in sustainable development can deliver to World Heritage properties and other properties protected by the national states;
 - c) Ensuring that World Heritage conservation strategies and programmes are aligned with broader sustainable development goals.
22. The Ouro Preto Meeting also identified a number of 'overarching principles' that should inform this new policy, including in relation to the specific processes of the Convention. Eventually, the implementation of this policy would require that the practice of conservation incorporate a new multi-disciplinary and inter-sectoral approach, based on a fully participatory approach and integrating a consideration of social and economic dimensions through appropriate methodologies and indicators.
23. In terms of follow-up actions, the participants in the Ouro Preto Meeting recommended, inter alia, that a small expert working group be established to take the process further and develop a full policy on the integration of sustainable development into the processes of the World Heritage Convention, for consideration by the World Heritage Committee and possible inclusion in the future *Policy Guidance* document.
24. This should be complemented, if possible, by a number of other activities, building also on the recommendations of the Paraty Meeting. These activities would include the development of a set of sustainable development indicators that could be applied to heritage conservation, the carrying out of specific studies, the development of capacity-building tools and programmes, as well as of pilot initiatives at selected sites. Once completed, these actions would enable the effective implementation of the future policy for the integration of a sustainable development perspective in World Heritage processes.
25. Finally, recognising the crucial role of international cooperation in redressing imbalances and achieving sustainable development, and of the major importance of heritage in that regard, the Ouro Preto meeting recommended that the Committee add to its strategic objectives a sixth "C", for Cooperation. The Meeting also proposed the possible elaboration of a UNESCO Universal Declaration on Sustainable Development and Bio-cultural Diversity, in consideration of the close relation and interdependence between biological and cultural diversity and of the need for a better integration and learning across cultural and biodiversity related Conventions.
26. The Ouro Preto Meeting's conclusions suggest that heritage conservation, in the context of Rio + 20, could be seen as a strategy for a more sustainable development, which would foster a greener economy and more cohesive and resilient societies. World Heritage properties, in particular, could provide the testing ground where innovative approaches could be explored and best practice models developed.

27. The full text of the conclusions and recommendations of the Ouro Preto Meeting is available from its proceedings (see: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/events/794/>).

III. DRAFT DECISION

Draft Decision: 36 COM 5C

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-12/36.COM/5C,*
2. *Recalling Decisions 33 COM 14A.2, 34 COM 5D and 35 COM 5E adopted at its 33rd (Seville, 2009), 34th (Brasilia, 2010) and 35th (Paris, 2011) sessions respectively,*
3. *Welcomes the outcome of the Consultative Meeting on World Heritage and Sustainable Development held in Ouro Preto (Brazil) on 5-8 February 2012, takes note of its recommended actions and thanks the State Party of Brazil for having generously hosted this event;*
4. *Recognising that the conservation of cultural and natural heritage is of critical importance for the achievement of sustainable development in its various dimensions at global and local levels, recommends that, in full consistency with the Convention's primary objectives, the processes of the Convention should seek to appropriately integrate a sustainable development perspective to realise the full benefits of heritage to society, and the benefits of sustainable development approaches to the enhanced protection and conservation of heritage;*
5. *Requests the World Heritage Centre, with the support of the Advisory Bodies to convene a small expert working group to develop, within a year, a policy on the integration of sustainable development into the processes of the World Heritage Convention, for possible inclusion in the future Policy Guidance document. This policy should take into consideration the outcomes of the Ouro Preto Meeting, of other meetings that are taking place in the anniversary year across the world and of the Rio + 20 Conference, as well as integrate the relevant reflection from previous and ongoing discussions on related topics, in connection with the UNESCO initiative to promote the role of culture in development;*
6. *Further requests the interested State Parties to consider provision of extrabudgetary resources to enable the implementation of this and the other actions recommended by the Ouro Preto Meeting.*
7. *Also requests, within available resources, the World Heritage Centre to submit a draft of the above-mentioned policy and a report on the progress made in the implementation of other actions recommended by the Paraty and Ouro Preto meetings, for examination by the Committee no later than at its 38th session in 2014.*