

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Conference

Linking Universal and Local Values: Managing a Sustainable Future for World Heritage

Amsterdam, 22-24 May 2003

Summary

These conclusions and recommendations were agreed upon by the participants at the conference *Linking Universal and Local Values: Managing a Sustainable Future for World Heritage* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 22-24 May 2003). The conference was attended by representatives from Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Canada, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Honduras, India, Iran, Kenya, Lebanon, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mali, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Poland, Portugal, Peru, Suriname, Uganda, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN. The conference Programme and List of Participants are annexed to this document as Annex 1 and Annex 2. The abstracts and papers can be downloaded from the website <http://www.unesco.nl>.

Preamble

1. The Participants expressed their sincere gratitude to the Netherlands National Commission for UNESCO for organising the conference and to the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Sciences for its financial support, as well as to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, the Province of North-Holland and the Netherlands Committee for IUCN for their collaboration.

2. Since *The World Heritage Global Strategy Natural and Cultural Heritage Expert Meeting: Linking Nature and Culture* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 1998), there has been a shift in focus from identification of potential World Heritage sites to management and conservation in the context of development. Further emphasis has been placed on the intrinsic relationship between culture and nature, people and place, and cultural diversity.

3. The aim of the conference was to bring together a wide range of heritage professionals, active both at the theoretical and practical level of site management and conservation, in order to better understand

the connection between local values and “outstanding universal value”, on which conservation and management strategies are to be based.

4. The conference paid tribute to the broadening concept of World Heritage which is being embraced around the world - with a special focus on mixed cultural and natural properties, on cultural landscapes, on culture-nature linkages, on the involvement of local communities, on traditional management practices and knowledge, on spiritual and sacred values, and on the intangible and the stories narrated by World Heritage that are vital for the safeguarding of “outstanding universal value”.

5. In a stimulating environment of cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary exchange, case-studies highlighted the diversity of World Heritage and the great richness in the variety of management systems, challenges and innovative approaches to World Heritage conservation.

6. The conclusions and the recommendations of the conference will be transmitted to all States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, to the World Heritage Committee at its 27th Session (Paris, 30 June - 5 July 2003), to the World Heritage Centre, to other relevant UNESCO units and agencies, international organisations, as well as to the Advisory Bodies, with a request for their comment and opportunities for collaboration.

7. It is hoped that this conference will lay a cornerstone for the continued sharing of practical experience and lessons learned about different approaches to and systems of World Heritage conservation. The conference papers and summary of discussions shall be published as a compendium, providing the means by which a broad audience can access new information and knowledge, and above all gain inspiration and encouragement for the sustainable management of cultural and natural heritage.

8. The Participants:

(i) Recognize the existing frameworks, such as the intergovernmental system, the legal systems of each State Party, and the responsibility of the States Parties, and acknowledge the existence of heritage cooperation promoted by Conventions (such as the World Heritage Convention), Declarations, Recommendations and Programmes of UNESCO.

Outstanding universal and local values

(ii) Recognize that the World Heritage Convention aims to protect cultural and natural heritage of “outstanding universal value”, but underscored that the whole range of values - including local values,

intangible and spiritual values, and traditional management systems - should be fully understood, respected, and taken into account in the process of identification and sustainable management of World Heritage, as for example in Côte d'Ivoire where the NGO Croix Verte de Côte d'Ivoire has developed inventories and networks of sacred forests with the support of the government and the International Development Research Centre based in Canada.

(iii) Emphasize that universal and local values are part of a continuum, not a hierarchy, and should not be separated. Indeed, it is not viable to identify or manage universal value without acknowledging and maintaining value of place to the local peoples.

(iv) Acknowledge that World Heritage properties are dynamic entities where cultural and social values evolve. They should not be frozen in time for purposes of conservation. Indeed, the continuity between the past and future should be integrated in management systems accommodating the possibility for sustainable change, thus ensuring that the evolution of the local value of the place is not impaired.

Participation and involvement

(v) Highlight that “World Heritage is about people as well as places”. All stakeholders possibly affected by the inscription of a site on the World Heritage List should be made aware of, consulted and involved in the interpretation and assessment of its values, in the preparation and presentation of the Nomination, as well as of the management system. The Participants recommend that States Parties ascertain that measures are undertaken by the authorities to ensure that all stakeholders are informed of and fully understand all possible implications, benefits, costs and consequences of World Heritage status on their cultural and natural heritage and resources. Furthermore, all stakeholders should continue to be consulted about the protection of the site once it is inscribed on the World Heritage List.

(vi) Recognize that the inscription of a property on the World Heritage List should benefit the international and the local community as a whole, and not just some intermediaries. The benefits for the local communities need to be considered in the context of both safeguarding the values of the property and the social and economic development. The benefits can include, amongst others, respect for traditional lifestyles and investment of revenue (notably from tourism) in property, housing and educational facilities.

(vii) Further recognize that site owners and custodians play a central role in the management of World Heritage sites, and consider that their involvement is an essential prerequisite for the identification of

World Heritage value. This implies that the authorities responsible for sites and the local communities need to work together.

(viii) Agree that meaningful stakeholder consultation and involvement should be based on accepted standards and principles and on the recognition of local values and of “outstanding universal value”.

(ix) Urge that new ways be found for the voices of local communities, including indigenous peoples, to be heard, particularly in international *fora* on heritage conservation and management.

(x) Recommend that all efforts be made to maintain social structures and traditional skills that are vital for the safeguarding of World Heritage and for social and economic development.

International co-operation

(xi) Recognize that the multi-lateral and interdisciplinary approach promoted by the World Heritage Convention can lead to new opportunities for peace-building, sustainable development and international co-operation, and emphasize the need for States Parties to cooperate with each other to achieve this, as well as for international organisations to mainstream their efforts in the field of heritage conservation and management.

(xii) Recommend that coordination and cooperation between and within UN agencies (particularly UNESCO, FAO, UNDP, UNEP) and the World Bank be further enhanced, and stress the need for strengthening ties between the World Heritage Convention and other Conventions for the protection of cultural heritage and the environment, particularly the Draft Convention for the safeguarding of Intangible Heritage and the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

(xiii) Strongly encourage that the World Heritage Committee and the World Heritage Centre look into further opportunities for collaboration with other UNESCO Programmes, as for example the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) inter-sectorial initiative, and the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Reserve Programme, such as the International Network of Sacred Natural Sites for Diversity Conservation.

Management Systems

(xiv) Recognize the need to apply a diversity of management systems to World Heritage. In situations where the sustainability of local and universal values and heritage depends upon customary protection and traditional knowledge, flexible systems and approaches not necessarily based on a rigid concept

for management planning should be fostered. Traditional management systems should be used wherever they prove to be most effective for conservation and most advantageous for sustainable social and economic development of the local populations.

(xv) Recommend that greater efforts be made to share experiences of the diversity of management systems worldwide.

(xvi) Strongly advocate that management systems consider varied opportunities for social and economic development through conservation addressing the needs of local peoples, and examine the prospects for involving the local communities in managing the area around a site, as has been demonstrated at Belovezhskaya Pushcha / Bialowieza Forest (Belarus/Poland).

(xvii) Recommend that scientific research and interdisciplinary work linking culture and nature in theory and practice as a basis for management systems be strengthened, particularly with a view to reinforcing dialogue between indigenous and scientific knowledge holders to enhance biodiversity conservation and to transmit local and indigenous knowledge by education. To this effect, the example of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre's 'fieldworker network' could be advocated and promulgated wherever applicable.

Capacity-Building

(xviii) Recommend that efforts be made towards increasing the understanding of the significance of human knowledge as capital, and as a basis for sustainable conservation and development founded on respect and involvement for social and cultural values of local communities.

(xix) Agree that capacity-exchange is an essential addition to capacity-building, and to this end recognized a specific need for South-South collaboration. Hence, the unilateral (i.e. North-South) export of expertise should be avoided wherever possible.

(xx) Acknowledge that capacity-building and capacity-exchange are a continuing process, based on trust and enduring relationships that require a long-term commitment.

(xxi) Further acknowledge that capacity-building and capacity-exchange constitute a continuous dialogue between all stakeholders, that should concentrate on the development of skills, and also on awareness-raising. Capacity-building and capacity-exchange should be flexible enough to encompass the diversity of management systems, and develop the expertise of stakeholders in technical skills, as well as in other essential skills such as managerial skills.

(xxii) Appeal to the States Parties, the World Heritage Committee, the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies and all relevant agencies to further disseminate the object and purpose of the Convention and the *Operational Guidelines*, and to share the expertise acquired and lessons learned from projects with local communities and site managers.

Partnerships

(xxiii) Acknowledge that conservation and management cannot be sustainable without partnerships at all levels.

(xxiv) Recognize the fundamental role of the States Parties in establishing and implementing long-term partnerships.

(xxv) Recognize the need for sustainable support structures and financing, creating benefits and win-win situations for all, as well as the necessity of moving away from one-off project financing to built-in mechanisms.

(xxvi) Appeal to funding agencies to take local values into account for sustainable development and conservation projects.

(xxvii) Advocate the need to mainstream conservation and coordination mechanisms, building on the principals of holistic, long-term, comprehensive, ownership-based, participatory and partnership development.

(xxviii) Agree that to build partnerships for heritage conservation and management the international community needs to look at the larger picture with integration at all levels and across all sectors and constituencies, taking into account complexities and inter-dependencies and *continua*. There is a necessity to build on similarities and to share, learn and listen.

(xxix) Recommend the creation of UNESCO-World Heritage Centre scholarships for research, training and fieldwork on World Heritage properties, and asks interested States Parties to develop this proposal in association with UNESCO.

Communicating the message from Amsterdam

(xxx) Recognize the need for this agreed approach to conservation to be promulgated and publicized. Some of the approaches suggested in this document will be a challenge to others, and should therefore

be explained, discussed and advocated (as for example at the Vth World Parks Congress, Durban, South Africa, September 2003).

(xxx) Recommend that the *Operational Guidelines* and procedures, as well as the Regional action Programmes of the World Heritage Committee, be revised to clearly reflect these conclusions and make them operational.