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2 Policies Regarding CREDIBILITY of the World Heritage List

The World Heritage List is a list of cultural and natural heritage deemed to be of 'Outstanding Universal Value' as defined in the *World Heritage Convention*. It is established, updated and published by the World Heritage Committee and is drawn from national inventories, further to proposals for inscription made by the respective States Parties.

The Credibility of the List refers to it as a representative and geographically balanced testimony of cultural and natural properties of Outstanding Universal Value.

The **Credibility** theme includes policies related to the World Heritage List, such as nominations, Outstanding Universal Value, Tentative Lists, the Upstream Process, the Global Strategy or type of property, among others.

2.1 Nominations to the World Heritage List

[World Heritage Convention](#)

Article 11

1. "Every State Party to this *Convention* shall, in so far as possible, submit to the World Heritage Committee an inventory of property forming part of the cultural and natural heritage, situated in its territory and suitable for inclusion in the list provided for in paragraph 2 of this Article.
2. On the basis of the inventories submitted by States in accordance with paragraph 1, the Committee shall establish, keep up to date and publish, under the title of "World Heritage List," a list of properties forming part of the cultural heritage and natural heritage, as defined in Articles 1 and 2 of this *Convention*, which it considers as having outstanding universal value in terms of such criteria as it shall have established. An updated list shall be distributed at least every two years.
3. The inclusion of a property in the World Heritage List requires the consent of the State concerned. The inclusion of a property situated in a territory, sovereignty or jurisdiction over which is claimed by more than one State shall in no way prejudice the rights of the parties to the dispute."

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 123

"Effective and inclusive participation in the nomination process of local communities, indigenous peoples, governmental, non-governmental and private organizations and other stakeholders is essential to enable them to have a shared responsibility with the State Party in the maintenance of the property. States Parties are encouraged to prepare nominations with the widest possible participation of stakeholders and shall demonstrate, as appropriate, that the free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples has been obtained, through, inter alia, making the nominations publicly available in appropriate languages and public consultations and hearings."

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 122

"Before States Parties begin to prepare a nomination of a property for inscription on the World Heritage List, they should become familiar with the nomination cycle, described in Paragraph 168. It is desirable to carry out

initial preparatory work to establish that a property has the potential to justify Outstanding Universal Value, including integrity or authenticity, before the development of a full nomination dossier which could be expensive and time-consuming. Such preparatory work might include collection of available information on the property, thematic studies, scoping studies of the potential for demonstrating Outstanding Universal Value, including integrity or authenticity, or an initial comparative study of the property in its wider global or regional context, including an analysis in the context of the Gap Studies produced by the Advisory Bodies. This first phase of work will help to establish the feasibility of a possible nomination and avoid the use of resources on preparing nominations that may be unlikely to succeed. States Parties are encouraged to seek upstream advice from the relevant Advisory Body(ies) for this first phase as well as to contact the World Heritage Centre at the earliest opportunity in considering nominations to seek information and guidance.”

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 53

“Nominations presented to the Committee shall demonstrate the full commitment of the State Party to preserve the heritage concerned, within its means. Such commitment shall take the form of appropriate policy, legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures adopted and proposed to protect the property and its Outstanding Universal Value.”

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 50

“States Parties are invited to submit nominations of properties of cultural and/or natural value considered to be of "Outstanding Universal Value" for inscription on the World Heritage List.”

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 48

“Nominations of immovable heritage which are likely to become movable will not be considered.”

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 39

“A partnership approach, underpinned by inclusive, transparent and accountable decision-making, to nomination, management and monitoring provides a significant contribution to the protection of World Heritage properties and the implementation of the *Convention*.”

[The Budapest Declaration on World Heritage](#)

3. "(...)

b) [The World Heritage Committee invites States Parties to the *Convention* to] identify and nominate cultural and natural heritage properties representing heritage in all its diversity, for inclusion on the World Heritage List.”

[Decision of the World Heritage Committee 43 COM 5E](#)

9. "[The World Heritage Committee] Invites the Advisory Bodies to engage in effective and constructive dialogue with States Parties in the preparation of Tentative Lists, in the nomination process, including before the publication of recommendations, and post inscription (including monitoring missions), with the aim of achieving more effective credibility, transparency and better implementation of the Convention and Sustainable Development Goals."

2.2 Outstanding Universal Value

2.2.1 Outstanding Universal Value: definition and attributes

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 78

"To be deemed of Outstanding Universal Value, a property must also meet the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity and must have an adequate protection and management system to ensure its safeguarding."

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 49

"Outstanding Universal Value means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity. As such, the permanent protection of this heritage is of the highest importance to the international community as a whole. The Committee defines the criteria for the inscription of properties on the World Heritage List."

[Decision of the World Heritage Committee 43 COM 8](#)

5. "[The World Heritage Committee] Also recalling that the *Operational Guidelines* set out the conditions for inscription on the World Heritage List, strongly reiterates that only meeting criteria is not enough to warrant inscription, as to be deemed of Outstanding Universal Value a site must also meet the conditions of integrity (and authenticity) and must have an adequate protection and management system to ensure its safeguarding, as outlined in paragraph 78 of the *Operational Guidelines*;"

[Decision of the World Heritage Committee 42 COM 8](#)

3. "[The World Heritage Committee considers that], in compliance with the *Convention* and the *Operational Guidelines*, Outstanding Universal Value is recognised at the time of inscription of a property on the World Heritage List and that no recognition of Outstanding Universal Value is foreseen prior to this stage (...)."

[Decision of the World Heritage Committee 32 COM 9](#)

9. "[The World Heritage Committee] reinforces the rigorous, objective and consistent application of the three key tests to determine Outstanding Universal Value as set out in the *Operational Guidelines*:

- a) the property must meet one or more of the 10 criteria (Paragraph 77);
- b) the property must meet the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity (Paragraphs 79/95); and

c) the property must have an adequate protection and management system in place to ensure its safeguarding (Paragraph 78)."

Decision of the World Heritage Committee 30 COM 9

3. "[The World Heritage Committee], conscious that outstanding universal value is a concept that shall embrace all cultures, regions and peoples, and does not ignore differing cultural interpretations of outstanding universal value because they originate from minorities, indigenous groups and/or local peoples,

4. Recognises that the identification of outstanding universal value on the basis of the established criteria needs to be analysed also in their cultural and natural context, and that in some instances, the tangible and intangible interpretations cannot be separated."

2.2.2 World Heritage criteria

a) General

World Heritage Convention

Article 11

5. "The Committee shall define the criteria on the basis of which a property belonging to the cultural or natural heritage may be included in either of the lists mentioned in paragraphs 2 and 4 of this article."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 166

"Where a State Party wishes to have the property inscribed under additional, fewer or different criteria other than those used for the original inscription, it shall submit this request as if it were a new nomination (including the requirement to be previously included on the Tentative List – see paragraph 63 and 65). This re-nomination must be received by 1 February and will be evaluated in the full year and a half cycle of evaluation according to the procedures and timetable outlined in paragraph 168. Properties recommended will only be evaluated under the new criteria and will remain on the World Heritage List even if unsuccessful in having additional criteria recognized."

Report of the Rapporteur, World Heritage Committee, Fourth Session, 1980

19. "(...)

(a) Because of the educational and public information purposes of the World Heritage List, the criteria for the inclusion of properties in the List have been elaborated with a view to enabling the Committee to act with full independence in evaluating the intrinsic merit of a property without regard to any other consideration (including the need for technical co-operation support).

(f) The criteria for the inclusion of cultural properties in the World Heritage List should always be seen in relation to one another and should be considered in the context of the definitions set out in Article 1 of the *Convention*."

[Decision of the World Heritage Committee CONF 003 XI.35](#)

(v) "Particular attention should be given to cases which fall under criterion (vi) so that the net result would not be a reduction in the value of the List, due to the large potential number of nominations as well as to political difficulties. Nominations concerning, in particular, historical events or famous people could be strongly influenced by nationalism or other particularisms in contradiction with the objectives of the *World Heritage Convention*."

[b\) Specific considerations related to criterion \(vi\)](#)

[Report of the Rapporteur, World Heritage Committee, Third Session, 1979](#)

J. Note 11 (iii) "In order to preserve its symbolic status as a monument to all the victims, Auschwitz should, it seems, remain in isolation. In other words, we recommend that it should stand alone among cultural properties as bearing witness to the depth of horror and of suffering, and the height of heroism, and that all other sites of the same nature be symbolized through it".

Conclusions. "Sites representing the positive and negative sides of human history will only be invested with real force if we make the most remarkable into unique symbols, each one standing for the whole series of similar events".

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 77

"Criterion vi [To] be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria)."

[Decision of the World Heritage Committee CONF 003 XII.46](#)

31. "The Committee decided to enter Auschwitz concentration camp on the List as a unique site and to restrict the inscription of other sites of a similar nature."

2.2.3 Authenticity

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 86

"In relation to authenticity, the reconstruction of archaeological remains or historic buildings or districts is justifiable only in exceptional circumstances. Reconstruction is acceptable only on the basis of complete and detailed documentation and to no extent on conjecture."

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 85

"When the conditions of authenticity are considered in preparing a nomination for a property, the State Party should first identify all of the applicable significant attributes of authenticity. The statement of authenticity should assess the degree to which authenticity is present in, or expressed by, each of these significant attributes."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 84

“The use of all these sources permits elaboration of the specific artistic, historic, social, and scientific dimensions of the cultural heritage being examined. "Information sources" are defined as all physical, written, oral, and figurative sources, which make it possible to know the nature, specificities, meaning, and history of the cultural heritage.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 81

“Judgments about value attributed to cultural heritage, as well as the credibility of related information sources, may differ from culture to culture, and even within the same culture. The respect due to all cultures requires that cultural heritage must be considered and judged primarily within the cultural contexts to which it belongs.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 80

“The ability to understand the value attributed to the heritage depends on the degree to which information sources about this value may be understood as credible or truthful. Knowledge and understanding of these sources of information, in relation to original and subsequent characteristics of the cultural heritage, and their meaning as accumulated over time, are the requisite bases for assessing all aspects of authenticity.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 79

“Properties nominated under criteria (i) to (vi) must meet the conditions of authenticity. Annex 4 which includes the Nara Document on Authenticity, provides a practical basis for examining the authenticity of such properties and is summarized below.”

Decision of the World Heritage Committee CONF 003 XI.35

(iv) "The authenticity of a cultural property remains an essential criterion."

Case Law

Synthesis based on relevant Committee decisions

The World Heritage Committee recommends paying particular attention to the conservation of authenticity and to inaccurate reconstructions and the risk of over-interpretation, with regard to restoration and development works, including architectural restorations and of technical historical reconstructions (*based on Case law on decisions on Nominations*).^{1 1}

¹ See for example Decisions [37 COM 8B.41](#) , [38 COM 8B.34](#) .

The World Heritage Committee encourages the use of traditional materials and skills in restoration works and interventions (*based on Case law on decisions on the State of Conservation*).²¹

2.2.4 Integrity

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 91

“In addition, for properties nominated under criteria (vii) to (x), a corresponding condition of integrity has been defined for each criterion.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 90

“For all properties nominated under criteria (vii) - (x), bio-physical processes and landform features should be relatively intact. However, it is recognized that no area is totally pristine and that all natural areas are in a dynamic state, and to some extent involve contact with people. Biological diversity and cultural diversity can be closely linked and interdependent and human activities, including those of traditional societies, local communities and indigenous peoples, often occur in natural areas. These activities may be consistent with the Outstanding Universal Value of the area where they are ecologically sustainable.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 89

“For properties nominated under criteria (i) to (vi), the physical fabric of the property and/or its significant features should be in good condition, and the impact of deterioration processes controlled. A significant proportion of the elements necessary to convey the totality of the value conveyed by the property should be included. Relationships and dynamic functions present in cultural landscapes, historic towns or other living properties essential to their distinctive character should also be maintained.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 88

“Integrity is a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the natural and/or cultural heritage and its attributes. Examining the conditions of integrity, therefore requires assessing the extent to which the property:

- a) includes all elements necessary to express its Outstanding Universal Value;
- b) is of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features and processes which convey the property’s significance;
- c) suffers from adverse effects of development and/or neglect.

This should be presented in a statement of integrity.”

² See for example Decisions [34 COM 7B.53](#) , [38 COM 7B.52](#) , [40 COM 7B.41](#) , [41 COM 7B.46](#) , [43 COM 7A.33](#) , [43 COM 7B.76](#) .

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 87

“All properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List shall satisfy the conditions of integrity.”

Case Law

Synthesis based on relevant Committee decisions

The World Heritage Committee recommends providing a more detailed inventory of the attributes and elements of the property (*based on Case law on decisions on Nominations*).³¹

2.2.5 Protection and management

a) General

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 97

“All properties inscribed on the World Heritage List must have adequate long-term legislative, regulatory, institutional and/or traditional protection and management to ensure their safeguarding. This protection should include adequately delineated boundaries. Similarly States Parties should demonstrate adequate protection at the national, regional, municipal, and/or traditional level for the nominated property. They should append appropriate texts to the nomination with a clear explanation of the way this protection operates to protect the property.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 96

“Protection and management of World Heritage properties should ensure that their Outstanding Universal Value, including the conditions of integrity and/or authenticity at the time of inscription, are sustained or enhanced over time. A regular review of the general state of conservation of properties, and thus also their Outstanding Universal Value, shall be done within a framework of monitoring processes for World Heritage properties, as specified within the Operational Guidelines.”

b) Legislative, regulatory and contractual measures for protection

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 98

“Legislative and regulatory measures at national and local levels should assure the protection of the property from social, economic and other pressures or changes that might negatively impact the Outstanding Universal Value, including the integrity and/or authenticity of the property. States Parties should also assure the full and effective implementation of such measures.”

c) Management systems

³ See for example Decisions [32 COM 8B.28](#) , [33 COM 8B.32](#) , [34 COM 8B.11](#) , [34 COM 8B.20](#) .

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 118

“The Committee recommends that States Parties include disaster, climate change and other risk preparedness as an element in their World Heritage site management plans and training strategies.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 117

“States Parties are responsible for implementing effective management activities for a World Heritage property. States Parties should do so in close collaboration with property managers, the agency with management authority and other partners, local communities and indigenous peoples, rights-holders and stakeholders in property management, by developing, when appropriate, equitable governance arrangements, collaborative management systems and redress mechanisms.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 112

“Effective management involves a cycle of short, medium and long-term actions to protect, conserve and present the nominated property. An integrated approach to planning and management is essential to guide the evolution of properties over time and to ensure maintenance of all aspects of their Outstanding Universal Value. This approach goes beyond the property to include any buffer zone(s), as well as the broader setting. The broader setting may relate to the property’s topography, natural and built environment, and other elements such as infrastructure, land use patterns, spatial organization, and visual relationships. It may also include related social and cultural practices, economic processes and other intangible dimensions of heritage such as perceptions and associations. Management of the broader setting is related to its role in supporting the Outstanding Universal Value. Its effective management may also contribute to sustainable development, through harnessing the reciprocal benefits for heritage and society.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 111

“In recognizing the diversity mentioned above, common elements of an effective management system could include:

- a) a thorough shared understanding of the property, its universal, national and local values and its socio-ecological context by all stakeholders, including local communities and indigenous peoples;
- b) a respect for diversity, equity, gender equality and human rights and the use of inclusive and participatory planning and stakeholder consultation processes;
- c) a cycle of planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and feedback;
- d) an assessment of the vulnerabilities of the property to social, economic, environmental and other pressures and changes, including disasters and climate change, as well as the monitoring of the impacts of trends and proposed interventions;
- e) the development of mechanisms for the involvement and coordination of the various activities between different partners and stakeholders;
- f) the allocation of necessary resources;
- g) capacity building;

h) an accountable, transparent description of how the management system functions."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 110

"An effective management system depends on the type, characteristics and needs of the nominated property and its cultural and natural context. Management systems may vary according to different cultural perspectives, the resources available and other factors. They may incorporate traditional practices, existing urban or regional planning instruments, and other planning control mechanisms, both formal and informal. Impact assessments for proposed interventions are essential for all World Heritage properties."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 109

"The purpose of a management system is to ensure the effective protection of the nominated property for present and future generations."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 108

"Each nominated property should have an appropriate management plan or other documented management system which must specify how the Outstanding Universal Value of a property should be preserved, preferably through participatory means."

d) Sustainable use

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 119

"World Heritage properties may sustain biological and cultural diversity and provide ecosystem services and other benefits, which may contribute to environmental and cultural sustainability. Properties may support a variety of ongoing and proposed uses that are ecologically and culturally sustainable and which may enhance the quality of life and well-being of communities concerned. The State Party and its partners must ensure their use is equitable and fully respects the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. For some properties, human use would not be appropriate. Legislation, policies and strategies affecting World Heritage properties should ensure the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value, support the wider conservation of natural and cultural heritage, and promote and encourage the effective, inclusive and equitable participation of the communities, indigenous peoples and other stakeholders concerned with the property as necessary conditions to its sustainable protection, conservation, management and presentation."

e) Impact assessment

Decision of the World Heritage Committee 35 COM 12E

15.c) "[The World Heritage Committee encourages States Parties to] (...) be proactive in relation to development and conservation of World Heritage properties by conducting a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) at the time of nomination to anticipate the impact of any potential development on the Outstanding Universal Value."

2.2.6 Boundaries and buffer zones

a) Boundaries

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 102

"The boundaries of the nominated property may coincide with one or more existing or proposed protected areas, such as national parks or nature reserves, biosphere reserves or protected cultural or historic districts or other areas and territories. While such established areas for protection may contain several management zones, only some of those zones may satisfy requirements for inscription."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 101

"For properties nominated under criteria (vii) - (x), boundaries should reflect the spatial requirements of habitats, species, processes or phenomena that provide the basis for their inscription on the World Heritage List. The boundaries should include sufficient areas immediately adjacent to the area of Outstanding Universal Value in order to protect the property's heritage values from direct effect of human encroachments and impacts of resource use outside of the nominated area."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 100

"For properties nominated under criteria (i) - (vi), boundaries should be drawn to include all those areas and attributes which are a direct tangible expression of the Outstanding Universal Value of the property, as well as those areas which in the light of future research possibilities offer potential to contribute to and enhance such understanding."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 99

"The delineation of boundaries is an essential requirement in the establishment of effective protection of nominated properties. Boundaries should be drawn to incorporate all the attributes that convey the Outstanding Universal Value and to ensure the integrity and/or authenticity of the property."

Decision of the World Heritage Committee 35 COM 8B.46

7. "[The World Heritage Committee] considers that modifications to boundaries of World Heritage properties that are related to mining activities should be considered through the procedure for significant modifications of

boundaries, in accordance with paragraph 165 of the Operational Guidelines, given the potential impact of such projects on Outstanding Universal Value."

b) Buffer Zones

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 107

"Although buffer zones are not part of the nominated property, any modifications to or creation of buffer zones subsequent to inscription of a property on the World Heritage List should be approved by the World Heritage Committee using the procedure for a minor boundary modification (see paragraph 164 and Annex 11). The creation of buffer zones subsequent to inscription is normally considered to be a minor boundary modification."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 106

"Where no buffer zone is proposed, the nomination should include a statement as to why a buffer zone is not required."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 105

"A clear explanation of how the buffer zone protects the property should also be provided."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 104

"For the purposes of effective protection of the nominated property, a buffer zone is an area surrounding the nominated property which has complementary legal and/or customary restrictions placed on its use and development to give an added layer of protection to the property. This should include the immediate setting of the nominated property, important views and other areas or attributes that are functionally important as a support to the property and its protection. The area constituting the buffer zone should be determined in each case through appropriate mechanisms. Details on the size, characteristics and authorized uses of a buffer zone, as well as a map indicating the precise boundaries of the property and its buffer zone, should be provided in the nomination."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 103

"Wherever necessary for the proper protection of the property, an adequate buffer zone should be provided."

c) Minor modifications to the boundaries

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 164

“If a State Party wishes to request a minor modification to the boundaries of a property already on the World Heritage List, it must be prepared in compliance with the format of Annex 11 and must be received by 1 February by the Committee through the Secretariat, which will seek the evaluation of the relevant Advisory Bodies on whether this can be considered a minor modification or not. The Secretariat shall then submit the Advisory Bodies’ evaluation to the World Heritage Committee. The Committee may approve such a modification, or it may consider that the modification to the boundary is sufficiently significant as to constitute a significant boundary modification of the property, in which case the procedure for new nominations will apply.”

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 163

“A minor modification is one which has not a significant impact on the extent of the property nor affects its Outstanding Universal Value.”

d) Significant modifications to the boundaries

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 165

“If a State Party wishes to significantly modify the boundary of a property already on the World Heritage List, the State Party shall submit this proposal as if it were a new nomination (including the requirement to be previously included on the Tentative List – see paragraph 63 and 65). This re-nomination shall be presented by 1 February and will be evaluated in the full year and a half cycle of evaluation according to the procedures and timetable outlined in paragraph 168. This provision applies to extensions, as well as reductions.”

2.3 Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 74

“To implement the Global Strategy, cooperative efforts in capacity building and training for diverse groups of beneficiaries may be necessary to assist States Parties in acquiring and/or consolidating expertise in the preparation, updating and harmonization of their Tentative List and the preparation of nominations.”

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 72

“In addition, States Parties are encouraged to consult the specific thematic studies carried out by the Advisory Bodies.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 71

“Tentative Lists should be drawn selectively and on the basis of evidence that supports potential Outstanding Universal Value. States Parties are encouraged to consult the analyses of both the World Heritage List and Tentative Lists prepared at the request of the Committee by ICOMOS and IUCN to identify the gaps in the World Heritage List. These analyses could enable States Parties to compare themes, regions, geo-cultural groupings and bio-geographic provinces for prospective World Heritage properties (...).”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 59

“To promote the establishment of a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List, States Parties are requested to consider whether their heritage is already well represented on the List and if so to slow down their rate of submission of further nominations (...).”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 57

“All efforts should be made to maintain a reasonable balance between cultural and natural heritage on the World Heritage List.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 55

“The Global Strategy for a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List is designed to identify and fill the major gaps in the World Heritage List. It does this by encouraging more countries to become States Parties to the *Convention* and to develop Tentative Lists (...) and nominations of properties for inscription on the World Heritage List.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 54

“The Committee seeks to establish a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List in conformity with the four Strategic Objectives adopted by the Committee at its 26th session (Budapest, 2002).”

Recommendation of the Working Group on the Representativity of the World Heritage List, DECISION CONF 204 VI (Cairns, 2000)

“The tentative list of cultural and natural sites should be used in the future as a planning tool with a view to reducing any imbalances in the World Heritage List”.

“Regional Plans of Action should be updated and developed within the framework of the Global Strategy”.

12th General Assembly of States Parties

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1. “Agrees to give its full support for the implementation of the *Convention*, in the States Parties whose heritage is still under-represented on the List,
2. Recognizes the interest of all the States Parties and the advisory bodies in preserving the authority of the *1972 Convention*, by improving, through appropriate means, the representativity of the World Heritage List which must reflect the diversity of all cultures and ecosystems of all regions,
3. Endorses the objectives of the Global Strategy while reaffirming the sovereign rights of the States Parties and the sovereign role of the General Assembly”.

16th General Assembly of States Parties

2. "The Global Strategy proposed specifically to ‘move away from a purely architectural view of the cultural heritage of humanity towards one which was much more anthropological, multi-functional and universal”.
4. "(...) those aspects of the Global Strategy directly relevant to improving those three characteristics attributed to the List. As such, it is important to recall that:
 - Representativity refers to: *ensuring representation on the World Heritage List of properties of outstanding universal value from all regions* (2000 Working Group on the Representativity of the World Heritage List);
 - Balance refers to: *ensuring that key bio-geographical regions or events in the history of life are reflected in the World Heritage List* (Expert Meeting Parc de La Vanoise, 1996; WHC.96/CONF.201/INF.08);
 - Credibility refers to: *ensuring a rigorous application of the criteria established by the Committee for both inscription and management, and ensuring representativity and balance of sites, in order that the World Heritage List as a whole is not undermined* (Expert Meeting Parc de La Vanoise, 1996; WHC.96/CONF.201/INF.08; and as reviewed during the development of the 1992 ICOMOS Global Study)."

Decision of the World Heritage Committee 43 COM 5E

9. "[The World Heritage Committee] Invites the Advisory Bodies to engage in effective and constructive dialogue with States Parties in the preparation of Tentative Lists, in the nomination process, including before the publication of recommendations, and post inscription (including monitoring missions), with the aim of achieving more effective credibility, transparency and better implementation of the Convention and Sustainable Development Goals."

Decision of the World Heritage Committee 35 COM 12B

15. "[The World Heritage Committee] (...) recommends that States Parties already well represented on the World Heritage List should exercise restraint in bringing forward new nominations in order to achieve a better balance of the List."

Decision of the World Heritage Committee 27 COM 14

1. "(...) [The World Heritage Committee decides to focus on] improving the geographic distribution of properties on the World Heritage List (...)."

[Decision of the World Heritage Committee CONF 203 X](#)

X.2 "(...) The Committee, in the light of earlier discussions:

- invites States Parties to nominate types of sites presently under-represented on the World Heritage List;
- invites States Parties attending the World Heritage Committee and its Bureau to be represented by both cultural and natural heritage specialists;
- requests States Parties to communicate regularly to the Centre updated addresses of the national institutions primarily responsible for cultural and natural heritage;
- asks the World Heritage Centre to undertake efforts to strengthen the links to natural heritage institutions in States Parties to the *Convention*;
- requests the Centre to work on an overall global strategy for natural heritage in close cooperation with IUCN and ICOMOS."

[Decision of the World Heritage Committee CONF 203 IX.1](#)

IX.22 "(...)

2) The Committee stressed the urgent need to establish a representative World Heritage List and considered it imperative to ensure more participation of those States Parties whose heritage is currently underrepresented on the World Heritage List. The Committee requested the Centre and the advisory bodies to actively consult with these States Parties to encourage and support their active participation in the implementation of the Global Strategy for a credible and representative World Heritage List through the concrete regional actions described in the Global Strategy Action Plan adopted by the Committee at its twenty-second session".

2.4 Upstream Process

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 122 [footnote]

"Upstream Process: In relation to the nomination of sites for inscription on the World Heritage List, the "Upstream Process" comprises advice, consultation and analysis that occurs prior to the preparation of a nomination and is aimed at reducing the number of nominations that experience significant problems during the evaluation process. The basic principle of the Upstream Process is to enable the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre to provide guidance and capacity building directly to States Parties, throughout the whole process leading up to the preparation of a possible World Heritage nomination. For the upstream support to be effective, it should be undertaken from the earliest stage in the nomination process, at the moment of the preparation or revision of the States Parties' Tentative Lists.

The purpose of the advice given in the context of a nomination is limited to providing guidance on the technical merit of the nomination and the technical framework needed, in order to offer the State(s) Party(ies) the essential tools that enable it(them) to assess the feasibility and/or actions necessary to prepare a possible nomination.

Requests for the Upstream Process shall be submitted using the official format (Annex 15 of the *Operational Guidelines*). Should the number of requests exceed the capacity, then the prioritization system as per paragraph 61.c will be applied."

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 122

“Before States Parties begin to prepare a nomination of a property for inscription on the World Heritage List, they should become familiar with the nomination cycle, described in Paragraph 168. It is desirable to carry out initial preparatory work to establish that a property has the potential to justify Outstanding Universal Value, including integrity or authenticity, before the development of a full nomination dossier which could be expensive and time-consuming. Such preparatory work might include collection of available information on the property, thematic studies, scoping studies of the potential for demonstrating Outstanding Universal Value, including integrity or authenticity, or an initial comparative study of the property in its wider global or regional context, including an analysis in the context of the Gap Studies produced by the Advisory Bodies. This first phase of work will help to establish the feasibility of a possible nomination and avoid the use of resources on preparing nominations that may be unlikely to succeed. States Parties are encouraged to seek upstream advice from the relevant Advisory Body(ies) for this first phase as well as to contact the World Heritage Centre at the earliest opportunity in considering nominations to seek information and guidance.”

[Decision of the World Heritage Committee 41 COM 9A](#)

4. “[The World Heritage Committee] (...) recalls that, in order to be effective, the upstream support should ideally take place at an early stage, preferably at the moment of the preparation or revision of the States Parties’ Tentative Lists.”

2.5 Tentative Lists

[World Heritage Convention](#)

Article 11

1. “Every State Party to this *Convention* shall, in so far as possible, submit to the World Heritage Committee an inventory of property forming part of the cultural and natural heritage, situated in its territory and suitable for inclusion in the list provided for in paragraph 2 of this Article. This inventory, which shall not be considered exhaustive, shall include documentation about the location of the property in question and its significance.”

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 73

“States Parties are encouraged to harmonize their Tentative Lists at regional and thematic levels. Harmonization of Tentative Lists is the process whereby States Parties, with the assistance of the Advisory Bodies, collectively assess their respective Tentative List to review gaps and identify common themes. The harmonization has considerable potential to generate fruitful dialogue between States Parties and different cultural communities, promoting respect for common heritage and cultural diversity and can result in improved Tentative Lists, new nominations from States Parties and cooperation amongst groups of States Parties in the preparation of nominations.”

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 70

“Tentative Lists are a useful and important planning tool for States Parties, the World Heritage Committee, the Secretariat, and the Advisory Bodies, as they provide an indication of future nominations.”

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 68

“(…) The sole responsibility for the content of each Tentative List lies with the State Party concerned. The publication of the Tentative Lists does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of the World Heritage Committee or of the World Heritage Centre or of the Secretariat of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its boundaries.”

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 65

“States Parties shall submit Tentative Lists to the Secretariat, at least one year prior to the submission of any nomination. States Parties are encouraged to re-examine and re-submit their Tentative List at least every ten years.”

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 64

“States Parties are encouraged to prepare their Tentative Lists with the full, effective and gender-balanced participation of a wide variety of stakeholders and rights-holders, including site managers, local and regional governments, local communities, indigenous peoples, NGOs and other interested parties and partners. In the case of sites affecting the lands, territories or resources of indigenous peoples, States Parties shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before including the sites on their Tentative List.”

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 63

“Nominations to the World Heritage List are not considered unless the nominated property has already been included on the State Party's Tentative List.”

[Operational Guidelines](#)

Paragraph 62

“A Tentative List is an inventory of those properties situated on its territory which each State Party considers suitable for nomination to the World Heritage List. States Parties should therefore include, in their Tentative Lists, details of those properties which they consider to be of potential Outstanding Universal Value and which they intend to nominate during the following years.”

[Decision of the World Heritage Committee 41 COM 8A](#)

2. "Stressing the importance of the process of revision and updating of Tentative Lists, as a tool for regional harmonisation of the World Heritage List and long-term planning of its development,

3. [The World Heritage Committee] encourages States Parties to seek as early as possible upstream advice from the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies during the development or revision of their Tentative Lists as appropriate."

2.6 Comparative studies

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 132

3. Justification for Inscription

"[For a nomination to be considered as "complete", the following requirements (see format in Annex 5) are to be met:] (...) In section 3.2, a comparative analysis of the property in relation to similar properties, whether or not on the World Heritage List, both at the national and international levels, shall be provided. The comparative analysis shall explain the importance of the nominated property in its national and international context."

Decision of the World Heritage Committee 7 EXT.COM 4A

III. COMPARATIVE ANALYSES

7. "[The World Heritage Committee] decides that comparative analyses by States Parties as part of the nomination dossier shall be undertaken in relation to similar properties, whether or not on the World Heritage List, both at the national and international levels."

Decision of the World Heritage Committee CONF 003 XI.35

(ii) "In its justification of the outstanding universal value of the property nominated, each State should, whenever possible, undertake a sufficiently wide comparison."

Case Law

Synthesis based on relevant Committee decisions

The World Heritage Committee recommends undertaking a deep comparative analysis in order to demonstrate the Outstanding Universal Value of the property by fully assessing the relative values of the nominated property against other sites (*based on Case law on decisions on Nominations*).^{4 1}

2.7 Types of World Heritage properties

2.7.1 Cultural, Natural and Mixed Properties

⁴ See for example Decisions [34 COM 8B.3](#) , [34 COM 8B.7](#) , [35 COM 8B.16](#) , [36 COM 8B.35](#) , [37 COM 8B.11](#) , [37 COM 8B.17](#) , [37 COM 8B.21](#) , [38 COM 8B.17](#) , [38 COM 8B.18](#) , [38 COM 8B.22](#) .

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 46

"Properties shall be considered as "mixed cultural and natural heritage" if they satisfy a part or the whole of the definitions of both cultural and natural heritage laid out in Articles 1 and 2 of the *Convention*."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 45

"Cultural and natural heritage are defined in Articles 1 and 2 of the World Heritage Convention.

Article 1

For the purposes of this Convention, the following shall be considered as "cultural heritage";

- monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and of man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological points of view.

Article 2

For the purposes of this Convention, the following shall be considered as "natural heritage":

- natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of Outstanding Universal Value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;
- geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation;
- natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty."

Decision of the World Heritage Committee 41 COM 9B

4. "[The World Heritage Committee] reiterates that due to the complexity of mixed site nominations and their evaluation, States Parties should ideally seek prior advice from IUCN and ICOMOS, if possible at least two years before a potential nomination is submitted, in compliance with Paragraph 122 of the Operational Guidelines."

2.7.2 Transboundary and transnational properties

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 136

"Extensions to an existing World Heritage property located in one State Party may be proposed to become transboundary properties."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 135

“Wherever possible, transboundary nominations should be prepared and submitted by States Parties jointly in conformity with Article 11.3 of the *Convention*. It is highly recommended that the States Parties concerned establish a joint management committee or similar body to oversee the management of the whole of a transboundary property.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 134

“A nominated property may occur:

- a) on the territory of a single State Party, or
- b) on the territory of all concerned States Parties having adjacent borders (transboundary property).”

Decision of the World Heritage Committee 29 COM 18A

3. “[The World Heritage Committee] aware of the need to specify the submission modalities for the nomination of transboundary or transnational serial properties on the World Heritage List,

4. (...):

- a) The States Parties co-authors of a transboundary or transnational serial nomination can choose, amongst themselves and with a common understanding, the State Party which will be bearing this nomination; and
- b) This nomination can be registered exclusively within the ceiling of the bearing State Party.”

Decision of the World Heritage Committee 7 EXT.COM 4A

“II. TRANSBOUNDARY AND TRANSNATIONAL NOMINATIONS

6) [The World Heritage Committee] decides to consider as:

(a) transboundary nomination, only a property jointly nominated as such, in conformity with Article 11.3 of the *Convention*, by all concerned States Parties having adjacent borders;

(b) transnational nomination, a serial nomination of properties located in the territory of different States Parties, which need not be contiguous and which are nominated with the consent of all States Parties concerned”.

2.7.3 Serial properties

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 139

“Serial nominations, whether from one State Party or multiple States, may be submitted for evaluation over several nomination cycles, provided that the first property nominated is of Outstanding Universal Value in its own right. States Parties planning serial nominations phased over several nomination cycles are encouraged to inform the Committee of their intention in order to ensure better planning.”

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 138

"A serial nominated property may occur:

- a) on the territory of a single State Party (serial national property); or
- b) within the territory of different States Parties, which need not be contiguous and is nominated with the consent of all States Parties concerned (serial transnational property)."

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 137

"Serial properties will include two or more component parts related by clearly defined links:

- a) Component parts should reflect cultural, social or functional links over time that provide, where relevant, landscape, ecological, evolutionary or habitat connectivity.
- b) Each component part should contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value of the property as a whole in a substantial, scientific, readily defined and discernible way, and may include, inter alia, intangible attributes. The resulting Outstanding Universal Value should be easily understood and communicated.
- c) Consistently, and in order to avoid an excessive fragmentation of component parts, the process of nomination of the property, including the selection of the component parts, should take fully into account the overall manageability and coherence of the property (see paragraph 114).

and provided it is the series as a whole – and not necessarily the individual parts of it – which are of Outstanding Universal Value."

Decision of the World Heritage Committee 41 COM 8B.50

2. "[The World Heritage Committee notes] that some large complex serial transnational nominations may benefit from an agreed nomination strategy before their official submission, (...);

5. [The World Heritage Committee] emphasizes that, if and when, it takes note of a nomination strategy, this is not prejudicial and does not imply that the complex serial transnational nominations proposed would necessarily lead to an inscription on the World Heritage List."

Decision of the World Heritage Committee CONF 016 VI.18-20

19. "(...)

(e) States Parties may propose in a single nomination a series of cultural properties in different geographical locations, provided that they are related because they belong : (i) to the same historico-cultural group or (ii) to the same type of property which is characteristic of the geographical zone and provided that it is the series as such and not its components taken individually, which is of outstanding universal value."

Decision of the World Heritage Committee CONF 003 XI.35

35. (i) "States Parties may propose in one single nomination several individual cultural properties, which may be in different geographical locations but which should:

- be linked because they belong to the same historic-cultural group, or
- be the subject of a single safeguarding project, or
- belong to the same type of property characteristic of the zone

(...)

Each State Party submits only the cultural properties situated on its territory (even if these properties belong to an ensemble which goes beyond its borders) but it may come to an agreement with another State Party in order to make a joint submission".

2.7.4 Cultural Landscapes

a) General

Operational Guidelines

Annex 3

7. "[Cultural Landscapes] ... should be selected on the basis both of their Outstanding Universal Value and of their representativity in terms of a clearly defined geo-cultural region and also for their capacity to illustrate the essential and distinct cultural elements of such regions".

9. "Cultural landscapes often reflect specific techniques of sustainable land-use, considering the characteristics and limits of the natural environment they are established in, and a specific spiritual relation to nature. Protection of cultural landscapes can contribute to modern techniques of sustainable land-use and can maintain or enhance natural values in the landscape. The continued existence of traditional forms of land-use supports biological diversity in many regions of the world".

Operational Guidelines

Paragraph 47

"Cultural landscapes are cultural properties and represent the "combined works of nature and of man" designated in Article 1 of the *Convention*. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal."

Case Law

Synthesis based on relevant Committee decisions

The World Heritage committee recommends addressing landscape surveys and the historic evolution of the landscape, as a holistic reflection of history and cultural traditions and of the interaction between culture and nature, including the way the landscape has been shaped by human practices and natural resources (*based on Case law on decisions on Nominations*).¹

b) Historic Urban Landscapes

¹ See for example Decisions [31 COM 8B.28](#) , [31 COM 8B.33](#) .

Decision of the World Heritage Committee 29 COM 5D

"The World Heritage Committee, (...)

4. Encourages States Parties to integrate the notion of historic urban landscape in nomination proposals and in the elaboration of management plans of properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List;
5. Also encourages States Parties to integrate the principles expressed in the Vienna Memorandum into their heritage conservation policies;
6. Requests the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre to take into account the conservation of the historic urban landscape when reviewing any potential impact on the integrity of an existing World Heritage property, and during the nomination evaluation process of new sites."

ANNEX I. List of documents and texts

[Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage](#)

[OG Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention \(WHC.19/01 - 10 July 2019\)](#)

[CC-79/CONF.003/11 Principles and criteria for inclusion of properties on World Heritage List](#)

[WHC-02/CONF.202/5 The Budapest Declaration on World Heritage](#)

[Working Group on the Representativity of the World Heritage List](#)

[WHC-99/CONF.206/7 Summary Record of the 12th General Assembly of States Parties](#)

[WHC.07/16.GA/9 Progress in the implementation of the Global strategy for a representative, balanced and credible World Heritage List](#)

[Decision 43 COM 8](#)

[Decision 43 COM 5E](#)

[Decision 42 COM 8](#)

[Decision 41 COM 9B](#)

[Decision 41 COM 9A](#)

[Decision 41 COM 8B.50](#)

[Decision 41 COM 8A](#)

[Decision 35 COM 12E](#)

[Decision 35 COM 12B](#)

[Decision 35 COM 8B.46](#)

[Decision 32 COM 9](#)

[Decision 30 COM 9](#)

[Decision 29 COM 18A](#)

[Decision 29 COM 5D](#)

[Decision 7 EXT.COM 4A](#)

[Decision 27 COM 14](#)

[Decision 19 COM X](#)

[Decision 22 COM IX1](#)

[Decision 4 COM VI.18-20](#)

[Decision 3 COM XII.46](#)

[Decision 3 COM XI.35](#)

[Decision 37 COM 8B.41](#)

[Decision 38 COM 8B.34](#)

[Decision 32 COM 8B.28](#)

[Decision 33 COM 8B.32](#)

[Decision 34 COM 8B.11](#)

[Decision 34 COM 8B.20](#)

[Decision 34 COM 8B.3](#)

[Decision 34 COM 8B.7](#)

[Decision 35 COM 8B.16](#)

[Decision 36 COM 8B.35](#)

[Decision 37 COM 8B.11](#)

[Decision 37 COM 8B.17](#)

[Decision 37 COM 8B.21](#)

[Decision 38 COM 8B.17](#)

[Decision 38 COM 8B.18](#)

[Decision 38 COM 8B.22](#)

[Decision 31 COM 8B.28](#)

[Decision 31 COM 8B.33](#)

[Decision 34 COM 7B.53](#)

[Decision 38 COM 7B.52](#)

[Decision 40 COM 7B.41](#)

[Decision 41 COM 7B.46](#)

[Decision 43 COM 7B.76](#)

[Decision 43 COM 7A.33](#)