



# Statement of the World Heritage Site Managers' Forum

the 41. Session of World Heritage Committee in Kraków

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**30 June – 6 July 2017**

## **PREAMBLE**

The Site Managers' Forum was held in Kraków from 30 June to 6 July 2017, and united lectures from Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre with case study presentations by the participants and much stimulating debate. Participation at the Committee sessions and discussions was also an essential component.

The participants, site managers from all regions of the world, expressed their thanks to the organisers and the host country for this valuable opportunity and their generous hospitality.

The platform offered by the Forum has brought the participants to highlight the vital role of furthering capacity building throughout our sector, at an international, national and local level. It is fundamental to achieve alignment of strategic visions at international and national levels with site management, both among authorities and between authorities and civic society. The goals of the World Heritage Convention cannot be fully achieved without effective co-operation between all these players.

The participants' discussions led them to identify a rich series of opportunities during the Forum. They present these considerations in this document under three main themes: the World Heritage (eco) system, World Heritage processes and capacity building.

The participants would like to bring the World Heritage Committee's particular attention to the most important proposal that emerged. They request approval for the creation of a network/federation/alliance for World Heritage Site Managers hosted within the capacity-building mandate of the relevant Advisory Bodies. Building on regional dialogue through the year, representatives of this community should meet annually, preferably in conjunction with the World Heritage Committee Sessions, with a view to sharing experiences, evaluating the progress in the implementation of the recommendations, discussing specific needs and developing tools and learning resources etc.

The participants recognized, in particular, the need to:

## 1.0 THE WORLD HERITAGE (ECO) SYSTEM

- Promote open dialogue, clear communication channels and information sharing. Lack of communication and involvement is an enemy of trust and it destroys relationships. Open and clear communication and inter-cultural understanding helps to promote peace and cooperation at all levels of site management.
- Commit to credible and transparent decision-making process through community and stakeholder involvement, including credible local beneficiary models which match local community aspirations for tangible benefits.
- Create a mechanism for a holistic approach to integrate nature, culture and people linkages.
- Better integrate all levels to effectively implement the World Heritage Convention, and foster bottom-up leadership processes in order to address and overcome site managers' perception of disconnections between what they are trying to achieve at a local level and the systems operating at national and international levels.

## 2.0 WORLD HERITAGE PROCESSES

- Ensure the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies respond within a fixed timescale in order to influence decision making in a timely way, in order to maintain the credibility and effectiveness of the system.
- Intervene earlier in the monitoring process via other, proactive measures, in addition to Danger Listing, that encourage international co-operation and peer learning from other sites. 'Desired State of Conservation' would work better as a separate set of measures prior to Danger Listing, not after; and constructed as a shared process between local, national and international levels.
- Appoint the right specialist teams for Advisory and Reactive Monitoring to address the specific nature of the challenges in question, including people from similar sites with comparable situations, and who can understand the local conditions in order to be able to produce accurate and feasible solutions.
- Implement a co-operative process between the sites and the Advisory Bodies, where they work together on an informal, unpublished report before the final State of Conservation (SoC) report for the World Heritage Committee is completed. The system should include feedback on the quality of SoC reports to make the process more mutually beneficial and avoid demotivating some levels of management.
- Encourage the World Heritage Centre and relevant Advisory Bodies to ensure Advisory Missions happen within a timescale necessary for successful resolution of the situation, so that recommendations can be effective.
- Ensure site managers are provided with the necessary information and support before the Periodic Reporting process starts, including reiterating Periodic Reporting's purpose and precisely how the information is used.
- Ensure the system is sufficiently flexible to accommodate the variety of sites on the World Heritage List, and reiterate that some challenges are also opportunities.

### 3.0 CAPACITY BUILDING

- Ensure that State Parties, in collaboration with World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies, devise capacity-building programmes that meet the needs of the different management levels and diverse audiences with a view to:
  - improving understanding of the management and monitoring systems of the diversity of World Heritage properties;
  - developing effective conservation approaches aligned with sustainable development goals and more responsive to community needs
- Mobilize the State Parties to secure financial resources to adapt international learning resources and exchanges (including World Heritage procedures such as SoC, Reactive and Advisory Missions and Periodic Reporting) and to enhance better international assistance (also through high-level capacity building) to secure greater national/site-level benefits.
- Encourage universities and providers of professional training to collaborate with site managers to share the research, knowledge and practice available in both sectors for mutual benefits.
- Prioritize knowledge areas to be addressed include negotiating skills for consensus building, conflict resolution, mitigation and compromise among relevant authorities and all stakeholders at all levels.
- Recognize that the standards of conservation and management developed for World Heritage Properties should be a catalyst for greater effectiveness in caring for all heritage. Particular attention should be paid to the most challenging heritage typologies that can also present the greatest potential for our sector to achieve significant goals in other spheres. An example is that of sites of remembrance that have a particular place in our collective conscience and recall the capacity of the heritage sector, when working with civic society, to contribute to social cohesion and cross-border cooperation in remarkable ways.
- Develop, update and disseminate in a participatory way a database of knowledge of 'hands-on' experience and case studies within the capacity-building mandate of the relevant Advisory Bodies and with particular attention paid to the following thematic areas:
  - models of socio-economic development (and relative monitoring) that have achieved greater wellbeing for communities and been compatible with safeguarding OUV including integrity and authenticity,
  - best practice in community involvement and engagement in site management,
  - examples of successful interventions by the international community and good practice in conflict resolution, and how this has increased local stakeholder faith in the importance of heritage designation, and promoted social cohesion,
  - examples of good practice in addressing and solving conservation, technical and management challenges,
  - heritage impact assessments and their integration with SEA's and EIA's.