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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-seventh session

Phnom Penh, Cambodia
16 - 27 June 2013

Item 18 of the Agenda: Forthcoming sessions of the World Heritage Committee

18B. Feasibility study on an additional ordinary session of the World Heritage Committee

SUMMARY

By its Decision **36 COM 12B** (paragraph 6), the Committee decided to “assess the feasibility of an ordinary session in October/November 2013, as requested in its Decision 35 COM 12B paragraph 9c, at its 37th session (June/July 2013)”. Paragraph 9 of Decision **35 COM 12B** reads as follows:

“ 9. three regular (not extended) sessions of the Committee should be held each biennium as follows:

a) Even years – host country; agenda: reports, budget, nomination and state of conservation reports,

b) Odd years – host country; agenda: reports, budget, nomination and state of conservation reports, and

c) Odd years – UNESCO Headquarters immediately after the General Assembly, (which should be held within the period of UNESCO’s General Conference); agenda: strategic and policy issues and as necessary, reports on the state of conservation needing urgent examination”.

The present document contains information regarding the feasibility of an additional ordinary session of the World Heritage Committee in October/November 2013.

Draft Decision: 37 COM 18B, see Point III.

I. BACKGROUND

1. On numerous occasions, the Committee discussed the holding of additional sessions in the framework of its reflection on its working methods, to allow a more efficient and effective management of the increased workload of its two ordinary sessions per biennium. For the sake of clarity, only the most recent decisions taken by the Committee in this regard are referred to in the present document.

2. At its 33rd session (Seville, 2009), the World Heritage Committee, by Decision **33 COM 14.A2**, requested the World Heritage Centre to undertake a feasibility study to examine in-depth the concept and implications of holding two sessions of the Committee per year, and also to examine other options for a more efficient and effective management of the increasing workload of the Committee.

3. An agenda item on a *Feasibility Study on the working methods of the Committee – Possibility of holding two annual sessions of the World Heritage Committee* was examined by the Committee at its 34th session. By Decision **34 COM 14**, the Committee proposed the consideration of this issue by the Working Group on the Future of the *World Heritage Convention*, created as a Consultative Body.

4. In the framework of the Reflection on the Future of the *World Heritage Convention*, this issue was considered by the expert meeting on decision-making procedures of the statutory organs of the *World Heritage Convention*, which was held in Bahrain in December 2010. The meeting recommended that:

“Three regular (not extended) sessions of the Committee should be held each biennium as follows:

a) Even years – host country; agenda: reports, budget, nomination and state of conservation reports

b) Odd years – host country; agenda: reports, budget, nomination and state of conservation reports,

c) Odd years – UNESCO Headquarters immediately after the General Assembly, (which should be held within the period of UNESCO’s General Conference and not after it as in 2009); agenda: strategic and policy issues”.

5. This recommendation was adopted by the Committee at its 35th session by **Decision 35 COM 12B** with a slight amendment to paragraph 9c which reads as follows:

“c) Odd years – UNESCO Headquarters immediately after the General Assembly, (which should be held within the period of UNESCO’s General Conference); agenda: strategic and policy issues and as necessary, reports on the state of conservation needing urgent examination;”

6. Following this Decision, the Committee at its 36th session, decided to “*assess the feasibility of an ordinary session in October/November 2013, as requested in its Decision 35 COM 12B paragraph 9c, at its 37th session (June/July 2013)*” (Decision **36 COM 12B** (paragraph 6)).

II. FEASIBILITY OF AN ADDITIONAL ORDINARY SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE IN OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2013

7. The advantages and disadvantages of an additional annual session of the Committee, as presented in Working Document WHC-10/34.COM/14, were examined in detail by the Committee at its 34th session in 2010.

8. If the major advantage of holding an additional session of the Committee can be reiterated - i.e.:this would decongest the overloaded agenda of the Committee sessions and will allow more serene debates and decision making - the disadvantages of organizing an additional session can also be reiterated and should be clearly examined and taken into account notably in view of the financial constraints that UNESCO is currently facing. In this regard, it should be recalled that:

- Additional costs: direct and indirect costs will be doubled by the preparation and holding of an additional session (The estimate of the cost of an ordinary session of the World Heritage Committee to be held at UNESCO Headquarters is included as an Annex to the present document for easy reference).
- Time should be considered as the most important resource for the organization of an additional session, in addition to direct costs. Indeed, time spent on the technical preparation as well as on the content of the session implies indirect costs (i.e notably staff involvement).
- Due to the heavy workload and the existing statutory deadlines, the Secretariat as well as the Advisory Bodies, are subject to very short timeframes which leaves little room for the addition of new statutory dates. It should be reiterated in this regard that, as indicated in all the external as well as internal Audit reports, notably regarding management, the workload of the World Heritage Centre keeps constantly being increasing. An additional session will not give the States Parties, Advisory Bodies, and Secretariat adequate time to follow-up and implement the decision taken at that session.
- Last but not least, the considerable risk of lack of coherence between the sessions, as each session should be taken into account would deal with different subjects (technical versus administrative and financial) would call upon different competencies, obliging the States Parties to send different experts to each of the sessions. In this regard, there could be a considerable risk of lack of coordination and losing a view of the overall picture.
- Finally, the costs of the ordinary Committee sessions are borne by hosting States Parties to a great extent; in case the Committee wishes to add an additional ordinary session during the years of the General Assembly, the financial resources necessary for that session need to be identified accordingly.

III. DRAFT DECISION

Draft Decision: 37 COM 18B

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-13/37.COM/18B,*
2. *Recalling Decision **36 COM 12B**, adopted at its 36th session;*
3. *Considering the costs inherent to the holding of an additional ordinary session of the World Heritage Committee and the financial situation that UNESCO, including its World Heritage Centre, is facing;*
4. *Decides not to hold an additional ordinary session in October/November 2013,*
5. *Requests the World Heritage Centre to reassess the eventual possibility of holding an additional ordinary session of this Committee in 2015 and to present a report on this issue at its 39th session in 2015.*

ANNEX

Estimated costs for an ordinary session of the World Heritage Committee to be organized at UNESCO Headquarters.

Session of the World Heritage Committee 11 days meeting, 2 languages 1300 participants, 21 Committee members	
Interpretation English/French	\$120,000.00
Translation (+Translator) English/French	\$110,000.00
Production of documents	\$10,000.00
Typist	\$10,000.00
Temporary assistance WHC	\$12,000.00
Webcasting	\$40,000.00
Technicians	\$14,000.00
Electricity, Heating, Air Conditioning, Fire Protection (overtime)	\$9,000.00
Cleaning, Personnel for Conference Room	\$20,000.00
Security services	\$30,000.00
Personnel (overtime)	\$30,000.00
USB Keys for Participants, Badges	\$11,000.00
Hospitality/Catering	\$20,000.00
Total	\$436,000.00

**NB: It should be noted that these estimated costs include some of the costs that are usually met by the Host country, such as on-site documents printing, USB keys for participants, webcasting, security services, badges, clerks, movers (reference made to the Host Country Agreement and the Statement of Requirements).*