

World Heritage

AT THE IUCN WORLD PARKS CONGRESS 2014

The Promise of Sydney

Over 6,000 participants from over 170 countries

met at the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014 in Sydney, Australia.

Recognising World Heritage properties as the world's most iconic natural areas with highest degree of international recognition and prestige, World Heritage was one of the four cross-cutting themes during this once-in-a-decade event, organised from 12 to 19 November 2014.

The IUCN World Parks Congress 2014 set the agenda for World Heritage sites to deliver conservation success during the decade to come, endorsed in the Promise of Sydney. As flagships of the world's protected areas, World Heritage sites can be the learning laboratories and a source of inspiration for the global protected area network, demonstrating best practice in various aspects of planning and management of protected areas.

World Heritage site managers, including those responsible for marine heritage properties, and experts from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Arab region, Europe and North America attended the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney thanks to generous contributions from the Netherlands Funds-In-Trust and UNESCO/Flanders Trust Fund available at the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Their contribution also made this document possible.

The World Heritage Centre has previously published proceedings from the IUCN World Parks Congress 2003, held in Durban, South Africa, which culminated in the Durban Action Plan. It subsequently served as the basis for the Natural Heritage Strategy of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.





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The Promise of Sydney

Following the deliberations of the Congress, the Promise of Sydney rallied the high-level aspirations and recommendations for the change we need in the coming decade to enhance implementation of conservation and development goals for parks, people and the planet.

Captured from the boldest thinking of governments, international organisations, communities, civil society leaders and indigenous peoples, the four pillars of the **Promise of Sydney** collectively represent the outcomes of the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014. These pillars – a core vision for the future we want to see, a set of innovative approaches to solving some of the world's most elusive challenges, commitments to advancing this change for people, protected areas and the planet, and solutions that provide evidence this change is in fact within our reach – collectively represent the direction and blueprint for a decade of change that emanate from the deliberations of this World Parks Congress.

Originally proposed by a youth leader in the preparations for the Congress, the Promise of Sydney is a deliberate step away from the

usual declaration and action plan so familiar to these events. The Promise of Sydney is at once representative of the promise we will make to our children and our belief in a promising future for all.

Each of the eight streams and four cross-cutting themes involved in the Congress contributed content and direction to the Promise of Sydney ahead of the IUCN World Parks Congress. Each stream elaborated on its own ambitious set of innovative approaches to change, integrating the input of the cross-cutting perspectives, and using this outline to prepare an incisive debate of the issues at the Congress.

The Promise of Sydney management team collated and synthesised the proposals throughout the World Parks Congress to formulate the final vision for the Promise of Sydney, and presented this vision in the final plenary of the Congress. Through the collective innovative approaches, promises and solutions activated by our world community, elements of the Promise of Sydney are communicated into the most important policy, institutional and community forums moving forward.

World Heritage agenda for the next decade

The Promise of Sydney for World Heritage sites agreed at the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014 is to secure the highest level of international protection for our most iconic natural areas, and to provide exemplary leadership within the protected areas movement on land and in the oceans. Delivering this promise is the litmus test: if we allow World Heritage sites to be degraded, this would constitute a clear failure of the conservation movement.

In order to change the dynamic for World Heritage, we all have to act together and make the conservation of these outstanding places a global, joint responsibility shared by States Parties, the private sector (including extractive industries), civil society, local communities and indigenous peoples. To be successful, we need to commit to World Heritage as a common purpose.

Such ambition is nothing new. The very foundation of the World Heritage Convention in 1972 was motivated by a willingness to recognise places of Outstanding Universal Value and, through an international mechanism, keep them intact for future generations.

In 2014, pressure from threats is mounting while the number of sites added to the prestigious list has grown past the 1,000-mark. Imbalance between development needs and conservation concerns, illegal wildlife trade and conflict are only few of the frequently cited challenges impeding effective World Heritage conservation,

exacerbated by inadequate resources and capacities at some sites.

Discussions in Sydney stressed that to maintain credibility, a shift in focus from quantity to quality must take place. This means sites put forward for a nomination should be clearly identified as gaps on the World Heritage List and be supported early on. It also means putting the management of existing World Heritage sites at the centre of the Convention's focus, so that successful practices can be sustained and insufficiencies can be rectified through extra support. This requires adequate protection measures and additional resources invested in World Heritage conservation.

At the same time we also need to ensure equitable management and shared benefits of World Heritage sites, to fully realise the potential of the Convention to support sustainable development, and contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Through the compliance mechanism of the Convention and tracking the conservation status of all natural World Heritage sites with the IUCN World Heritage Outlook system, complemented with the interventions via both UNESCO and IUCN channels to support sites to achieve an improved Outlook, **the major goal for the next 10 years is to achieve a demonstrable improvement in the conservation status of natural World Heritage sites.**



A STRATEGY OF INNOVATIVE APPROACHES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

for enhancing World Heritage in the next decade

The text featured below is extracted directly from the official document submitted as part of the Promise of Sydney.

The World Heritage Convention is of central importance in recognising protected areas of universal value to all of humanity. World Heritage sites protect over 8% of the total global protected area estate, including our most iconic natural and cultural areas, and should be drivers of change and models of excellence to show how protected areas can succeed as inspiring solutions for nature and people. The promise of World Heritage sites is to provide the highest level of international protection to our most iconic protected areas, and to provide exemplary leadership within the protected areas movement on land, and in the oceans. Delivering the promise of World Heritage is the litmus test, as allowing these sites to be degraded would constitute a clear failure of the conservation movement. Despite their iconic status and global recognition, World Heritage sites are subject to the same threats and pressures facing the wider protected area estate: they are suffering from the impacts of climate change and are increasingly under pressure from large scale development projects, including a range of very damaging industrial extractive activities. In order to change the dynamic for World Heritage, all stakeholders and rights holders have to act together, making the conservation of these outstanding places a global, joint common responsibility between States Parties, private sector and industry (including extractives), civil society, local communities and indigenous peoples. To be successful we need to commit to World Heritage as a common purpose.

In particular we must ensure the full involvement of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and religious groups in World Heritage site identification, assessment, nominations, and management in accordance with a rights-based approach and the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; using the Convention and the newly launched IUCN Conservation Outlook Assessment and civil society partnerships to monitor and improve site management; raising awareness of the values of sites and the serious and increasing threats they face; reform of the Convention's Operational Guidelines to ensure full participation of Indigenous Peoples in all processes related to sites incorporating any part of their lands, territories and seas and to require free, prior and informed consent from affected peoples to the World Heritage listing of their lands, territories and seas; and developing new tools and guidance, for example addressing the indissoluble links between nature and culture in World Heritage sites and how to implement a wilderness conservation strategy under the Convention. The World Parks Congress has seen the launch of the first ever global assessment of natural World Heritage, and is a unique opportunity to ensure the leadership role of the World Heritage Convention in the coming decade.

To ensure the credibility of the World Heritage Convention we must shift the focus from listing to providing leadership in protected area conservation. We must improve the outlook for all World Heritage sites to ensure that they maintain their Outstanding Universal Value, and also ensure their equitable management and shared benefits for the local communities and indigenous peoples that depend upon them.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

1. States Parties to the World Heritage Convention should work with civil society and other partners to ensure that World Heritage sites serve as models for integrated, effective, equitable and enduring natural and cultural conservation, and have a good and improving Outlook and resilience in the face of global change, as a litmus test of the success of Protected Areas globally.
2. To achieve a credible World Heritage List, which is regarded as substantially complete, the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Convention should support States Parties in the targeted nomination of sites that fill the few remaining gaps on the World Heritage List in terms of conserving biodiversity, wilderness, spectacular natural features, cultural landscapes, and geodiversity, in all regions of the globe, and the World Heritage Committee should maintain the high standard of Outstanding Universal Value to ensure only those areas that are the best of the best are inscribed on the World Heritage List.
3. The credibility and integrity of the World Heritage Convention is restored and retained, and decision-taking by the World Heritage Committee is driven by science and objectivity.
4. Civil Society, local communities, indigenous peoples and religious groups should decisively increase their engagement in the World Heritage Convention, for the benefit and support of World Heritage sites and the communities that depend on them, demonstrating that World Heritage sites contribute to sustainable development, in a manner consistent with and without in any way detracting from their outstanding universal value, and the eradication of poverty, and should contribute to the forthcoming United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The Congress recognises that impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage sites may not be compensated by offsets.
5. Global standards for Indigenous Peoples rights, and for the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, including the UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples, should be adopted and implemented in the World Heritage Convention, including through a revision of its Operational Guidelines to ensure respect for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the full and effective involvement of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and religious groups in the Convention's evaluation and monitoring processes and in the management of World Heritage sites on Indigenous Peoples' lands, territories and seas, in accordance with a rights-based approach.
6. The World Heritage Convention should fully and consistently recognise Indigenous Peoples' cultural values as universal, and develop methods for recognition and support for the interconnectedness of natural, cultural, social, and spiritual significance of World Heritage sites, including natural and cultural sites and cultural landscapes.

Showcasing World Heritage at the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014

In Sydney, the World Heritage theme flagged several conservation tools, approaches and programmes that demonstrate best practice and illustrate that World Heritage sites serve as models of excellence. These exceptional sites may also provide examples of major stepping stones to better support the World Heritage Convention in fulfilling its role as leader of the conservation movement over the coming decade.

IUCN WORLD HERITAGE OUTLOOK 2014

Launched in 2014, the IUCN World Heritage Outlook tool is the first global assessment of natural World Heritage and the first to recognise conservation success in the world's most iconic places. Up to this point, only about half of the listed sites have been regularly monitored through the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. In Sydney, the report *IUCN World Heritage Outlook 2014* was released. It offers global and regional analyses based on expert assessments of all natural World Heritage sites (228 at the time of the Congress), available online. The IUCN Outlook tool aims to track overall trends and changes occurring within the sites, taking into account threats, protection and management, and the state of World Heritage values, such as biodiversity, ecosystems and geological features.
worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org

IUCN STUDY ON THE BENEFITS OF NATURAL WORLD HERITAGE

According to an IUCN study released in Sydney, natural World Heritage sites provide benefits that contribute to economies, climate stability and human well-being. Funded by Germany's Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, it is the first assessment of the benefits and ecosystem services provided by the world's most outstanding natural places. The report highlights the economic benefits and cost-effectiveness of preserving the exceptional values of listed natural sites. It shows however that the benefits they provide decrease due to changes in landscape and overexploitation of resources. The report also contains a global analysis of carbon storage and water provided by the sites, using latest data including from remote sensing, compiled by the United Nations Environment Programme's World Conservation

Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).
<https://portals.iucn.org/library/efiles/documents/2014-045.pdf>

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE MARINE PROGRAMME

Launched in 2005, the mission of the UNESCO World Heritage Marine Programme is to establish effective conservation of existing and potential marine areas of Outstanding Universal Value to make sure they will be maintained and thrive for generations to come. In Sydney, the global network of World Heritage marine site managers established by the Marine Programme shared concrete activities, interventions and twinning initiatives between World Heritage marine sites, demonstrating good practices and the growing importance of the programme on conservation of the marine heritage of global importance. Currently, there are 47 World Heritage marine sites located in 36 countries covering nearly 15% of all existing marine protected areas by surface area.
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/marine-programme/>

COMPACT FOR ENGAGING LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN STEWARDSHIP OF WORLD HERITAGE

With over a decade of experience, the Community Management of Protected Areas for Conservation (COMPACT) initiative has been able to demonstrate how community-based activities can significantly increase the effectiveness of biodiversity conservation by working to improve the livelihoods of local populations and sharing conservation responsibilities. Started in partnership between the UNDP-implemented GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP), the United Nations Foundation and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, COMPACT has produced inspiring stories, a replicable methodology, and tangible conservation and livelihood benefits at several World Heritage sites around the world. Funded by the Government of Spain (AECID) and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of the Netherlands, a methodological guide based on COMPACT was launched in Sydney to enhance the involvement of local communities and indigenous peoples in World Heritage conservation.
<http://whc.unesco.org/en/series/40/>

Recommendations

FOR WORLD HERITAGE OVER THE NEXT DECADE



1. Models of conservation

As a litmus test of the success of protected areas globally, World Heritage sites should serve as models of conservation and have a good outlook in the face of global change.

2. Best of the best

To achieve a credible World Heritage Convention, only the very best natural areas should be inscribed to fill the few remaining gaps on the World Heritage List.

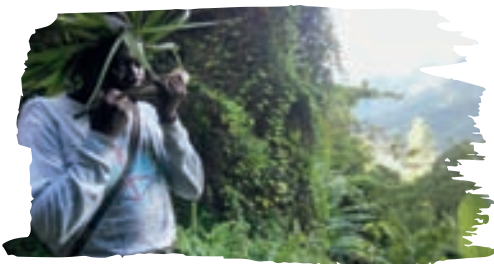


3. Credibility

The credibility and integrity of the World Heritage Convention must be restored and retained, with the World Heritage Committee taking decisions driven by science and objectivity.

4. Sustainable development

Civil society, local communities, indigenous peoples and religious groups should increase their engagement in the Convention, demonstrating that World Heritage contributes to sustainable development.



5. Indigenous peoples rights

Global standards for indigenous peoples rights should be adopted and implemented in the World Heritage Convention, to ensure indigenous peoples are fully involved in World Heritage processes and site management, and that their rights are fully respected.

6. Nature and culture interconnectedness

The World Heritage Convention should recognise indigenous peoples' cultural values as universal, and develop methods for recognising the interconnectedness of natural, cultural, social and spiritual significance of World Heritage sites.

