



IUCN Response to Strategic Review of IUCN’s Future Engagement with World Heritage Convention

This paper presents IUCN’s response to the *Strategic Review of IUCN’s Future Engagement with World Heritage Convention* (“the Review”), commissioned in April 2022, and final report delivered in November 2022.

The Review was undertaken by Aleph Strategies to take stock and reflect on IUCN’s future engagement with the Convention including its role as an Advisory Body to the World Heritage Committee.

The Review found that engagement in the Convention confers a range of valuable benefits to IUCN, specifically:

1. The level of **visibility** and **influence** that IUCN has within the Convention as an Advisory Body and the tangible conservation outcomes that flow from this
2. The **strong communications** potential
3. The **range of instruments** available to secure the conservation of World Heritage sites, which are not to be found in other nature conservation conventions.

The Review assessed IUCN’s engagement with the World Heritage Convention across five pillars and found the following:

1. **Strategic alignment** – The World Heritage Convention is generally well aligned with IUCN’s strategic ambitions for nature conservation but there is room for closer alignment, including raising the profile of nature conservation within the Convention; deepening the inclusion of indigenous peoples and civil society; alignment with IUCN’s wider programme portfolio such as Green List, and alignment with the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.
2. **Reputation** – The Advisory Body role of IUCN is generally viewed positively but it is also considered to be an underutilised asset for communication and fundraising, and a perception that IUCN is too “European”.
3. **Influence** – IUCN is considered to be a highly influential stakeholder within the World Heritage Convention and notwithstanding the increasing politicisation of the World Heritage Committee, there is scope for IUCN to advocate for operational reform from within.
4. **Financial health** – In the face of increasing demand for Advisory Body services and decreasing funding from the World Heritage Fund, IUCN must reassess its ability and willingness to continue investing its own resources into the statutory work.
5. **Impact** – The Convention has no measurement framework to explicitly record conservation impact at ground level that is directly attributable to inscription on the WH List, but the IUCN World Heritage Outlook findings illustrate that sites are just about maintaining a static conservation outlook in spite of rising threat levels and poor protection and management in half of natural sites, suggesting that inscription on the World Heritage List may play a role in protecting natural heritage.

The Review presents eight overarching recommendations to IUCN:

1. **Develop a strategy for IUCN’s World Heritage work** collaboratively through contributions from a wide range of departments and programmes within IUCN to enable the development of a costed set of activities and to identify funding gaps.
2. **Develop a communications strategy** to explain the IUCN World Heritage programme of work to the IUCN Regions and constituents to strengthen collaborations.
3. **Strengthen evaluation and monitoring instruments to measure the impact of World Heritage sites on achieving positive conservation outcomes** using communications and outreach platforms such as PANORAMA and building upon the IUCN World Heritage Outlook.
4. **Develop a funding strategy for IUCN’s work on World Heritage** to address the existing funding gap, either by continued co-financing or by scaling-back activities that includes a transitioning phase.
5. **Strengthen the regional representativity** of the World Heritage List and IUCN’s pool of technical experts through continued capacity building.

6. **Strengthen inclusion and participation of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities** in the World Heritage Convention through collaborations and integration into IUCN evaluation processes, capacity building and advocating for changes within the Convention.
7. **Advocate for strengthened inclusion of participation of Civil Society** in the World Heritage Convention by mobilising IUCN's global membership.
8. **Support the World Heritage Centre to strengthen governance of the Convention** by creating a toolkit to monitor the strategic health of the Convention and developing tools for new Committee Members.

The review is available online at the following address:

https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/IUCN_Strategic_Review_FINAL_NOV22.pdf

IUCN has considered the Review and its conclusions:

The Executive Board (ExBo) considered this as an item of its meeting 23/03 held on 1 February 2023. ExBo concluded that: "Based on the recommendations of the review, it was agreed that we will continue our work with the WH Convention, including in Advisory Role capacity, with an ambition to scale up the work and strengthen engagement based on a new WH Strategy. ExBo further noted that an important aspect of the Strategy is communications – both outward (to support fundraising) and inward, within the Union; the latter can be done via the soon-to-be-launched digital memberzone.

The Programme and Policy Committee (PPC) of IUCN Council 2021-25 also considered the Review at its 10th meeting, on 9 March 2023. The Secretariat presented the external Strategic Review and the proposal, based on the recommendations of the review, to scale up the work and strengthen engagement based on a new WH Strategy. PPC members highly appreciated the IUCN World Heritage work and welcomed the recommendations of the Review. PPC:

- Noted the opportunity to engage with National and Regional Member Committees, as well as with National and Regional Offices
- Recommended that IUCN's role as an official advisory body in the World Heritage Convention should remain as independent as possible, and that this was an important point of oversight, including regarding reputational risks. The latter include a number of World Heritage Sites facing complex issues regarding conservation and rights.
- Emphasised that IUCN should be clear on the distinct responsibilities of UNESCO on assuring the quality of governance of the Convention.
- Noted that documenting impacts of the Convention could consider first some case studies in a range of different countries.
- Agreed that PPC should have an oversight role when it comes to strategic matters, which include strategic alignment with the programme and assuring the independence of the IUCN Advisory Body role, and requested the Secretariat report back once the proposed strategy is completed.

Based on this scrutiny, IUCN agrees with the conclusions of the Review, and will act to address them. The Annex provides an overview of the actions to be undertaken in relation to each of the Review recommendations.

For further information about this response, please contact Tim Badman, Head, Heritage and Culture:

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ANNEX 1: TABLE OF RESPONSES TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STRATEGIC REVIEW OF IUCN'S FUTURE ENGAGEMENT WITH WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION, MAY 2023

Review recommendation	IUCN Response	Actions proposed
<p>REC 1: Develop a strategy for IUCN's World Heritage programme of work</p>	<p>We agree with the recommendation on the need to develop a strategy to support IUCN's statutory Advisory Body work and its broader World Heritage programme of work. The strategy should articulate the unique contribution of our engagement in WH to advance IUCN's vision and mission and to engage the component parts of the Union to realise the potential of WH to support this, including the goals of the new Global Biodiversity Framework. Extending the roles of IUCN Regional Offices and furthering the strong relations with the IUCN Commissions in WH implementation should be priorities within this strategy. The constituency focused actions below with IUCN members will also be integrated into the strategy.</p> <p>World Heritage Sites both make an exceptional contribution to conserving nature, but also need to be exemplars of the highest standards of conservation practice more widely. There are unique opportunities offered by the Convention to connect nature and culture, and important synergies between WH and other Conventions. IUCN should build on these strengths by both enhancing existing initiatives such as the World Heritage Outlook, and World Heritage Leadership Programme, and by connecting World Heritage appropriately and strongly to IUCN's leading standards, tools and knowledge products, including STAR and the IUCN Red List and Green List, and the work of the IUCN Commissions.</p> <p>The strategy should be developed by the World Heritage Unit (IUCN Secretariat), in consultation with other Teams and Centres, IUCN Regional Directors/Offices, IUCN Commissions, UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICCROM (the two cultural heritage focused Advisory Bodies to the Convention).</p> <p>The strategy should be clearly positioned to ensure full consistency with IUCN's independent statutory Advisory Body role within the World Heritage Convention, with continued strong oversight mechanisms as appropriate, including via the established mechanism of the IUCN World Heritage Panel.</p> <p>The Strategy will be further considered by the Programme and Policy Committee of IUCN Council, as per its meeting of 9th March 2023.</p>	<p>World Heritage Unit (WHU) – complete management response via Council, end May 2023 and conclude Strategy by end June 2023.</p>
<p>REC 2: Develop a communications strategy to explain the World Heritage programme of work</p>	<p>We agree with the recommendation on the need for a strategy on communications, and this will be included in the overarching WH strategy (R1). Communication should address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The distinction between IUCN's Advisory Body work and IUCN's regional and country-level work • Strengthening communication with regional offices • Improving communication with IUCN constituents, including civil society, indigenous peoples' organisations engaged in current and potential WH Sites, States and State Agencies, including through the new "IUCN Engage" platform 	<p>WHU, with Knowledge Management and Library Team and Global Communications Unit, and with regions.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating the contribution of WH to broader biodiversity conservation internally and externally, including disseminating WH case studies on PANORAMA. 	
<p>REC 3: Strengthen evaluation and monitoring instruments to measure the impact of World Heritage sites on achieving positive conservation outcomes</p>	<p>We agree with the recommendation, which will need to be costed in determining feasible options.</p> <p>Opportunities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertaking analyses at site-level and regional level, to scale up the IUCN World Heritage Outlook, and the means to act on its findings, linked to funding strategies Mobilising leading IUCN standards and tools to improve conservation outcomes, and engage with communities of expertise in IUCN Commissions. 	<p>WHU with action across Centres and Commissions – review/evaluate resources to determine scope of work; integrate into World Heritage Outlook.</p>
<p>REC 4: Develop a funding strategy for IUCN's Advisory Body role</p>	<p>We agree with the recommendation, which will also be essential to enable the new WH strategy. A full verifiable costing exercise for the delivery of all statutory obligations across all offices and positions will be a time-consuming exercise to undertake comprehensively, but it will clearly lay out the real cost compared to the available funding and identify current gaps. The funding strategy should be linked to a costed workplan, based on available budgets, and the additional fundraising required to deliver the WH strategy. Engagement with ICOMOS and ICCROM, and the World Heritage Centre, will be needed to ensure alignment of activities consistently to available resources across the three Advisory Bodies.</p> <p>Funding solutions should seek means to sustain the delivery of activities in a more creative way, that utilises IUCN's global presence including its regional offices to provide expertise. Scoping should also be undertaken of the opportunities for IUCN to act via its regrating role, GEF/GCF portfolio and the potential for IUCN to create new and innovative financing mechanisms dedicated to World Heritage.</p>	<p>WHU to develop cost analysis with DDG Programme and Strategic Partnerships Unit, and determine fundraising strategies.</p> <p>WHU to ensure alignment with ICOMOS, ICCROM, WH Centre.</p>
<p>REC 5: Address the regional imbalance of the World Heritage List</p>	<p>The issue of the imbalanced List is well recognised by the WH Committee, and this agenda can be supported through capacity building, including via the World Heritage Leadership Programme. An IUCN programme workshop with regions in 2022 has explored options to more strongly regionalise IUCN's work on WH and better mobilise the necessary technical and financial resources to address regional needs more equitably.</p> <p>More broadly, the WH Strategy will include other aspects of geographical representation and diversity, such as improving and making more visible diversity in IUCN representation at external for a including the WH Committee meeting, missions, and workshops.</p>	<p>WHU to consult with RDs and address in WH Unit to include in scope of consultation with regions.</p>
<p>REC 6: Strengthen inclusion and participation of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in the World Heritage Convention</p>	<p>We agree with this recommendation to strengthen engagement with IPLCs in processes and working methods. Options which can be implemented in various ways, and this work needs to be developed in a joint process with IUCN IPO members, and wider IPLC constituencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for changes within statutory processes of the Convention, including in relation to Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) 	<p>WHU to include actions in the new Strategy and ensure appropriate engagement with IPO leads.</p> <p>WHU to raise wider issues with UNESCO and the other Advisory Bodies.</p>

Review recommendation	IUCN Response	Actions proposed
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a framework to assess the criteria for meeting FPIC within WH nominations, and listed sites • Review IUCN toolkits and reporting templates on WH to ensure FPIC is a specified criterion. 	
<p>REC 7: Advocate for strengthened inclusion and participation of Civil Society in the World Heritage Convention through mobilising IUCN's global membership</p>	<p>We agree with the recommendation to maximise IUCN's outreach through leveraging IUCN's global membership, and wider constituencies. Key needs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing local capacities on to secure World Heritage nominations and conservation results, through focused site-specific interventions • Multi-tiered engagement across governmental and non-governmental institutions with responsibilities and/or programmes focused on WH site management • Recognising the high profile of rights issues in WH sites as a basis to strengthen engagement with the international Human Rights constituency and indigenous peoples' organisations. 	<p>WHU to review resources and scope of work and integrate appropriate actions into the WH Strategy.</p>
<p>REC 8: Support the World Heritage Centre to strengthen governance of the Convention</p>	<p>We agree that IUCN's Advisory Body role provides an important responsibility to influence the continued credibility and performance of the World Heritage Convention, but that the primary responsibilities in this regard are fundamentally those of UNESCO, the Convention Secretariat, and the parties to the Convention. Opportunities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing science-based tools and metrics that can be taken up by UNESCO to report on the performance of the World Heritage Convention, including its governance and strategies • Collaborating with the World Heritage Centre and the other Advisory Bodies to provide more effective training and orientation for prospective and new World Heritage Committee members, and other participants in the WH Committee • Integrate training on World Heritage into IUCN's capacity building offer, including via the IUCN Academy, and the World Heritage Leadership Programme. 	<p>WHU align recommendations with WH Centre, ICOMOS and ICCROM.</p>