



aleph strategies

Strategic Review of IUCN's Future Engagement with the  
World Heritage Convention

November 2022

Final Report



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## Acronyms

AB	Advisory Body
AWHF	African World Heritage Fund
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
IIPFWH	International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on World Heritage
IOS	Internal Oversight Services (department within the World Heritage Centre)
IPO	Indigenous Peoples Organisation
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
NGO	Non-government organisation
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
WCPA	World Commission on Protected Areas
WH	World Heritage
WHC	World Heritage Convention
WHF	World Heritage Fund

## Executive Summary

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### Context

Aleph Strategies was engaged by the IUCN Secretariat to conduct a strategic review of the organisation's future engagement with the World Heritage Convention. IUCN has been an Advisory Body to the World Heritage Convention since inception in 1972. In this role it conducts a broad range of statutory work (such as evaluating nominations for inscription and conducting reactive monitoring), in addition to wider activities in support of this role (such as the World Heritage Leadership Programme and World Heritage Outlook).

At its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the World Heritage Convention faces a number of challenges: there is a funding crisis; decisions to inscribe sites are increasingly driven by politics rather than science; and there is a worrying trend to ignore recommendations provided by the technical Advisory Bodies, including IUCN. Yet the Convention remains one of the most high-profile instruments for protecting natural and mixed heritage sites, and is equipped with a range of unique instruments to help ensure strong management practices. It is against this backdrop that IUCN has recently undertaken an organisation-wide restructure, providing the impetus to take stock and reflect on IUCN's future engagement with the Convention including its role as an Advisory Body.

Aleph Strategies assessed IUCN's engagement with the World Heritage Convention across five pillars: *strategic alignment, reputation, influence, financial health* and *impact*. We asked:

- i) *Strategic alignment* – to what extent are the World Heritage Convention and IUCN's strategic ambitions aligned with one another?
- ii) *Reputation* – to what extent does IUCN's role as Advisory Body to the Convention enhance or undermine IUNC's reputation?
- iii) *Influence* – does IUCN have influence within the Convention?
- iv) *Financial Health* – to what extent does IUCN consider the current financial arrangements to be sustainable?
- v) *Impact* – does the Advisory Body role strengthen or undermine IUCN's capacity to support positive conservation outcomes?

On the basis of these findings we provide a set of strategic and operational recommendations to help guide IUCN's future engagement with the Convention.

## Main Findings

**Strategic alignment:** The World Heritage Convention is generally well aligned with IUCN's strategic ambitions for nature conservation, as taken from Nature 2030, the Promise of Sydney (2014) and the resolutions on World Heritage from the IUCN World Conservation Congress at Jeju in 2012. The World Heritage Convention was the first convention to recognise the linkages between nature and culture and remains the most high-profile convention serving this agenda. World Heritage Sites, whether natural or mixed, are a key instrument in protecting and conserving natural areas, and therefore make a core contribution to IUCN's wider protected areas work. Like IUCN, the Convention recognises the need to integrate sustainable development perspectives into conservation management and planning, and like IUCN, the Convention is taking steps to include indigenous peoples, civil society and local communities in the World Heritage Processes. Nevertheless, there are a number of areas in which we find 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.

**Reputation:** Reputationally, the Advisory Body role brings both advantages and disadvantages to IUCN. On balance, we consider IUCN's association with the World Heritage Convention through the Advisory Body role to be generally positive. The majority of stakeholders interviewed in this exercise think that IUCN's Advisory Body role reinforces its reputation for technical credibility. Indeed, according to some States Parties, the credibility of the Convention itself is elevated through IUCN's association. However, familiarity with IUCN's Advisory Body role amongst non-World Heritage practitioners is judged by interviewees to be low. Given the comparatively high-profile of the World Heritage Convention itself, the Advisory Body role is therefore considered by many within IUCN and externally to be an underutilised asset for communication and fundraising. The main criticism to emerge from the interviews was that IUCN is considered to be too 'European'.

**Influence:** IUCN is considered to be a highly influential stakeholder within the World Heritage Convention by the majority of stakeholders interviewed. Paradoxically, there is an increasing trend for the World Heritage Committee to disregard the Advisory Bodies' recommendations for inscription and Danger Listing due to the increased politicisation of decision making. We see little opportunity for IUCN to address this issue specifically, which must be referred to the World Heritage Centre, but there is latitude for operational reform, enabling incremental, but important

improvements in Operational Guidelines. On balance, we consider that IUCN is better placed to advocate for reform to the Convention from within than from without.

**Financial Health:** The World Heritage Convention is facing a funding crisis. As the Convention has grown in scale and complexity, the demand for Advisory Body services and the administrative burden on the World Heritage Centre itself has risen dramatically, while the funds available to cover this work have decreased. The solutions to the funding crisis remain elusive and it is unlikely that additional funds can be secured for the World Heritage Fund itself from States Parties which to date have shown little appetite for increasing their contributions to the Convention.

IUCN currently estimates that it will contribute CHF 400,000 in direct finance and CHF 1.3 million in total when including in-kind support marshalled through IUCN volunteer networks over the 2022-2023 Biennium in order to maintain the current level of statutory work. It is unclear whether this level of internal direct funding will be available after 2023. IUCN must therefore reassess its ability and willingness to continue investing its own resources into the statutory work and, if not, be prepared to provide justification in negotiating contractual arrangements with the World Heritage Centre for a reduced level of support to the Convention in line with real costs and available resources.

**Impact:** The Convention is uniquely equipped with a range of measures to encourage strong conservation management practices. However, it is difficult to assess the conservation impact of these measures, or of the Convention more broadly, at ground level, as there are no measurement frameworks that explicitly record conservation outcomes pre- and post-inscription.

Nevertheless, IUCN's flagship World Heritage Outlook report fills an important gap by providing an assessment of conservation outlook at all natural World Heritage Sites. The Outlook report illustrates that sites are just about maintaining a static conservation outlook in spite of rising threat levels, suggesting that inscription on the World Heritage List may play a role in protecting natural heritage.

## Recommendations

There is an implicit question underpinning this review: *to what extent should IUCN remain committed to its role as Advisory Body to the World Heritage Convention?* In spite of the many challenges associated with the Advisory Body role, and the Convention itself more broadly, there is consensus within IUCN that the Advisory Body role confers a range of valuable benefits that would be lost if IUCN were to depart from the Convention. These include: the level of visibility and

influence that IUCN has within the Convention as an Advisory Body, the strong communications potential, and 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 has highlighted a number of areas in which IUCN can refresh and reorientate its engagement with the Convention, and a number of ways in which it can address some of the outstanding challenges the Convention is experiencing. The issues at hand are highly complex and often interrelated. A full suite of strategic and operational recommendations is provided at the end of this report. Each of the recommendations is accompanied by a set of practical actions that IUCN can undertake. The recommendations here are directed towards the IUCN World Heritage unit unless explicitly stated otherwise. In this executive summary we present five overarching recommendations.

**RECOMMENDATION 1: Develop a strategy for IUCN's World Heritage work.** There is currently no strategy for the World Heritage programme of work as a whole, nor, by extension is there a strategy for engaging with the World Heritage Convention itself. This is problematic on a number of levels. Firstly, without clear set of ambitions for the IUCN World Heritage programme of work, it is difficult to advise IUCN on how it should position itself within the Convention within this review. Secondly, without a strategy it is hard to determine whether IUCN's engagement with the Convention is supporting or undermining its work, as there are no outcome measurement indicators associated with the AB role. Thirdly, the absence of a consolidated, clearly articulated strategy obstructs budgeting and financial forecasting. A strategy would enable IUCN to develop a costed set of activities and to identify potential funding gaps based on previously-attained funding levels.

We strongly encourage IUCN to undertake this exercise in a collaborative manner, seeking contributions from a wide range of departments and programmes within IUCN, especially those working in 'outward facing' roles such as Regional Directors, the IUCN Commissions, partnerships, communication and membership. There is appetite within IUCN to engage in this exercise, as the Convention could serve a multitude of purposes, as we explore below. The strategy should be aligned with IUCN's Nature 2030 Strategy, anchored in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and should be situated within the broader discussions about IUCN's 20-year vision, which are taking place within IUCN in advance of the next Congress in 2025.

Developing a strategy should include a number of actions:

- Build a programmatic theory of change.



- Develop a monitoring framework to assess IUCN's engagement with the World Heritage Convention.
- Develop a clear strategy for positioning World Heritage within the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Develop a communications strategy to explain the IUCN World Heritage programme of work.** There is currently no written, consolidated communication and outreach strategy to explain the World Heritage programme of work. IUCN is a large and complex organisation, and on occasion the lines between IUCN's statutory work and its broader advocacy and programming can be blurred. Key actions include:

- Clarify the distinction between IUCN's statutory work on the Convention from its wider World Heritage programming.
- Build an 'online community zone' to better communicate with IUCN constituents.
- Strengthen engagement with States Parties.
- Promote the role of the World Heritage Convention in contributing to nature conservation.
- Strengthen internal communications with IUCN Regional Directors.
- Conduct reputation audits amongst IUCN's members.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Strengthen evaluation and monitoring instruments to measure the impact of World Heritage Sites on achieving positive conservation outcomes.** Throughout this review, we have struggled to articulate the impact of World Heritage Inscription on conservation outcomes. There does not appear to be either an aggregated evidence base to measure conservation impacts, or specific case studies. As most interviewees acknowledged, the World Heritage Convention itself tends to be better known as an instrument to protect cultural heritage rather than natural heritage. Measuring the conservation impact of inscription on the World Heritage List would therefore create an evidence base for policy and advocacy work in general, and enable IUCN to showcase the World Heritage Convention as a critical instrument for nature conservation, using communications and outreach platforms such as PANORAMA. This could also evidence the contribution of World Heritage Sites to the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework goal of '30 by 30'. IUCN has plenty of data about each of the listed Natural Heritage Sites, in some cases dating back many years, so there is a wealth of existing data that could be drawn upon to develop a practical toolkit for measuring conservation impacts. IUCN's World Heritage Outlook report provides a strong basis on which to build. There are three key actions associated with this recommendation:

- Conduct case study impact assessments of World Heritage Sites.

- Deepen the regional analysis within World Heritage Outlook.
- Integrate the IUCN Green List as a conservation benchmark within Word Heritage Outlook.

**RECOMMENDATION 4: Develop a funding strategy for IUCN's Advisory Body role.** There is insufficient funding available to IUCN to continue delivering statutory work at current levels through the World Heritage Fund. Past efforts to increase voluntary contributions have failed. IUCN must therefore decide what level of financial contribution (if any) it is prepared to sustain going forward.

It is our independent view that IUCN should continue to co-finance the statutory work delivered through the IUCN World Heritage programme of work at the historic level of 200,000 CHF per annum. As noted above, the advantages of the Advisory Body role outweigh the disadvantages. Further, by co-financing the statutory work IUCN can maintain the credibility of being an independent actor within the Convention, rather than a consultant to UNESCO.

However, if it is not prepared to make any further contributions, then IUCN must prepare a clear 'get-what-you-pay-for' model, outlining the services it is able to deliver with the available World Heritage Funding. This would require a careful transitioning phase to ensure that the World Heritage Centre and the Committee are informed about the intent to scale back activities. In reaching a decision on how to proceed, we recommend the following actions:

- IUCN should cost its contributions for each activity within its statutory work.
- IUCN should develop a workplan based on the available WHF budget for its statutory work.
- IUCN should engage with the IUCN Council to agree on a proposed set of reduced activities.
- IUCN should engage with ICOMOS and ICCROM to reach consensus on a common position with regards to aligning activities to available resources.
- IUCN should engage with the World Heritage Centre to present the rebalanced workplans.
- IUCN should advocate for Committee Sessions to take place every two years in order to reduce costs.

**RECOMMENDATION 5: Address the regional imbalance of the World Heritage List.** There are a variety of historical, political, structural and financial reasons for the geographical imbalance of

the World Heritage List. One of the most frequently referenced causes cited during interviews is the perception that the Convention itself is Eurocentric, an accusation we heard levelled against IUCN and the other Advisory Bodies over the course of the interviews. Another is the uneven distribution of technical experts and World Heritage leaders, who tend to come from the Global North. States Parties from the Global South express frustration at seeing ‘the same experts again and again’ on site visits and technical reports. There is frustration that IUCN does not make more use of regional experts, who would provide a deeper contextual understanding of the sites, and would be more cost-effective to deploy on field visits. Stakeholders highlight the need for continuous professional training and mid-career training focused on the processes and procedures linked to the World Heritage Convention. There are two ways that IUCN can address the regional imbalance of the list: it can continue to strengthen the capacity of technical experts based in the global south, and it can take steps to change the optics of its own European identity. Four actions are suggested:

- Promote the World Heritage Leadership Programme.
- Explore accreditation for the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) expert roster.
- Create regional pools of experts.
- Consider relocating the IUCN Advisory Body work to another country in Africa or Asia.

**RECOMMENDATION 6: Strengthen inclusion and participation of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in the World Heritage Convention.** A number of interviewees, including representatives of States Parties, state that the inclusion of indigenous peoples within the World Heritage Convention processes is weak. FPIC is currently *encouraged* by the Operational Guidelines (see para. 64), but it is not mandated, creating leeway for States Parties to ignore this element of the Tentative Listing process. Similarly, States Parties are only *encouraged* to consult with indigenous peoples in the Preliminary Assessment requests (see para.123). Under paragraph 148 in the Operational Guidelines, which lists the principles that should guide the Advisory Bodies’ recommendations, there is no mention of assessing or validating whether indigenous peoples have provided FPIC for the nomination. Key actions include:

- Advocate for the mandatory inclusion of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in key nomination processes.
- Collaborate with indigenous peoples’ representative bodies to develop a standardised definition for FPIC.
- Update IUCN toolkits and reporting templates to include FPIC.
- Provide technical support to the IIPFWH to signpost entry points to the Convention.

- Include local indigenous peoples and indigenous peoples experts in the evaluations.

**RECOMMENDATION 7: Advocate for strengthened inclusion and participation of Civil Society in the World Heritage Convention.** A number of interviewees, particularly from NGOs, highlighted that there are limited opportunities for civil society to engage with the World Heritage Convention. There are currently no working groups for NGOs within the World Heritage Convention, unlike the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The inclusion of NGOs and civil society would ensure that diverse expert knowledge, opinions and experiences are reflected in discussions, policies and practices associated with the Convention, and it would increase visibility for the Convention itself. It may also help to raise the visibility of the nature conservation side of the Convention. The following actions are recommended:

- Mobilise IUCN's global membership to facilitate greater involvement of civil society organisations in the Convention.
- Create working groups (similar to the Ad-Hoc Open-Ended Inter-Sessional Working Groups for the CBD).
- Mobilise online discussion groups through IUCN's membership.
- Leverage IUCN's National and Regional Committees to convene local CSOs/NGOs for roundtable discussions.

**RECOMMENDATION 8: Support the World Heritage Centre to strengthen governance of the Convention.** As we note in the report, there is no one watching out for the strategic health of the Convention. Committee Members themselves report that technical expertise in heritage conservation, and familiarity with the World Heritage Convention itself, varies significantly amongst Committee Members, which can lead to a departure from the Convention's Operational Guidelines. Moreover, Committee Members have a short mandate, meaning that every six years, levels of expertise and understanding of the Convention are essentially reset. There is little that IUCN can do to directly here, as leadership must come from the World Heritage Centre. However, we identify two actions that IUCN may wish to consider in order to support the Centre. There are two key actions:

- Develop a set of 'on-boarding tools' for new Committee Members.
- Create a toolkit to monitor the strategic health of the Convention.

# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1. Overview

Aleph Strategies was commissioned by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to conduct a strategic review of the organisation's future engagement with the World Heritage Convention. This report presents the findings of the review, which was conducted between May and September 2022.

## 1.2. Background and Objectives

2022 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the World Heritage Convention. It also marks 50 years of IUCN's engagement as Advisory Body to the World Heritage Convention. During this time the Convention has grown in both size and complexity. As IUCN itself now undergoes a significant internal restructure, a strategic review has been commissioned to inform IUCN's future engagement with the Convention. The terms of reference for this review outline the following objectives:

1. How is IUCN perceived as an actor within the World Heritage Convention, and how does this perception vary by geographic region and sector - what are our perceived strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement, and how is our role seen in relation to the other actors in the Convention (Committee, States Parties, other Advisory Bodies, UNESCO, other current or potential partners in the Convention)? This should include consideration of the extent to which IUCN's role is unique, or irreplaceable, and whether there are alternative organisations who could act in roles IUCN is currently undertaking.
2. How should IUCN position itself, and act, in response to the key issues, challenges and opportunities facing the World Heritage Convention, in order to secure reform of the Convention, so that it remains relevant to the future of conservation? This should include the way that IUCN engages through its current statutory AB role, and if we should seek changes in how this role is defined and discharged.
3. How should IUCN position its role and work within the World Heritage Convention, in relation to the key challenges for contemporary conservation, including action on climate mitigation and adaptation, the achievement of just, rights-based approaches to conservation, and the response to the impacts of the COVID crisis?

4. How should IUCN now act to position its work within the World Heritage Convention within the implementation of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, when adopted?
5. How should IUCN act to address the widely acknowledged failure of the Convention's current Global Strategy to improve the balance on the World Heritage List and to work towards a completion of the World Heritage List for natural heritage by 2050, and an enhancement of the diversity and regional balance across its World Heritage expert network?
6. What priorities should IUCN set for World Heritage within its reorganised Global Secretariat including Regional Offices, Commissions and the new IUCN Programme "Nature 2030", including through optimizing the future potential of the IUCN World Heritage Outlook?
7. How should IUCN communicate its distinct role in the World Heritage Convention, and in particular the differentiation of its statutory AB role from wider IUCN engagement with IUCN state, NGO and IPO members on World Heritage Issues?
8. How can IUCN catalyse the resource mobilization and partnership arrangements necessary to address the recommendations which will arise from this review, to ensure increased and secure funding for IUCN's work, and to seek more effective (existing and new) mechanisms to address the ongoing funding and capacity gaps that exists for conservation of World Heritage sites. This should include, but not be limited to, the positioning of IUCN's partnership arrangements with UNESCO, and the other Convention Advisory Bodies, ICOMOS and ICCROM?

### 1.3. Methodology

Aleph undertook a qualitative methodology to conduct this review. A **desk review** was conducted at the start of the project to refine lines of enquiry within each of the questions provided in the Terms of Reference. A **Review Framework** was developed to provide a structural foundation for gathering, analysing and presenting information about IUCN's engagement with the World Heritage Convention. This was a necessary first step to developing recommendations for further action. A detailed description of the Review Framework is included in the annexes at the end of this report. The Framework was designed to provide a snapshot of the current status of IUCN's engagement with the Convention, and to review some of the advantages and disadvantages that accrue from its statutory role. The Framework was built on five key pillars:

- vi) *Strategic alignment* – to what extent are the World Heritage Convention and IUCN's strategic ambitions aligned with one another?

- vii) *Reputation* – to what extent does IUCN’s role as Advisory Body to the Convention enhance or undermine IUCN’s reputation?
- viii) *Influence* – does IUCN have influence within the Convention?
- ix) *Financial Health* – to what extent does IUCN consider the current financial arrangements to be fair?
- x) *Impact* – does the Advisory Body role strengthen or undermine IUCN’s capacity to support positive conservation outcomes?

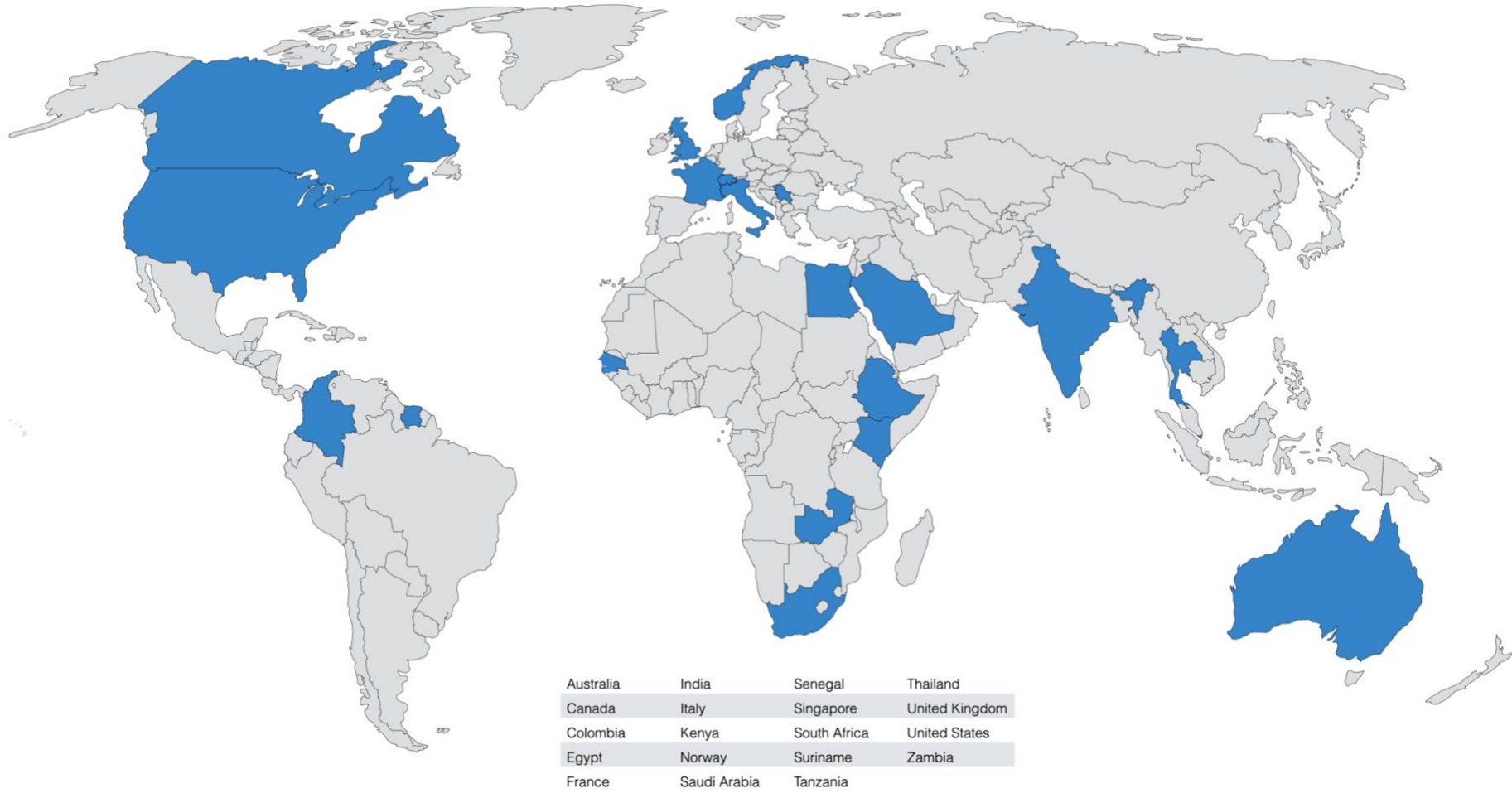
Aleph engaged with 52 individuals through **qualitative interviews**, which were conducted via video-teleconference. Interviews generally lasted for one hour, and were guided by a semi-structured questionnaire developed for each separate stakeholder category. A number of stakeholders, particularly those within IUCN, were interviewed on multiple occasions. Snowball sampling was employed to provide flexibility for the review team to pursue new lines of enquiry as they emerged during the interview process. This approach also helped to mitigate potential sampling bias, as we were able to speak to people who were not selected in advance by IUCN, enabling a wide inclusion of perspectives. A breakdown of interviews is presented below:

*Table 1: Number of interviewees by stakeholder category*

Stakeholder Group	Interviewed
IUCN (WH programme staff, non-WH staff, Council, Regional Directors)	17
UNESCO and the World Heritage Centre	7
Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Convention	3
World Heritage Committee Members	5 (countries)
States Parties to the Convention	9 (countries)
Conservation / IPLC NGOs	4

The map below illustrates the geographic distribution of interviews. No further details are provided in order to preserve participant anonymity.

Figure 1: Location of Interview Participants (N.B. borders approximate only)





Aleph also conducted a series of workshops and presentations to ensure continual alignment of scope and expectations of this review. An *Inception Workshop* was held at the start of the review to confirm the methodology and to agree on the format and content of the Review Framework. Towards the end of the data collection phase, Aleph facilitated two *Recommendations Workshops* to present and validate early findings and to generate discussion around potential recommendations.

#### 1.4. Limitations

- **Breadth versus depth** - This review explores a range of diverse and highly complex issues within a finite allocation of working days. Though this confers the advantage of necessitating a strategic perspective, it also prevents a detailed analysis of individual topics. Throughout this exercise we have endeavoured to strike a balance between depth of insight and breadth of subject matter coverage.
- **Not an evaluation of the World Heritage Convention** – This review is concerned with understanding IUCN’s role within the World Heritage Convention. Challenges facing the convention are therefore relevant to this work, but the review does not provide a detailed account of every challenge the Convention faces, nor the causes, nor the solutions.
- **Not an evaluation of the IUCN World Heritage programme of work** – Though relevant, IUCN’s wider World Heritage work - such as the World Heritage Leadership Programme and Outlook - is not assessed in detail as part of this exercise.
- **Non-representative sampling** – Within the time allocation for this review, Aleph undertook a qualitative methodology, interviewing stakeholders from across the World Heritage sector. Given the small sample sizes, the sampling strategy was non-representative, and we are cautious throughout this report about making regional generalisations. However, as noted in the methodology, a wide range of opinions were solicited from a good geographic spread of stakeholders in order to mitigate the risk of ‘group think’ amongst a narrow pool of respondents.
- **Non-exhaustive literature review** – There is a wealth of literature contained within IUCN, UNESCO and the wider World Heritage Convention stakeholder universe. Throughout this

report we draw on relevant documentary sources to illustrate key points and build an evidence base, but we do not provide an exhaustive review of all available literature pertaining to the World Heritage Convention.

- **Availability of key informants** – This review was conducted between June and September, during which time, many people were on leave or away from their desks. Response rates to interview requests were low.
- **Not a financial review.** While this review does concern itself with the financial health of the Convention, and though we provide recommendations about funding, it does not entail a full financial assessment of IUCN's funding streams for the World Heritage programme of work more widely. A full financial review was not requested in the terms of reference, and is therefore beyond the scope of this exercise. Instead, therefore, we provide a high-level snapshot of the World Heritage Fund, and the funding imperatives that flow from this.
- **Focus on IUCN** - The challenges associated with the implementation of the World Heritage Convention are multifarious and involve an extremely broad constellation of stakeholders across and within national governments, the World Heritage Centre, UNESCO more widely and the broader 'universe' of experts, NGOs and civil society. All play a role, to varying degrees, in the Convention's challenges. However, we limit the scope of our investigation and the recommendations to IUCN's part in this context.

## 1.5. Report Structure

Our analysis begins in Section 2 of the report with a summary of the Review Framework findings. Here, we provide a consolidated analysis of IUCN's relationship to the World Heritage Convention across each of the Framework's five pillars. Section 3 of the report presents our recommendations, which are grouped thematically.

## 1.6. Definitions

We provide some basic definitions below that will be used throughout the report. Where possible we ascribe views and opinions gathered through interviews using a standardised format, presented in the table below.

### 1.6.1. Stakeholders

Table 2: Definition of Stakeholder Categories

Stakeholder Reference	Description
IUCN World Heritage team	Shorthand for team within the current Heritage, Culture and Youth Team under the new restructure
IUCN wider staff	IUCN staff who are not in the Heritage, Culture and Youth Team, including regional offices, and staff in the Secretariat.
States Parties	Signatories of the World Heritage Convention who are not also current Committee Members
Committee Members	States Parties to the Convention who are currently on the World Heritage Committee
UNESCO	Staff at UNESCO in general
World Heritage Centre	Staff within the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO (the Secretariat of the Convention)
Wider experts / stakeholders	Staff working for CSOs/NGOs in the conservation sector, or representing IPLCs

### 1.6.2. IUCN

IUCN comprises a variety of different elements. In this report, when we refer to IUCN, we are referring to the Secretariat, and more specifically to the World Heritage Unit, unless specifically mentioned otherwise. We do not refer to IUCN's wider structures such as its membership or Commissions, unless explicitly referenced. We use the term **IUCN World Heritage Unit** as a shorthand to describe the staff working on World Heritage specifically, within the current IUCN Heritage, Culture and Youth Team. See further definitions of IUCN's work in the table below.

Table 3: Definitions of IUCN's World Heritage Work

Term	Definition	Activities	Current Funding
Advisory Body Role	<p>"The specific role of IUCN in relation to the Convention includes: evaluation of properties nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List, monitoring the state of conservation of World Heritage natural properties, reviewing requests for International Assistance submitted by States Parties, and providing input and support for capacity building activities" (Operational Guidelines, para 37). This also includes advising on the implementation of the Convention, assisting the Secretariat in preparing documentation, assisting with the development and implementation of a strategy for the representativity of the List, World Heritage Capacity Building, periodic reporting etc., monitoring the state of conservation of WHS and reviewing requests for assistance, and attending meetings of the Committee. This work is embedded in the Convention itself (Articles 8.3; 13.7 and 14.2)</p>	<p>See Statutory Work and Wider World Heritage programme of work below</p>	<p>See Statutory Work and Wider World Heritage programme of work Below</p>
Statutory Work	<p>IUCN Advice to the World Heritage Committee. A specific set of activities under the Advisory Body role. This clearly codified work is consistent with the defined mandate articulated in para 37 of the OGs and includes the evaluation of dossiers and SoC monitoring procedures, as well as the preparation of policy documents for the Committee. This work is specifically requested/mandated by the World Heritage Committee.</p>	<p>Evaluations; State of Conservation reports (Reactive Monitoring); Field missions, and every part of the nomination such as upstream support and the proposed Preliminary Assessment process; Preparing documents for the Committee</p>	<p>World Heritage Fund and direct and indirect finance from IUCN</p>
Wider World Heritage programme of work	<p>Projects and Activities of IUCN (delivered by the WH Unit in the Heritage Culture and Youth Team, and formerly by the IUCN World Heritage Programme). Work conducted by the IUCN World Heritage programme of work, which is consistent with the AB mandate but not necessarily directly requested by the World Heritage Committee, and/or requested/mandated by the Committee (or the Convention's General Assembly) but not funded by the World Heritage Fund. This work includes IUCN initiated work but also a large number of unfunded mandates and requests both as general mandates (such as capacity building for which UNESCO provides zero funding) and specific requests to IUCN in Committee decisions (both issue and/or site specific).</p>	<p>Capacity building programmes (e.g. World Heritage Leadership); Additional monitoring, such as World Heritage Outlook which aggregates data from SoC reports; Regional and Thematic Gap Studies; Communications and outreach; Site specific advice (including engagement in impact assessments); Ad hoc advice delivered at the request of State Parties</p>	<p>IUCN through extra-budgetary fundraising via its World Heritage programme of work</p>

<p>WH work in IUCN's wider portfolio</p>	<p>This corresponds to stakeholders and partners that may be IUCN members or Commission members or those with an interest in heritage conservation (e.g. HIST, Google Arts and Culture, Geoheritage partners). Many aspects of IUCN's work on the Green List and protected areas, Protected Species, Indigenous peoples' rights etc. include aspects that are relevant to World Heritage, but there is currently no extensive approach to documenting this work and naming World Heritage as a line on the budget. As with all WH work in IUCN, direct engagement in WH must remain consistent with and be respectful of the AB mandate (for instance no part of IUCN can prepare WH nominations).</p>	<p>Examples: Programmes carried out within the Protected Areas portfolio, focusing on specific issues (e.g. governance) at the regional scale (e.g. the Lake Ohrid region in Macedonia); Programmes carried out within the Ocean Unit, focusing on Marine World Heritage Sites in specific regions (e.g. Arctic); Country specific programmes (e.g. Thailand, Sri Lanka, Mauritania), or region specific programmes (e.g. North Africa)</p>	<p>IUCN, which has access to wider conservation and climate change funding, from a wide range of donors and through the implementing agency mechanisms of GEF and GCF</p>
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## 2. Findings from the Review Framework

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The Review Framework is intended to provide a snapshot of IUCN's engagement with the World Heritage Convention. It is a summative, rather than evaluative instrument. It is important to understand the status of IUCN's engagement with the Convention before we can advise IUCN how to act. Below we present findings for each of the Framework's five pillars: *strategic alignment*, *reputation*, *influence*, *financial health* and *impact*.

### 2.1. Strategic Alignment

The World Heritage Convention is generally well aligned with IUCN's strategic ambitions for nature conservation. Nevertheless, there are a number of areas in which we find 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.

#### 2.1.1. Areas of convergence

**Overall, we find broad alignment between the conservation priorities within the World Heritage Convention and IUCN's conservation priorities.** We discern IUCN's strategic ambitions from three key sources: IUCN's overall strategy, *Nature 2030*; the *Promise of Sydney* from 2014; and the resolutions on World Heritage from the IUCN *World Conservation Congress at Jeju* in the Republic of Korea (2012). As we note in our Inception Report, we identified a number of enduring themes that capture IUCN's longer-term direction of travel including: *conservation impact*, *integrated nature-culture approaches*, *sustainable development*, and *inclusion of indigenous peoples, civil society and local communities*. In three of these four areas we recognise a general alignment, be that in terms of shared/similar definitions or tangible actions.

- *Integrated nature-culture approaches* - The World Heritage Convention was the first to link the concepts of nature and culture conservation, and remains the most high-profile Convention explicitly serving this agenda. Though there are many well-documented challenges facing the Convention as it enters its 50<sup>th</sup> year, it has evolved and adapted over the years in response to contemporary conservation needs. World Heritage Sites,

whether natural or mixed, are a key instrument in protecting and conserving natural areas, and therefore make a core contribution to IUCN's wider protected areas work.

- *Sustainable development* – At its 20<sup>th</sup> session in 2015, the General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention adopted the Policy Document for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Process of the World Heritage Convention. The policy provides clear guidance to States Parties for balancing the needs of conservation, sustainability, and development in order to protect World Heritage properties. There is a current funding request 'live' at the time of writing in 2022 for a UNESCO programme to support the integration of Sustainable Development practices within national-level conservation policies<sup>1</sup>.
- *Inclusion of indigenous peoples, civil society and local communities* – The inclusion of indigenous peoples has been a strategic objective of the Convention since 2007. This is reflected in the Operational Guidelines, which introduced Free, Prior and Informed Consent as a clause of nominations in 2015. Though still not operational, since 2021, the Preliminary Assessment toolkit checklist stipulates the need to ensure that local communities are involved in the planning and management of heritage sites, and indigenous peoples have been increasingly included through the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on World Heritage (IIPFWH), which started in 2017.

### 2.1.2. Opportunities to strengthen alignment

**However, interviews highlighted a number of areas in which there is need to align the Convention with IUCN's strategic priorities.**

- *Conservation impact* – Fundamentally, both the World Heritage Convention and IUCN are concerned with protecting World Heritage. However, there is broad consensus among interviewees (including Members of the World Heritage Committee, States Parties to the Convention, and the World Heritage Centre) that discussions at Committee sessions and within the Ad-hoc Working Groups tend to focus on the nomination process rather the conservation management. Stakeholders remark that there is a greater investment of resource in the inscription process than maintaining high conservation standards once sites have been added to the List. As one interviewee in IUCN noted, there is no incentive

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO (2002) World Heritage and Sustainable Development policy explained: A guide and a collection of good practices to support development of national policies, programmes and sustainable management of World Heritage properties. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/948/>

for maintaining a positive conservation outlook other than avoiding Danger Listing. While the purpose of the Danger List is to allocate additional support to the properties that are under threat, Danger Listing can be perceived as a 'punitive measure' by some state parties as the media can portray it as a state's poor ability to preserve natural protected areas. Moreover, as some sites have remained on the Danger List for many years, the value of such instruments to act as a deterrent is questionable.

- *Raising the profile of nature within the Convention and Positioning the World Heritage Convention within the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework* - Integrating nature and culture is one of the key aims of the Promise of Sydney and is perceived as a priority within the Convention. However, stakeholders argue that natural heritage is still not getting the attention it deserves, especially considering its potential for climate change mitigation. One key aspect of IUCN's vision for the future is their engagement with the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework propelled by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). While this Framework is closely aligned with IUCN's work within the Convention, particularly where the protection of natural areas is concerned, there are still obstacles to achieving synergy in practice. IUCN's World Heritage Unit has drafted a statement in 2019 outlining the relevance of their work to the Framework, but they report there has been limited follow up. The Convention is seen by many within IUCN, States Parties and the World Heritage Centre, as a powerful (and untapped) mechanism to promote the conservation of large areas of land, getting the planet closer to its '30 by 30' goal while providing a high quality of protection, scrutiny and visibility. Contributing to protected and conserved areas work is one of the core tasks of World Heritage Sites. The World Heritage Convention operates at local, national and international levels to protect biodiversity: this gives it scope to both monitor the situation on the ground and provide an international framework for protection. According to key conservation stakeholders, the Convention has not yet positioned itself within the Framework, even though cooperation has been encouraged since CBD COP 13 in 2016<sup>2</sup>.
- *Deeper integration of indigenous peoples and local communities in the World Heritage planning and management processes* - Integrating nature and culture often involves incorporating indigenous perspectives on natural heritage (songs, storylines, oral history etc.). According to some stakeholders, the integration of intangible cultural heritage

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<sup>2</sup> CBD/COP/DEC/XIII/24



relating to natural sites is still incipient. There is also a perception among wider conservation stakeholders and indigenous representatives we interviewed that IUCN needs to do more to include the voices of Civil Society Organisations and IPLCs. This would involve facilitating their participation in decision-making process, including local NGOs and associations which might be better informed regarding the local context.

**Ultimately, IUCN's lack of a clearly articulate and consolidated strategy for engaging with the World Heritage Convention makes it difficult to assess the extent to which the Convention enhances or undermines IUCN's strategic priorities.** Historically there was no written strategy for the former World Heritage Programme, nor is there one now under the new Heritage, Culture and Youth programme. Neither is there a clear written strategy to guide IUCN's engagement with World Heritage more broadly. Such a strategy would enable the World Heritage Programme to create a performance framework to regularly assess the 'health' of IUCN's Advisory Body role within the Convention. We develop this theme more fully in the recommendations later in the report.

## 2.2. Reputation

Reputationally, the Advisory Body role brings both advantages and disadvantages to IUCN. On balance, we consider IUCN's association with the World Heritage Convention through the Advisory Body role to be generally positive. The majority of stakeholders interviewed in this exercise think that IUCN's Advisory Body role reinforces its reputation for technical credibility. Indeed, according to some States Parties, the credibility of the Convention itself is elevated through IUCN's association. However, familiarity with IUCN's Advisory Body role amongst non-World Heritage practitioners is judged by interviewees to be low. Given the comparatively high-profile of the World Heritage Convention itself, the Advisory Body role is therefore considered by many within IUCN and externally to be an underutilised asset for communication and fundraising. The main criticism to emerge from the interviews was that IUCN is considered to be too 'European'.

### 2.2.1. Familiarity with IUCN's Advisory Body Role

**The majority of stakeholders interviewed (including State Parties and Committee Members) are fairly familiar with IUCN's World Heritage work at a general level.** Knowledge appears to be limited to specific areas of engagement, with stakeholders occasionally expressing surprise at learning about IUCN's wider work ranging beyond its Advisory Body role. Even amongst those who have

worked closely with IUCN for many years, there is some uncertainty about the full range of IUCN's organisational elements and areas of work. State Party representatives who have worked with IUCN are familiar with other aspects of its work, including the Green List and World Heritage Outlook.<sup>3</sup> However, the sheer scale of operations, geographical spread and membership are either overlooked or unknown. One interviewee remarked that they had no idea IUCN had such broad regional coverage until they saw a presentation at a recent Ad-hoc Working Group.

**In contrast to this, a number of interviewees suggest that the World Heritage Advisory Body role is a comparatively little-known element of IUCN's wider global portfolio.** A number of sources, both within IUCN and from the States Parties consider that non-technical stakeholder groups, such as national and sub-national government entities or non-heritage orientated CSOs/NGOs, are not very familiar with IUCN's Advisory Body role. This may be compounded, in the view of another external stakeholder, by the fact that UNESCO publishes (and brands) many of the reports and documents that flow from the Convention. Therefore, only people who are closely involved in the nomination process are aware of the intricacies of IUCN's work and its role in the process.

One States Party who had been working with IUCN for a long time said that they only learned about IUCN's Advisory Body work when the focus of their own work switched to heritage conservation. In this regard, it is notable that a handful of interviewees, (including non-World Heritage IUCN staff and external stakeholders) think that the restructuring of the IUCN Secretariat further obfuscates its work on World Heritage. They think that the integration of the World Heritage Programme's work into the 'Heritage Culture and Youth team' under the Society and Governance Centre dilutes the 'brand visibility' of World Heritage within IUCN, and suggests to some that IUCN may be 'deprioritising' World Heritage within its global programme portfolio.

**For some, IUCN's Advisory Body role is seen as a significantly under-utilised communications and outreach asset.** Interviewees both in IUCN's Membership team and among State Parties to the Convention stated that IUCN's association with the World Heritage Convention is an under-leveraged asset for profile raising, policy and advocacy work, as well as for growing the membership base. It is striking that the World Heritage Convention is virtually invisible on the current IUCN website. For prospective members, the fact that IUCN is an Advisory Body to the World Heritage Convention could be better marketed as a core value proposition for membership.

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<sup>3</sup> World Heritage Outlook has been downloaded over 10,400 times from its publication in 2020 to June 2022, according to IUCN's Altmetric data.

Other stakeholders within IUCN (WCPA) and UNESCO think that the Advisory Body role is an untapped opportunity to propel World Heritage more firmly into discussions about conservation and climate change. As discussed below in the *Influence* section, IUCN's Advisory Body role confers an unusual degree of visibility and influence within the Convention. As the Convention itself is high profile, and comparatively well-known even amongst the general public, there are some within IUCN (especially stakeholders working closely with IUCN membership and outreach) who feel this could be better harnessed to further IUCN's brand recognition more widely. This is also the view of people working in partnership with IUCN, such as UNESCO stakeholders we interviewed.

### 2.2.2. Differentiating Advisory Bodies

**State parties recognise clear distinctions between the three Advisory Bodies, and that the Advisory Bodies are independent from the World Heritage Centre.** States Parties recognise that the Advisory Bodies are the technical experts and that the World Heritage Centre is the Secretariat to the Convention. The majority of stakeholders we interviewed, whether Committee Members, States Parties, or World Heritage Centre staff, distinguished clearly between the Advisory Bodies. It is notable that many of the criticisms levelled against the Advisory Bodies in general – notably the perception of Eurocentrism and Western bias – were felt more keenly towards ICOMOS than IUCN or ICCROM. ICCROM itself rarely featured in any of the interviews as its role within the Convention is comparatively small, and is not linked to the contentious issues around nomination decisions or State of Conservation reporting. According to a number of interviews, the reason ICOMOS often finds itself ‘in the line of fire’ more often than IUCN is because its work relates to cultural heritage, which is a more sensitive topic. Cultural sites are inextricably linked to wider concepts of identity and national pride – negative recommendations may therefore be perceived as an attack on a nation’s culture. Moreover, there is a perception among non-European States Parties that the definition of culture itself is still based on western/European values, and although many of those we interviewed recognised that IUCN has made efforts to include indigenous perceptions of culture, the extent to which policy acknowledges these knowledge systems is still limited.

The fact that stakeholders generally *do* differentiate between Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre illustrates a reasonably high level of basic awareness about key roles within the Convention amongst States Parties and wider conservation stakeholders. It suggests that the criticisms towards the Advisory Bodies in general should be treated with nuance by IUCN, and not seen as a direct criticism of IUCN itself.

### 2.2.3. Quality of work

IUCN is widely considered to be a strong technical institution, and its work within the Convention is generally highly respected by all those we interviewed, including State Parties to the Convention that may have publicly disagreed with IUCN in the past. It is difficult to judge the net reputational effect of IUCN's involvement with the World Heritage Convention without empirical stakeholder perception polling, but qualitative evidence gathered through our interviews suggests that the effect is likely more positive than negative. Anecdotal evidence from IUCN non-World Heritage Staff suggests that there have been instances where IUCN's nomination recommendations have strained relationships at a national level (Tanzania, Australia, Thailand), and it would be tempting to extrapolate from these instances a wider organisational risk. However, we urge caution. It is true that these cases have required a considerable investment of time and resource in damage limitation management<sup>4</sup>, but most stakeholders in IUCN agree that these are isolated cases. Moreover, when speaking to external stakeholders who are familiar with these events, even those representing States Parties, it is clear that IUCN is still seen as a strong technical institution. Its strengths are considered to be its global presence (more on which later), strong technical rigour, credibility and the fact that it has been a part of the Convention since the beginning, and is therefore familiar with its complex systems, policies and procedures. Even those who are critical of the organisation say that they respect IUCN's technical credentials.

### 2.2.4. Appetite for change

IUCN is generally seen as a valuable and integral part of the Convention, and stakeholders across the Convention (including States Parties, Committee Members and the World Heritage Centre) are pleased with IUCN's work as an Advisory Body with one senior stakeholder saying that there would be 'no Convention without IUCN'. UNESCO's documentation<sup>5</sup> makes it clear that the current Advisory Bodies fulfil the requirements of what they expect of such a role, and notes that few other organisations can comply with their requirements.'

**There is little appetite for finding alternative Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Convention, even amongst States Parties, UNESCO and the World Heritage Centre.** None of the interviewees could identify potential alternative organisations for the roles of Advisory Body to the Convention. Opinion is divided about the value in seeking additional or alternative Advisory Bodies to the convention. Many interviewees recognised both sides of the argument - while there is some

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<sup>4</sup> According to one IUCN interviewee the disagreements between IUCN and the State Party led to lost programme funding.

<sup>5</sup> *Background Document in Relation to Decision 44 COM 14* (p.21)

sympathy for the view that new Advisory Bodies could bring better value for money, there is general consensus that additional Advisory Bodies would enable States Parties to 'shop around' until they find someone to deliver a favourable recommendation. Further, they do not think there are any organisations with the same level of technical credibility as the current Advisory Bodies to fulfil this role.

As one senior commentator noted during an interview, the only exception to this, is when additional very specific inputs might be required on an ad hoc basis when the technical expertise required falls outside of IUCN's remit. This could apply to specific cases, such as seeking knowledge on Uranium mining from the International Council of Scientific Unions; or obtaining information pertaining to sites of memory and intangible cultural heritage, where ICOMOS might not be the first port of call.

**In sum, stakeholders acknowledge that IUCN is uniquely situated to be an Advisory Body and stands out from other organisations, due to the following factors:** i) its strong institutional experience and expertise working as an Advisory Body within the Convention for decades; and ii) its broad geographic coverage and membership, and iii) its strong technical capability and expertise.

#### 2.2.5. Critique of IUCN

**There is an enduring perception that IUCN is considered to be too European.** States Parties are particularly critical in this regard, even those countries in Europe or North America. The perceived lack of inclusion of local experts is harmful to IUCN's reputation, creating the impression that IUCN only sends the same people to conduct evaluations each time. Of course, those who know IUCN well and have worked alongside the organisation for many years recognise that IUCN has made important strides towards expanding its pool of experts and broadening the diversity of Panel members.<sup>6</sup> However, the location and leadership of the World Heritage programme of work within IUCN is still considered to be too European, notwithstanding the positive changes noted above. IUCN's own figures taken from its Background Paper to the Ad-hoc Working Group in 2021 show that the significant majority of experts sent on advisory and monitoring missions since 2016 have been European, even though European sites constituted less than a quarter of the mission locations<sup>7</sup>. We acknowledge that finding qualified experts from every region can be challenging –

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<sup>6</sup> IUCN 2022: Supplementary Information: Ad-hoc Working Group - Decision 44 COM 14: Further requests for clarifications following the meeting of 14 February 2022

<sup>7</sup> IUCN: Ad-hoc Working Group - Decision 44 COM 14 / BACKGROUND DOCUMENT, p. 9-10

something we have observed evaluating UNESCO's own programmes. However, irrespective of the justification for the selection of experts, the optics certainly seem to reinforce the perception of Eurocentrism and IUCN stakeholders themselves acknowledge there is still much to be done.

**IUCN's perceived lack of diversity is an issue that negatively affects stakeholders' relationship with IUCN.** Several States Parties feel that their voices are not heard within the Convention, and that the issue pertains to the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies' entrenched reliance on experts from the Global North rather than linked to gaps in capacity. Lack of expertise is often a claim that underpins regional imbalances, as experts that have previously worked with IUCN require less training and are more likely to work with IUCN again. African State Parties in particular have stated that they *do* have the relevant expertise regionally, but their experts are underrepresented in evaluation missions.

**Indigenous peoples are also seen as being underrepresented within the panel of Advisory Body experts,** according to some States Parties and those representing indigenous people's groups. Part of the problem, as they see it, is an underappreciation or lack of recognition of indigenous knowledge systems, compared to more widely recognised forms of technical qualification. They would like IUCN to provide technical training to people with indigenous heritage so that they can play a greater role in IUCN's statutory work. This would include training on how to sign up to IUCN's global expert roster, how to deliver evaluations, familiarity with the Convention etc. They recognised that this is currently provided by organisations such as the African World Heritage Fund and other UNESCO Category II centres, as well as the IUCN World Heritage Leadership Programme, but there is an appetite for these activities to be scaled.

### 2.3. Influence

IUCN is considered to be a highly influential stakeholder within the World Heritage Convention by the majority of stakeholders interviewed. Paradoxically, there is an increasing trend for the World Heritage Committee to disregard the Advisory Bodies' recommendations for inscription and Danger Listing due to the increased politicisation of decision making. We see little opportunity for IUCN to address this issue specifically, which must be referred to the World Heritage Centre, but there is latitude for operational reform, enabling incremental, but important improvements in Operational Guidelines. On balance, we consider that IUCN is better placed to advocate for reform to the Convention from within than from without.

### 2.3.1. Concordance between Advisory Body recommendations and Committee decisions

IUCN and many other observers, have noted its concern that the Committee is increasingly ignoring IUCN recommendations regarding inscription, non-inscription, referral, deferral, and Danger Listings for sites on the World Heritage List.<sup>8</sup> A review of the Committee's responses to IUCN's reports and recommendations as discussed in the 2019 Delegation Report suggests that the Committee exhibits a bias for inscription of sites onto the World Heritage List. At the 43rd Session of the Convention in 2019, the Advisory Bodies made 24 recommendations for inscription to the WH List; the Committee accepted all but one of these. However, of the 11 sites that the Advisory Bodies recommended be deferred or removed from the list, the Committee modified 8 to move these toward inscription.<sup>9</sup> A similar trend was in evidence in the 44th Session in 2021, when IUCN recommended 5 sites for inscription, all of which were accepted by the Committee; of the 3 sites IUCN recommended for referral or deferral, however, the Committee amended all three recommendations to inscribe the sites. IUCN was particularly alarmed by the Committee's decision to "triple-jump" the process on two sites that ICOMOS had recommended not be inscribed on the list in 2018: instead of moving through the usual steps of deferral or referral of these sites, the Committee "triple-jumped" to inscription in a direct reversal of ICOMOS's advice.<sup>10</sup>

The Committee has appeared similarly hesitant to accept the IUCN and other Advisory Bodies' recommendations for sites to be added to the list of World Heritage Sites in Danger; in 2019 and 2021, the tendency was to reject recommendations for danger listings, with the exceptions being cases where the relevant State Member Party agreed to the danger listing themselves.<sup>11</sup> These trends suggest a clear political drift in recent Committee decisions, which appear to prioritise decisions that will win the Committee favour with its State Members — by inscribing their sites on the WH List or by keeping those sites off the In Danger list. IUCN has the impression that Advisory Body advice is only lauded when it recommends inscription, and that it is challenged when it recommends referral, deferral, non-inscription or danger listing. A February 2022 non-paper submitted by India to the Convention, points out that the Committee is made up of sovereign nation states and that it is due to their decisions (rather than organised anti-AB bias within the Committee as an institution) that Advisory Body recommendations tend to be overturned.<sup>12</sup> While

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<sup>8</sup> Outlook Congress Event presentation, 16-17.

<sup>9</sup> IUCN, *Delegation Report World Heritage Committee 43COM, 30 June - 10 July 2019*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> IUCN, *Delegation Report World Heritage Committee Extended 44COM, 16 - 31 July 2021*, 3.

<sup>11</sup> IUCN, *Delegation Report 44COM*, 3; IUCN, *Delegation Report 43COM*, 1-2.

<sup>12</sup> India, "Reflections on Preliminary Assessments & Revenue Generation," February 2022, 1.

it is true that these decisions are taken by State Parties, it does not resolve the issue of the Committee's tendency to overturn the expert advice it has solicited from the Advisory Bodies and on which both World Heritage Fund and the Advisory Bodies' own resources have been spent. Nor does this account for the fact that the Committee rarely disagrees with Advisory Body recommendations if they are positive, i.e. to inscribe a site. There is only disagreement when the recommendation is perceived as 'negative'.

### 2.3.2. Capacity of the Convention to reform

**The Convention has limited capacity to change at a strategic level.** The main barrier to reform is the trend towards the politicisation of decisions in the World Heritage Committee, which is beyond the capacity of IUCN to address. The majority of those we interviewed consider this to be an inevitable, and unavoidable consequence of the Convention's own success. The number of States Parties has increased concurrent with a rise in political and economic capital associated with inscription on the World Heritage List. Interviewees described discussions amongst Committee Members as 'horse trading' referring to the practice of tactical voting and favour-gaining between countries seeking successful nominations. Bloc voting is allegedly not uncommon. Representatives for each States Party are now generally political appointments from Ministries of Foreign Affairs rather than technical line ministries. Those who have been involved with the Convention for a long time are concerned that the Convention's credibility is at stake. Efforts to address this issue have been proposed in the past - such as agreeing that Committee Members are not permitted to have inscription nominations during their membership of the Committee - but they have never been codified in the Operational Guidelines, and have been met with muted enthusiasm from States Parties.

**Authority to make changes to the Convention rests with the Committee,** which has little incentive for doing so as it has a short-term mandate and enjoys a disproportionate level of authority compared to the General Assembly, according to interviewees. If a State Party is not in the Committee, it cannot push for reform. The Convention is in a bind – change can only be made by those who stand to lose from it. Further, any attempt to radically alter or re-ratify the Convention would likely result in fewer signatories to the Convention, thereby significantly undermining the reach and influence of the current Convention.



As IUCN notes, one of the key barriers to reform is that there is no one to watch the strategic health of the Convention.<sup>13</sup> Even when changes can be made at a more operational level, through the Operational Guidelines (e.g. to limit submissions for nomination while on the Committee), this does not create a legally binding instruction, as the Guidelines can be disregarded at the discretion of the States Parties, according to UNESCO's legal advisors. The Committee's departure from the Operational Guidelines is a concern for all, even to those Committee Members who took part in this Review. IUCN stakeholders have also explained that at the Committee level, operational decisions are not made based on precedents. These decisions do not capitalise on previous experience and do not become legally binding or even a basis that later debates may refer to. This generates inconsistencies in the positioning of the Committee. Interviewees compared this situation to that of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which builds upon its past operational decisions. The majority of stakeholders who spoke about this problem felt that the World Heritage Centre should play a stronger role in maintaining standards, though no one was able to offer a suggestion as to how this could be done.

### 2.3.3. Ability of IUCN to advocate for change

**IUCN is better placed to advocate reform from within the Convention, rather than as an outside partner.** IUCN is considered to be highly influential within the Convention<sup>14</sup> – a view endorsed by many interviewees (including States Parties, Committee Members, UNESCO and the World Heritage Centre). IUCN is visible at Committee Sessions, with a place at the podium and with speaking rights above non-Committee Member States Parties. As IUCN drafts the decisions for nomination dossiers, it sets the tone and topics for discussion at the Committee sessions. From our own assessment, IUCN appears to have had some successes in advocating for operational level changes within the Convention, as we have highlighted in the *Alignment* section of the report.

Although attribution is hard to establish for changes happening within the Convention and its Operational Guidelines, several recent amendments are aligned with IUCN's historic advocacy priorities within the Convention, suggesting a high degree of influence. The reforms pertaining to indigenous rights and Free Prior Informed Consent are one such example. Another operational adjustment was the reform of the nomination process with the introduction of the Upstream Process<sup>15</sup>, which enables the Advisory Bodies and the World Heritage Centre to provide advice and capacity building support to States Parties in preparation of their nominations. Similarly, the

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<sup>13</sup> IUCN (2021): *Outlook Congress Event\_Powerpoint\_06* Sept 2021

<sup>14</sup> Meskell, L. (2013): *UNESCO's World Heritage Convention at 40*. Current Anthropology. Vol. 54, No. 4, p.485

<sup>15</sup> <https://whc.unesco.org/en/upstreamprocess/>

introduction of the so-called “Upstream Process”, which creates room for pre-inscription dialogue between IUCN and States Parties, and a Preliminary Assessment, were positive adjustments to the Operational Guidelines. These tools provide an opportunity for pre-nomination advice, which could help to alleviate some of the political pressures that arise from disagreements between States Parties and the Advisory Bodies, considered as harmful to all parties concerned.

## 2.4. Financial Health

**Financial Health:** The World Heritage Convention is facing a funding crisis. As the Convention has grown in scale and complexity, the demand for Advisory Body services and the administrative burden on the World Heritage Centre itself has risen dramatically, while the funds available to cover this work have decreased. The solutions to the funding crisis remain elusive and it is unlikely that additional funds can be secured for the World Heritage Fund itself from States Parties which to date have shown little appetite for increasing their contributions to the Convention.

IUCN currently estimates that it will contribute CHF 400,000 in direct finance and CHF 1.3 million in total when including in-kind support marshalled through IUCN volunteer networks over the 2022-2023 Biennium in order to maintain the current level of statutory work. It is unclear whether this level of internal funding will be available after 2023. IUCN must therefore reassess its ability and willingness to continue investing its own resources into the statutory work and, if not, be prepared to provide justification in negotiating contractual arrangements with the World Heritage Centre for a reduced level of support to the Convention in line with real costs and available resources.

### 2.4.1. Insufficient resources

**The World Heritage Fund is insufficient to cover the mandatory work of the Advisory Bodies.** The World Heritage Convention funding crisis is well documented<sup>16</sup>. IUCN’s World Heritage activities broadly fall all into three areas:

- i) IUCN’s statutory work, as mandated by the Operational Guidelines;

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<sup>16</sup> See in particular IUCN’s background document to the Ad-hoc Working Group - Decision 44 COM 14

- ii) IUCN's wider World Heritage work (such as the World Heritage Leadership Programme and Outlook);
- iii) IUCN's World Heritage work in the wider IUCN programme portfolio.

Here, we consider the financial health of IUCN's statutory work, as this will provide a basis for assessing future potential activities that fall under the other two categories above. Within the time constraints of this exercise, we are unable to provide a more detailed assessment of these areas.

**All interviewees agree that the financial arrangements for the World Heritage Convention are highly strained.** The majority of interviewees, including those within the World Heritage Centre, States Parties and Committee Members, and wider stakeholders, recognise that IUCN, and ICOMOS in particular, are chronically underfunded. The demand for Advisory Body services is rising exponentially as the number of sites on the List has increased, yet the resources available to respond have actually decreased. The Advisory Bodies' costs are covered by the World Heritage Fund, which is capped at 1% of States Parties' contributions to UNESCO. IUCN reports that there has been a 22% decrease in funds since the withdrawal of the US from UNESCO, resulting in a 10% reduction in the budget available for the Advisory Bodies.

**IUCN has not received an increase in funding for the last decade, during a time when the size of the list of natural and mixed sites has increased by 23%.<sup>17</sup>** UNESCO's own data shows that the amount available for each inscribed property has fallen from USD 6,900 in 1996 to just USD 2,600 in 2021, which it ascribes to a decrease in the Fund's income and a rise in the number of inscribed sites.<sup>18</sup> The addition of Preliminary Assessments to the statutory work of the Advisory Bodies is estimated to cost an additional USD 550,000 per year.<sup>19</sup> This does not account for the additional costs incurred by Advisory Bodies to deliver these activities. As UNESCO notes, this would further reduce available funds for conducting existing statutory obligations.<sup>20</sup>

IUCN expects to receive USD 1,465,282 from the World Heritage Fund for the 2022-2023 Biennium for conducting its statutory work.<sup>21</sup> In doing so, IUCN accrues additional operational costs for activities such as facilitating field missions or conducting 'damage control' with national

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<sup>17</sup> IUCN (2022): IUCN Observations/Comment: Ad-hoc Working Group - Decision 44 COM 14 / Background Document

<sup>18</sup> UNESCO IOS (2022): *Performance Audit of the World Heritage Centre*. P.6

<sup>19</sup> UNESCO IOS (2022): *Performance Audit of the World Heritage Centre*. P.9

<sup>20</sup> UNESCO IOS (2022): *Performance Audit of the World Heritage Centre*, p.9

<sup>21</sup> WHC/21/44.COM/14, p.76

counterparts in the event of a negative decision, voluntary time contributed by consultants, or the 'intense'<sup>22</sup> preparations for the annual Committee Sessions.

In addition, IUCN reports high transaction costs associated with routine requests and International Assistance, as well as significant time and material contributions at national level in support of evaluations, field visits, and other Convention-related business. IUCN states that the average financial cost of an evaluation is 25,000 USD, but when in-kind contributions are factored in (voluntary time and materials), the cost is closer to 94,000 USD<sup>23</sup>. In the same paper, IUCN shows that the Biennium budgets have decreased substantially since 2018-19. As a result, there is internal pressure within IUCN to allocate adequate resource for activities related to the Convention. Regional offices in particular struggle to allocate funds for this work as they receive no funding from the World Heritage Fund itself.

IUCN estimates conservatively that it will need to contribute an additional CHF 1,315,230 of its own resources (in-kind and direct finance) to maintain the current level of support to the Convention.<sup>24</sup>

**There is consensus within IUCN (both within the World Heritage team and wider departments) that the assumption that IUCN will be able and willing to provide the same level of support to the Convention is not sustainable, and that a review of how the statutory work is funded is now essential.** IUCN has always co-financed the statutory work delivered by the World Heritage programme of work, increasing the funding available to meet the rising volume of work the Advisory Body role has entailed. Following the 2013 external evaluation of the World Heritage programme of work, the IUCN Director General approved a management response confirming an increased allocation of framework funding from IUCN.<sup>25</sup> This was endorsed by the Council, which 'requests the Director General in the 2015 budgeting process to consider providing additional resources from core funds to IUCN's role in the World Heritage Convention.'<sup>26</sup> After this point, the funding was increased from around CHF 200,000 to approximately CHF 300,000 per annum. However, in 2022 the funding was reduced back to previous levels, and the IUCN World Heritage Unit currently receives CHF 200,000 a year in core funding to support the statutory

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<sup>22</sup> IUCN non-WH staff and States Parties described the preparations for the Committee sessions as *intense* and *time-consuming*.

<sup>23</sup> IUCN: Supplementary Information: Ad-hoc Working Group - Decision 44 COM 14

<sup>24</sup> WHC/21/44.COM/14, p.76

<sup>25</sup> IUCN (2014): *Management response to Evaluation of IUCN World Heritage Programme 2014*

<sup>26</sup> IUCN (2014): *83<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the IUCN Council, Gland (CH), 18-21 May 2014. Decisions. C/83/20*

work. At the time of writing (October 2022), it is unclear whether IUCN is able to continue co-financing the statutory work for the Convention beyond the current financial year.

#### 2.4.2. No solutions

**There is an on-going discussion within the Convention about whether the Advisory Bodies represent value for money.** UNESCO's Internal Oversight Services (IOS) conducted a Performance Audit of the World Heritage Convention, seeking to assess the financial sustainability of the World Heritage Centre<sup>27</sup>. Strikingly, the report only reviewed how the World Heritage Fund is allocated, which does not account for the full financial health of the World Heritage Centre. Including the World Heritage Fund, UNESCO's regular budget and the voluntary contributions, the Advisory Bodies only account for approximately 12% of the total budget (IUCN itself accounts for only 5%).<sup>28</sup> In omitting to include these funds in the Performance Audit, there has been a missed opportunity to provide an accurate understanding of the current financial situation. The report focused mostly on the Advisory Bodies, drawing conclusions that have been robustly contested by IUCN<sup>29</sup> and ICOMOS. To date, IUCN has received no response from UNESCO on these points of contestation. In particular, the report does not account for the Advisory Bodies' additional contributions to the Convention, which effectively subsidise its activities.

We endorse IUCN's suggestion for an independent assessment and business plan for the Convention, which should review all funding available to support World Heritage.<sup>30</sup> It would be beneficial to the financial health of the Convention if an holistic fully independent audit were to be undertaken, as this may help to identify potential areas for streamlining administrative and operational procedures, thereby resulting in potential cost-savings.

**A variety of solutions have been proposed over the years, yet, as IUCN notes<sup>31</sup>, there has been an almost universal failure to implement any of them.** The difficulty arises from the fact that most of the suggestions that have been made in the past required voluntary action from the States Parties, which, to date, has not been forthcoming. IUCN reports that only 3.6% of States Parties

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<sup>27</sup> UNESCO IOS (2022): *Performance Audit of the World Heritage Centre: Annex 9 – Terms of Reference of the IOS Performance Audit of the WHC*.

<sup>28</sup> WHC21-44com14, p.55

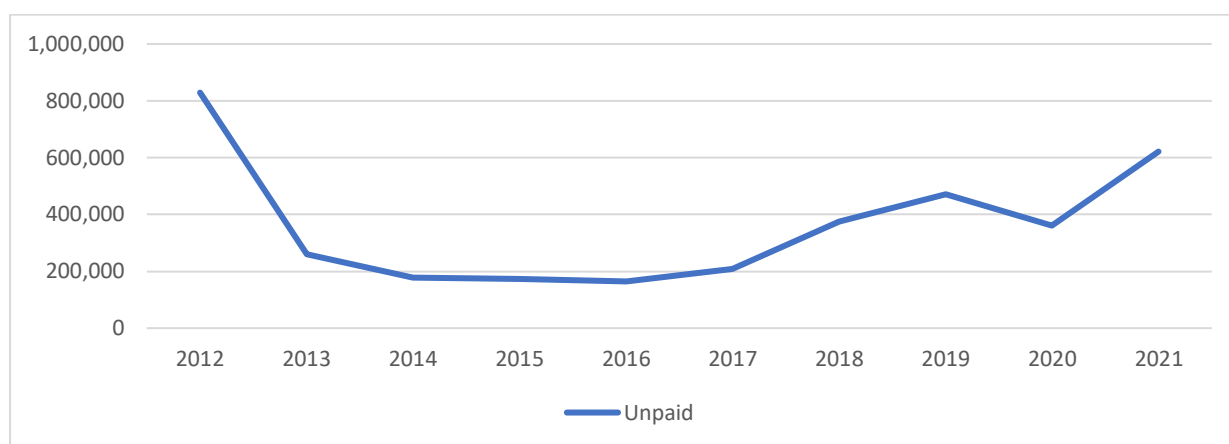
<sup>29</sup> IUCN (2022): *IUCN comments on the IOS Performance Audit of the World Heritage Centre*.

<sup>30</sup> IUCN (2022); *Supplementary Information: Ad-hoc Work Group Decision 44 COM 14 Draft IUCN inputs for further elaboration*

<sup>31</sup> IUCN (2022): *IUCN Observations/Comment: Ad-hoc Working Group - Decision 44 COM 14 / Background Document*

have voluntarily increased their annual compulsory contribution.<sup>32</sup> This may not be surprising, considering that many countries have not met their existing compulsory contributions. Looking at the World Heritage Fund’s published *Statements of Assessed Compulsory and Voluntary Contributions* shows an increasing, and concerning, trend in unpaid assessed compulsory contributions (see figure below). As of December 2021, fully one third of States Parties had unpaid contributions (33%).<sup>33</sup> The funding shortfall has been further exacerbated by the departure of the US from UNESCO in 2018.<sup>34</sup>

Figure 2: Summary of value of unpaid assessed compulsory contributions to the World Heritage Fund (source: World Heritage Fund Statements of Assessed Compulsory and Voluntary Contributions December 2012 - December 2021)



Some within IUCN feel that where technical assistance is requested by State Parties they should be charged proportionally for their services, with a potential subsidy provided by wealthier nations. However, cost-sharing models have been proposed in the past with limited success. In 2019, the Committee adopted a proposal for a cost-sharing model for the evaluation of nominations, with wealthier nations contributing additional funds to cover the nomination costs of Least Developed Countries or Low-Income Economies (Decision 43 COM 14, para. 18). A sub-account was created to hold the additional budget. 18 nomination dossiers were received from High or Middle-Income countries, generating a forecast surplus revenue of USD 440,000. However, as of December 2020, only 19.5% of this amount (USD 86,218) was received.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> World Heritage Fund Statement of Assessed and Voluntary Contributions December 2021

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/the-united-states-withdraws-from-unesco-us-department-of-state-press-release/>

<sup>35</sup> WHC/21/44.COM/14, p.14

Overall, on the basis of past precedent, it is unlikely that further contributions will be forthcoming from States Parties to increase the available funds within the World Heritage Fund. In a background document submitted to the Ad-hoc Working Group in 2022, IUCN describes the current financial position with the Convention 'unsustainable', warning that unless funds increase, the Advisory Bodies will be obliged to 'align workload to available resources.'<sup>36</sup>

It is our view that the current financial situation warrants precisely such a re-alignment of workload and resources. IUCN should conduct a detailed internal assessment leading to a clear set of costed activities that IUCN is able to deliver within the current resourcing constraints of the World Heritage Fund. This should entail a thorough cost benefit analysis of all activities related to the discharge of its statutory work. We return to this in detail in the recommendations that follow later in the report.

## 2.5. Impact

The Convention is uniquely equipped with a range of measures to encourage strong conservation management practices. However, it is difficult to assess the conservation impact of these measures, or of the Convention more broadly, at ground level, as there are no measurement frameworks that explicitly record conservation outcomes pre- and post-inscription.

However, IUCN's flagship World Heritage Outlook report fills an important gap by providing an assessment of conservation outlook at all natural World Heritage Sites. The Outlook report illustrates that sites are just about maintaining a static conservation outlook in spite of rising threat levels, suggesting that inscription on the World Heritage List does play a role in protecting natural heritage.

### 2.5.1. Delivering Impact

**The purpose of the World Heritage Convention is to deliver positive conservation outcomes at Listed Sites.** The Promise of Sydney, which provides a clear impact ambition for IUCN's conservation work, includes the World Heritage Convention as a means to achieve these objectives. In 2014, it states that the 'major goal for the next 10 years is to achieve a demonstrable improvement in the conservation status of natural World Heritage Sites'<sup>37</sup>. The World Heritage

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<sup>36</sup> IUCN (2022): *Ad-hoc Working Group – Decision 44 COM 14 / Background Document*

<sup>37</sup> Promise of Sydney p. 4.

approach complements IUCN's work to promote conservation and to protect 30% of the natural and maritime environment by 2030, as stated in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. World Heritage Sites can contribute to this effort as natural protected areas, and because they provide high quality protection due to the multiple layers of management they confer on natural areas.

**In principle, the Advisory Body role empowers IUCN to recommend a range of measures to strengthen conservation management.** IUCN has the ability to recommend measures such as de-listing, Danger Listing and Reactive Monitoring visits. Stakeholders from States Parties and within IUCN observe that the World Heritage Convention is unique in this regard. In theory, these measures enable IUCN to strengthen conservation outcomes by highlighting specific areas that need to be addressed in order to improve the conservation outlook at a specific site.

**However, there are mixed views as to the efficacy of these measures** – most notably Danger Listing – as a number of States Parties and the World Heritage Centre itself said that some sites have been on the Danger List for many years with no change (the Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley being a good example). Besides, by the time a site enters the Danger List, the damage might already be irreversible<sup>38</sup>. Unfortunately, there have been no empirical studies to assess the effectiveness of these measures in improving conservation outcomes, as we discuss below.

### 2.5.2. Measuring impact

**There are no reporting instruments within the World Heritage Convention to illustrate or measure the impact of World Heritage Inscription on conservation outcomes.** Are conservation outcomes improved as a result of World Heritage inscription? Does World Heritage inscription ensure the protection of each site's natural value?<sup>39</sup> Answering these questions would provide a strong evidence base for showcasing the Convention's contribution to nature conservation. The absence of impact measurement tools and data was also noted in the 2013 external evaluation of IUCN's World Heritage programme of work.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Labadi, S. (2022), "The World Heritage Convention at 50: management, credibility and sustainable development", *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCHMSD-05-2022-0077>.

<sup>39</sup> IUCN (2020): *Protected Areas Benefits Assessment Tool + (PA-BAT+)*, p.vii

<sup>40</sup> IUCN (2013): *Evaluation of the IUCN World Heritage Programme*, p.65



Within the Convention's current statutory reporting instruments, we can infer impact from two sources, *the List of World Heritage in Danger* and *State of Conservation* reporting. Danger Listing provides an indication of the proportion of listed sites with deteriorated conservation outcomes. State of Conservation reporting provides an update on sites, but as this as this a reactive instrument, it only provides a snapshot at a comparatively small proportion of sites that are threatened. Moreover, recent research has highlighted the extent of political manoeuvring in shielding heritage sites from Danger Listing, suggesting that the reality on the ground is potentially worse than the World Heritage List suggests.<sup>41</sup> There is a need, therefore, for stronger monitoring and reporting instruments to assess the conservation outlook of World Heritage inscription.

**Recognising this need, IUCN's World Heritage Outlook provides the only global assessment of the potential of natural World Heritage sites to conserve their World Heritage values over time.** Starting in 2014, a report is produced every three years, providing a longitudinal assessment of conservation outlook. It does not provide assessment pre- and post-inscription, but rather assesses changes over time across three datapoints since 2014. It assesses each natural and mixed site across three areas: *status of outstanding universal value, threats and protection and management*. It assesses conservation outlook against the four out of ten OUV criteria related to nature:

- (vii) contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- (viii) be outstanding examples representing major stages of Earth's history, including the record of life, significant on- going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- (ix) be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- (x) contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of Outstanding Universal Value from the point of view of science or conservation (UNESCO, 2019).

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<sup>41</sup> Morrison, T.H. et al. (2020): *Political dynamics and governance of World Heritage ecosystems*. Nature Sustainability 3, p.947

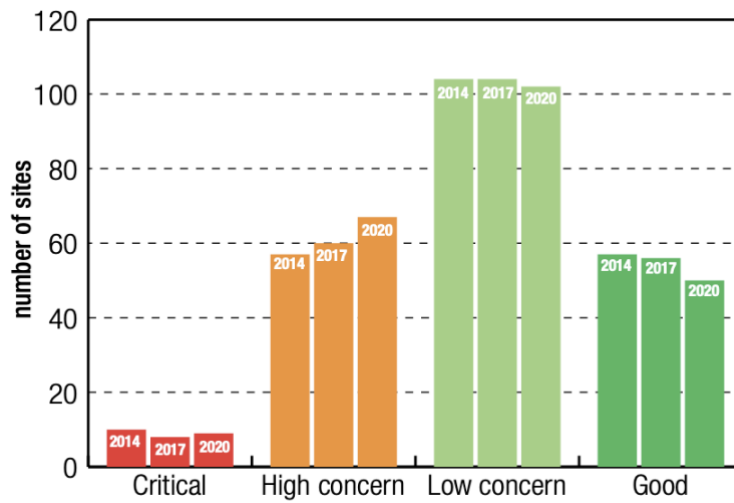
World Heritage Outlook is consistently one of IUCN's most downloaded and read publications each year it is produced, according to IUCN's Altmetric Attention Score. One State Party we interviewed was full of praise for Outlook, explaining that it filled a critical need in understanding the impact of the Convention on conservation results. Nevertheless, in spite of the high Altmetric Attention Score, within IUCN itself, there is a sense that this is an underutilised communications asset. According to the Membership Team, who polled members' views, IUCN's members are generally not familiar with Outlook compared to other higher-profile instruments such as the Red and Green Lists.

**IUCN's own assessment of the conservation outlook at World Heritage Sites shows that there has been limited improvement since 2017.** There is no baseline data to compare pre- and post-inscription conservation outlook, as World Heritage Outlook provides an assessment of existing sites only. Time-series data from 2014, 2017 and 2020 illustrates that in the majority of cases, the conservation outlook of sites has remained broadly the same. In those instances where changes have been observed (24 sites between 2017 and 2020), twice as many sites deteriorated (16) as improved (8). In total, since 2014, 43 sites changed their overall conservation outlook, with improvements in 18 cases, compared to deteriorations in 25.<sup>42</sup> Looking specifically at the conservation status of natural values, Outlook records a notable increase in the number of sites of *high concern* as shown in the chart below taken from the most recent Outlook Report. The number of sites of *low concern* or *good* has decreased.

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<sup>42</sup> IUCN (2020): *World Heritage Outlook 3*, p.85

Figure 3: Overall state of values of all natural World Heritage sites in 2014, 2017 and 2020, taken from World Heritage Outlook 3



The report notes that climate change is the most common threat to OUV, but it also shows that tourism visitation and infrastructure are significant threats. This is interesting, as many of the States Parties we interviewed described tourism revenue as one of the primary motivations for inscription, as discussed below.

Interviews with States Parties highlighted that the primary motivations for inscription are often linked to economic development and raising national profile, rather than conservation. This was found to be particularly true in Africa, where economic development is a prime motivator for World Heritage Listing. Conservation is rarely mentioned as a primary motivation. Some interviewees within IUCN, States Parties and the expert community saw the integration of "sustainable development" as a threat to the Outstanding Universal Value of the properties, citing the example of the Selous Game Reserve as a site which should have been removed from the List. On the other hand, State Parties in the Global South view development as their prerogative, and do not want conservation to prevent infrastructural changes that would benefit the quality of life of their citizens.

### 3. Recommendations

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There is an implicit question underpinning this review: *to what extent should IUCN remain committed to its role as Advisory Body to the World Heritage Convention?* The Review Framework above sought to provide a high-level assessment of advantages and disadvantages associated with the Advisory Body role. In spite of the many challenges associated with the Advisory Body role, and the Convention itself more broadly, there is consensus within IUCN that the Advisory Body role confers a range of valuable benefits that would be lost if IUCN were to depart from the Convention. IUCN has a unique level of access to and influence over one of the most significant platforms for multi-national policy making in the Nature/Culture sector. The World Heritage Convention is a high-profile brand, widely recognised beyond technical experts working in heritage conservation.

However, the review has highlighted a number of areas in which IUCN can strengthen its engagement with the Convention, and a number of ways in which it can address some of the outstanding challenges the Convention is experiencing. The issues at hand are highly complex and often interrelated. For clarity, we split the recommendations into three categories:

- i) ***Strategic recommendations*** provide guidance for building a strategy for IUCN's World Heritage work.
- ii) ***Operational recommendations*** provide guidance for IUCN on how to address specific challenges or opportunities within the World Heritage Convention.
- iii) ***Recommendations to support the World Heritage Centre*** provide suggestions for how IUCN can support the World Heritage Centre to address some of the challenges facing the Convention.

The recommendations here are directed towards the World Heritage Unit unless explicitly stated otherwise.

### 3.1. Strategic Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATION 1: Develop a strategy for IUCN's World Heritage programme of work.** There is currently no written, clear or consolidated strategy for the World Heritage programme of work, nor, by extension is there a strategy for engaging with the World Heritage Convention itself. This is problematic on a number of levels. Firstly, without clear set of ambitions for the World Heritage programme of work, it is difficult to advise IUCN on how it should position itself within the Convention within this review. Secondly, without a strategy it is hard to determine whether IUCN's engagement with the Convention is supporting or undermining its work, as there are no outcome measurement indicators associated with the AB role. Thirdly, the absence of a strategy obstructs budgeting and financial forecasting. A strategy would enable IUCN to develop a costed set of activities and to identify potential funding gaps based on previously-attained funding levels. We recognise that much of IUCN's statutory work is delivered in response to need/demand from States Parties, and is therefore hard to anticipate, but it should be possible to develop a set of basic assumptions around likely demand levels based on past precedent.

We strongly encourage IUCN to undertake this exercise in a collaborative manner, seeking contributions from a wide range of departments and programmes within IUCN, especially those working in 'outward facing' roles such as partnerships, communication and membership. There is appetite within IUCN to engage in this exercise, as the Convention could serve a multitude of purposes, as we explore below. The strategy should be aligned with IUCN's Nature 2030 Strategy, and should be situated within the broader discussions about IUCN's 20-year vision, which are taking place within IUCN in advance of the next Congress in 2025.

Developing a strategy should include a number of actions:

- **Build a programmatic theory of change.** Consistent with the recommendations in the World Heritage programme of work evaluation from 2013, IUCN should develop a theory of change, illustrating the expected conservation outcomes from World Heritage inscription. For example, it should illustrate how inscription is expected to impact biodiversity or eco-system services.

- **Develop a monitoring framework to assess IUCN's engagement with the World Heritage Convention.** This is about assessing the quality of engagement that IUCN has with the various elements of the Convention. At its most basic, it could take the form of a performance measurement framework, structured in a similar manner to the Review Framework used in this project. The framework would provide a measurable benchmark of IUCN's engagement with the Convention, facilitating a quick and accurate diagnosis of problems, and the identification of potential remedial actions. It would enable IUCN to monitor trends such as the overturning of IUCN's advice, the level of influence that IUCN has within the Convention, or IUCN's reputation amongst stakeholders. This would also contribute to a wider Convention Health Framework, that we propose below in Recommendation 8. The framework should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, and would facilitate future discussions around IUCN's continued engagement with the Convention.
- **Develop a clear strategy for positioning World Heritage within the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.** The World Heritage Convention is well-positioned to make important contributions to the goals of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, particularly with regards to achieving the goal of placing 30% of all land and oceans under protected area status by 2030.

Positioning the Convention within the Framework, would also help to address the optics of the Convention as being predominantly culture-focused. There are more cultural sites (897) inscribed on the World Heritage List than either mixed (39) or natural sites (218). According to one experienced observer who participated in this review, this means that a) the Convention's contributions to nature conservation are often overlooked by policy makers, and that b) the 'front line' policy making around nature conservation is taking place in other Conventions, and that c) the Convention struggles to attract nature conservation experts to the Committee Sessions.

Much work has already been committed to exploring the linkages between World Heritage and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. A joint statement was produced by IUCN, the World Heritage Centre, ICCROM, ICOMOS and ICIMOD in 2019, highlighting the specific contributions of World Heritage to the Framework and specific indicators that

could be included in the results measurement framework.<sup>43</sup> However, as IUCN reports, there has been limited follow up to this process. The IUCN World Heritage programme of work should conduct a brief review to assess the status of the recommendations to identify potential follow-up activities.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Develop a communications strategy to explain the World Heritage programme of work.** There is currently limited communication and outreach strategy to explain the World Heritage programme of work. As interviewees have explained, IUCN is a large and complex organisation, and on occasion the lines between IUCN's statutory work and its broader advocacy and programming can be blurred. Similarly, there is a request from within IUCN for better communication with the World Heritage Unit. Communications priorities will flow from the development of an overarching World Heritage programme of work strategy, above, but there are a number of actions that can already be foreseen:

- **Clarify the distinction between IUCN's statutory work on the Convention from its wider World Heritage programming.** This should entail clarification of the roles on the IUCN website. It could also include targeted communications to national governments through the IUCN membership channels and through regional directors. This could take the form of 'road-mapping' statutory procedures and the organisations responsible for delivering them. IUCN may also wish to consider creating a separate organisational brand identity for IUCN's Advisory Body work in order to reinforce differentiation between its various mandates.
- **Build an 'online community zone' to better communicate with IUCN constituents.** We understand that there are plans underway within IUCN to develop such a platform. The World Heritage Unit should be involved with these discussions in order to explore options for enabling vibrant and participatory discussions around key issues within the Convention. This would help to address the perception that civil society organisations, in particular, are generally excluded from the business of the Convention. As part of this work, IUCN could also consider polling members' views on World Heritage issues, helping to generate an evidence-base for wider advocacy work.

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<sup>43</sup> *World Heritage and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*

- **Strengthen engagement with States Parties.** Many of the States Parties we spoke to asked for closer dialogue and engagement with IUCN around the nomination and inscription process. As above, this would likely take the form of bilateral engagement with the IUCN Regional Offices, who should engage closely with States Parties early on in the nomination process to explain each step, and IUCN's role.
- **Promote the role of the World Heritage Convention in contributing to nature conservation.** As noted above, this should entail public communication about the role of World Heritage Sites in contributing to the achievement of conservation goals, such as those within the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. IUCN could also develop case studies to illustrate the positive conservation benefits that follow inscription. This ties in to the recommendations above about impact measurement.
- **Strengthen internal communications with IUCN Regional Directors.** The World Heritage Unit is considered to be generally good at communicating with Regional Directors, yet there are requests to further streamline dialogue in order to keep Directors updated on recommendations and potential problem areas in advance. Given the high volume of communication traffic this would likely entail, IUCN should consider developing a dedicated channel within the 'online community zone' or creating a separate internal communications platform for Convention-related information exchange. This could take the form of a basic Client Management System (such as Salesforce, for example), which creates alerts, logs discussions with external parties (in this case States Parties) and records follow-up activities.
- **Conduct reputation audits amongst IUCN's members.** IUCN has a large global membership, with representatives from a broad range of thematic areas and institutions, including national governments and NGOs. IUCN does already poll member views on a variety of issues, but has not conducted reputation audits in the past. Reputation measurement instruments could be developed using basic criteria such as *knowledge of IUCN's work; attitude towards IUCN, and quality of IUCN's stakeholder engagement*. Conducting an annual reputation audit amongst members would facilitate a deeper analysis of whether and to what extent positive/negative media coverage about IUCN's Advisory Body work has on its overall reputation. It would also enable IUCN to monitor the impacts of negative events such as the public disagreement over the decision to inscribe the Kaeng Kachan National Park in Thailand, for example. The reputation audit would also



have a wider relevance to non-World Heritage departments within IUCN as it would be designed to solicit views about all aspects of IUCN's work. This work would sit within the Corporate Services Department under the management of the Membership and Commissions Support team.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Strengthen evaluation and monitoring instruments to measure the impact of World Heritage Sites on achieving positive conservation outcomes.** Throughout this review, we have struggled to articulate the impact of World Heritage Inscription on conservation outcomes. There does not appear to be either an aggregated evidence base to measure conservation impacts, or specific case studies.

As most interviewees acknowledged, the World Heritage Convention itself tends to be better known as an instrument to protect cultural heritage rather than natural heritage. Measuring the conservation impact of inscription on the World Heritage List would therefore create an evidence base for policy and advocacy work in general, and enable IUCN to showcase the World Heritage Convention as a critical instrument for nature conservation using communications and outreach platforms such as PANORAMA. This could also evidence the contribution of World Heritage Sites to the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework goal of '30 by 30'. IUCN has plenty of data about each of the listed Natural Heritage Sites, in some cases dating back many years, so there is a wealth of existing data that could be drawn upon to develop a practical toolkit for measuring conservation impacts. IUCN's World Heritage Outlook report provides a strong basis on which to build. Key actions to take, include:

- **Conduct case study impact assessments of World Heritage Sites.** We recommend the IUCN undertakes case studies to begin with as a global impact evaluation would require a considerable investment of resource. Case studies could be conducted on a largely qualitative basis using existing data held by IUCN, or gathered from parks managers or relevant national departments. Case studies could be integrated into the World Heritage Outlook report, and could be used separately for communications and advocacy work.
- **Deepen the regional analysis within World Heritage Outlook.** Speaking to the World Heritage Unit within IUCN, there is certainly scope to create a more regionalised level of analysis with World Heritage Outlook. This could even entail the creation of specific indicators to measure output-level achievements such as 'hectares of forest/steppe/wetland etc. protected by the Convention'. More ambitiously, at outcome

level, it could consider indicators like 'legislative reform', which would showcase how the Convention is a lever for positive change in national conservation approaches.

- **Integrate the IUCN Green List as a conservation benchmark within World Heritage Outlook.** Outlook does not assess conservation outcomes. The World Heritage programme of work should consider using the same (or similar) impact indicators used with the Green List to assess conservation outcomes (criterion 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3).

**RECOMMENDATION 4: Develop a funding strategy for IUCN's Advisory Body role.** There is insufficient funding available to IUCN to continue delivering statutory work at current levels through the World Heritage Fund. Past efforts to increase voluntary contributions have failed. IUCN must therefore decide what level of financial contribution (if any) it is prepared to sustain going forward.

It is our independent view that IUCN should continue to co-finance the statutory work delivered by the IUCN World Heritage programme of work at the current level. As noted above, the advantages of the Advisory Body role outweigh the disadvantages. Further, by co-financing the statutory work IUCN can maintain the credibility of being an independent actor within the Convention, rather than a consultant to UNESCO.

However, if IUCN is not prepared to make any further contributions, then IUCN must prepare a clear 'get-what-you-pay-for' model, outlining the services it is able to deliver with the available World Heritage Funding. This would require a careful transitioning phase to ensure that the World Heritage Centre and the Committee are informed about the intent to scale back activities. In reaching a decision on how to proceed, we recommend the following actions:

- **IUCN should cost its contributions for each activity within its statutory work.** IUCN has undertaken some preliminary costing for the delivery of its statutory obligations to the Convention, but a full costing exercise has not been undertaken. IUCN's statutory work requires inputs from IUCN teams across a range of positions, most notably at Regional Director level. We acknowledge that it is impossible to conduct a thoroughly accurate costing exercise as Convention-related business may coincide with other programme activities, but it should be possible to build a reasonably accurate cost model based on

existing timesheets and estimates. This would enable IUCN to estimate the current funding gap for each type of activity associated with the statutory work.

- **IUCN should develop a workplan based on the available WHF budget for its statutory work.** The World Heritage Unit should provide an estimate for the number of activities it is able to deliver with the current allocation of resource from the World Heritage Fund. For example, it would include an estimate for the number of inscription evaluations, preliminary assessments, reactive monitoring visits etc. This would likely result in a significantly scaled back level of support to the Convention.
- **IUCN should engage with the IUCN Council to agree on a proposed set of reduced activities.** The World Heritage Unit should share the workplan above with the Council to canvass views on the proposed changes and to formulate pre-emptive mitigation measures to limit the potential negative ‘fall-out’ when the proposal to reduce services is presented to the World Heritage Committee and the World Heritage Centre.
- **IUCN should engage with ICOMOS and ICCROM to reach consensus on a common position with regards to aligning activities to available resources.** Ideally, the Advisory Bodies should develop a clear common position about the level of work they are able provide to the Convention based on available resources. Ideally, they should speak with one voice in advocating for a scaled back provision of statutory work. IUCN should therefore encourage ICOMOS and ICCROM to undertake similar financial reviews, if they have not already.
- **IUCN should engage with the World Heritage Centre to present the rebalanced workplans.** Given the on-going discussions around value for money within the Convention, specifically targeting the Advisory Bodies, such a proposition to the Committee could be seen as highly incendiary, and could encourage a renewed focus on finding alternative Advisory Bodies. This will entail difficult conversations with UNESCO and the World Heritage Centre, and may exacerbate tensions with States Parties, yet the alternative is to continue subsidising the statutory work.

In parallel to these actions, we recommend that:

- **IUCN should advocate for Committee Sessions to take place every two years in order to reduce costs.** This recommendation is consistent with the recommendations from the IUCN World Heritage programme of work evaluation conducted in 2013. Many of the stakeholders we interviewed in this review expressed relief that the Committee Session this year had been postponed with no alternative date agreed. Preparation for the Committee Sessions entails a significant investment of time and resource from the Secretariat, the Advisory Bodies and the States Parties themselves. Holding a physical Session every other year could result in significant cost savings, and alleviate financial pressures elsewhere in the Convention. There are some concerns that this would create a backlog of Committee business, but discussions could be facilitated online during the ‘off years’ to mitigate this risk. These discussions could provide an opportunity to consider critical decisions around items such as Danger Listing, for example.
- **IUCN should engage the WHC to invite UNESCO’s collaboration on fundraising to meet gaps through extra-budgetary funding.** There is a need for a more collaborative approach with UNESCO to identifying and addressing funding gaps. There may also be opportunities to pursue private and corporate philanthropy in order to cover the costs of IUCN’s non-statutory work. While IUCN has had some successes in the past raising funds from these sources, it remains a comparatively under-leveraged resource.

**RECOMMENDATION 5: Address the regional imbalance of the World Heritage List.** There are a variety of historical, political, structural and financial reasons for the geographical imbalance of the World Heritage List. One of the underlying causes is a perception that the Convention itself is Eurocentric<sup>44</sup>, an accusation we heard levelled against IUCN and the other Advisory Bodies over the course of the interviews. Another is the uneven distribution of technical experts and World Heritage leaders, who tend to come from European and North American countries. Indeed, States Parties from the Global South are frustrated at seeing ‘the same experts again and again’ on site visits and technical reports. There is frustration that IUCN does not make more use of regional

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<sup>44</sup> Steiner, L. and Frey, B. (2012): Correcting the Imbalance of the World Heritage List: Did the UNESCO Strategy Work? *Journal of International Organizations Studies*, Vol. 3, Issue 1, p. 28; Lababi, S. (2022): The World Heritage Convention at 50: management, credibility and sustainable development. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, p.5

experts, who would provide a deeper contextual understanding of the sites, and would be more cost-effective to deploy on field visits. Stakeholders highlight the need for continuous professional training and mid-career training focused on the processes and procedures linked to the World Heritage Convention.

There are two ways that IUCN can address the regional imbalance of the list: it can continue to strengthen the capacity of technical experts based in the global south, and it can take steps to change the optics of its own European identity.

- **Promote the World Heritage Leadership Programme.** The World Heritage Leadership Programme is IUCN's flagship capacity building initiative within the World Heritage sector. IUCN should promote the programme more widely amongst States Parties to demonstrate IUCN's active role in redressing one of the underlying causes of the imbalanced List. Further, IUCN should explore options for creating training modules focussing on the nomination process.
- **Explore accreditation for the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) expert roster.** This would create a transparent standard for assessing qualifications of technical experts, and would help to identify regional skills gaps. This in turn could help inform the content and geographical focus of the World Heritage Leadership Programme. A similar accreditation model is currently being employed within the Green List pool of experts. IUCN should conduct regional market analyses to test potential business models for sustainable revenue streams. Are people able and willing to pay for accreditation? How does this vary from one region to the next? Could a weighted fee structure be considered in order to subsidise fees for low-income countries?
- **Create regional pools of experts.** Leveraging IUCN's strong regional presence through its national offices and through its membership, the World Heritage Leadership Programme and the WCPA should create regional pools of experts. This need not be any more formal than an e-mail distribution list at first, to which calls for experts are sent in the first instance when they are required. This would confer a presumption that non-regional experts are deployed *only* if there are no regional experts available. IUCN may wish to go one step further and create an internal policy for selection, which requires explicit justification for deploying a non-regional expert. Once the regional pool of experts has been established, IUCN could consider an accreditation model, similar that proposed above.

- **Consider relocating the IUCN Advisory Body work to another country in Africa or Asia.** This would incur a significant initial investment of funds to enable the physical relocation of staff, but this could be offset by cost savings on office space, for example, in Gland. Relocating the statutory work to a new physical location would send a clear message to detractors of IUCN who consider it to be 'too European'. It would help to focus geographical attention to other parts of the World, and potentially encourage greater regional investment in skills and capacity building for World Heritage management and conservation. Finally, it would create a clear separation of IUCN's statutory work for the Convention from its wider World Heritage programme of work, which could continue to be based in Switzerland.

### 3.2. Operational Recommendations

**RECOMMENDATION 6: Strengthen inclusion and participation of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in the World Heritage Convention.** A number of interviewees, including representatives of States Parties, state that the inclusion of indigenous peoples within the World Heritage Convention processes is weak. FPIC is currently *encouraged* by the Operational Guidelines (see para. 64), but it is not mandated, creating leeway for States Parties to ignore this element of the Tentative Listing process. Similarly, States Parties are only *encouraged* to consult with indigenous peoples in the Preliminary Assessment requests (see para.123). Under paragraph 148 in the Operational Guidelines, which lists the principles that should guide the Advisory Bodies' recommendations, there is no mention of assessing or validating whether indigenous peoples have provided FPIC for the nomination.

- **Advocate for the mandatory inclusion of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in key nomination processes.** IUCN should collaborate with indigenous peoples' representative bodies, such as the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on World Heritage (IIPFWH) to review the Operational Guidelines to identify gaps and tighten the language around FPIC. Following this exercise, a motion could be tabled through the Ad-hoc Working Group and elevated at the next Committee Session for a vote on proposed changes to the Operational Guidelines text.

- **Collaborate with indigenous peoples' representative bodies to develop a standardised definition for FPIC.** As noted above, there is significant room both to interpret and to secure FPIC in the nomination and inscription processes. There is currently no standardised definition of FPIC. The nomination dossier template itself only requires States Parties to describe how indigenous peoples were engaged, but there is no framework or standard for assessing whether this was done adequately. A definition could be developed in the short term, outlining key steps, or best practices, in obtaining FPIC. Once a definition has been agreed, IUCN should advocate for the Committee to adopt the new definition of FPIC.
- **Update IUCN toolkits and reporting templates to include FPIC.** In conjunction with the actions above, the World Heritage programme of work at IUCN should review its existing suite of tools and reporting frameworks to ensure they are aligned with standardised definitions of FPIC. For example, FPIC should appear in the IUCN Field Evaluation report format, from where it is currently absent.
- **Provide technical support to the IIPFWH to signpost entry points to the Convention.** IUCN should work with the IIPFWH to identify specific stages in the World Heritage inscription and management processes where they can intervene to lobby for indigenous peoples' rights.
- **Include local indigenous peoples and indigenous peoples experts in the evaluations.** For sites where there are indigenous peoples' interests, IUCN should include relevant experts in the field of indigenous peoples' rights, or experts with indigenous heritage. Interviewees say that this is often not the case currently.

**RECOMMENDATION 7: Advocate for strengthened inclusion and participation of Civil Society in the World Heritage Convention.** A number of interviewees, particularly from NGOs, highlighted that there are limited opportunities for civil society to engage with the World Heritage Convention. There are currently no working groups for NGOs within the World Heritage Convention, unlike the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The inclusion of NGOs and civil society would ensure that diverse expert knowledge, opinions and experiences are reflected in discussions, policies and practices associated with the Convention, and it would increase visibility for the Convention itself. It may also help to raise the visibility of the nature conservation side of the Convention.

- **Mobilise IUCN's global membership to facilitate greater involvement of civil society organisations in the Convention.** Given IUCN's broad membership at local, national and international levels, it is particularly well-placed to facilitate the participation of CSOs and NGOs. There are a number of ways in which this could be achieved:
  - i) *Create working groups (similar to the Ad-Hoc Open-Ended Inter-Sessional Working Groups for the CBD).* Groups could be formed around key topics such as *inclusion of indigenous peoples, eco-tourism, sustainable development, capacity building, impact measurement* etc. These groups could be informal constructions to begin with, piloted by IUCN or ICOMOS depending on the subject matter.
  - ii) *Mobilise online discussion groups through IUCN's membership.* Once IUCN has established the 'online community zone' for members, the World Heritage programme of work team could build live discussion boards to provide an open channel of dialogue for civil society and members. This should be done on a needs basis only at first in order to test accessibility and utility, and to test engagement rates. One idea could be to gather views on the subjects and formats of IUCN's side events at the next Committee Session, for example.
  - iii) *Leverage IUCN's National and Regional Committees to convene local CSOs/NGOs for roundtable discussions.* As with the other options above, the World Heritage Unit could request National and Regional Committees to mobilise local groups to gather views on specific inputs to IUCN's work with the Convention.

### 3.3. Recommendations to strengthen governance of the World Heritage Convention

**RECOMMENDATION 8: Support the World Heritage Centre to strengthen governance of the Convention.** As we note in the report, there is no one watching out for the strategic health of the Convention. Committee Members themselves report that technical expertise in heritage conservation, and familiarity with the World Heritage Convention itself, varies significantly amongst Committee Members, which can lead to a departure from the Convention's Operational Guidelines. Moreover, Committee Members have a short mandate, meaning that every six years, levels of expertise and understanding of the Convention are essentially reset. There is little that



IUCN can do to directly here, as leadership must come from the World Heritage Centre. However, we identify two actions that IUCN may wish to consider in order to support the Centre.

- **Advocate for the develop a set of 'on-boarding tools' for new Committee Members.** IUCN could engage with the World Heritage Centre to develop a set of onboarding tools to help orientate new and existing Committee Members to the Operational Guidelines. These could also be shared on the IUCN Academy online, which provides free and paid training courses.
- **Advocate for the creation of a toolkit to monitor the strategic health of the Convention.** Similar to the Review Framework we employed in this review, the toolkit would comprise a variety of diagnostic indicators to enable a transparent and collaborative assessment of how the Convention is faring. These indicators could include: *convergence rate* (agreement between Advisory Body recommendations and the Committee decisions); *geographic distribution of heritage sites*; *status of the Danger List (movement into and out of Danger Listing)* etc. IUCN could create a draft framework in consultation with ICOMOS and ICCROM and present to the World Heritage Convention for further refinement and consultation with the Committee itself.

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## Annex 1: Review Framework

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Aleph developed a review framework to guide this project. The rationale for this approach is summarised below:

- 1. This review is primarily concerned with building an evidence base to inform decisions on IUCN's future involvement with the World Heritage Convention.** IUCN does not have a strategy to guide its engagement with the Convention. Instead, IUCN's work is directed by the Convention's Operational Guidelines. Without a clear strategy in place, it is difficult to know what IUCN expects from its engagement with the Convention other than fulfilling its mandated role as Advisory Body. The difficulties that IUCN has experienced as an Advisory Body to the Convention invite a re-examination of whether and to what extent IUCN wishes to be engaged in the Convention in the future. In order to provide recommendations about how IUCN should position itself and its work within the Convention, we needed to take stock of what the relationship currently looks like, what are its advantages and disadvantages, and the feasibility of reforms.
- 2. At the heart of this exercise was a single question from which all others emanated: to what extent does the WH Convention enhance or undermine IUCN's mission, programme and delivery for nature conservation?** The question may seem cynical, implying a purely transactional relationship, but this was not the intention. It merely served as a starting point for bringing a fresh perspective to the relationship dynamic with the World Heritage Convention and encouraging a more business focused and equitable arrangement that confers mutual benefits to all parties.
- 3. From this central question, we designed a framework comprising specific pillars that enabled a value judgement on the IUCN-Convention relationship.** Recognising the enduring nature of the Convention, the framework was designed to transcend temporal priorities contained in shifting strategies and annual plans, which (rightly) reflect contemporary issues. Instead, the framework was based on attributes that connote the kinds of qualities we would expect to see from a 'good relationship.' The pillars were based on feedback from the preliminary discussions and a validation workshop with IUCN staff, as well as our own experience evaluating complex multi-stakeholder consortia.

4. Each of these pillars was assigned a 'desired state,' which describes the ideal scenario for that area. For example, in strategic alignment, the desired state reads as follows: *The Convention is aligned with IUCN's general mission, as outlined in Nature 2030, as well as its objectives vis-a-vis World Heritage, as outlined in the Promise of Sydney and the Jeju Resolutions.*
5. The review then assessed the extent to which these desired states were true or false. We based our judgements on a combination of qualitative interviews with IUCN staff and external stakeholders (including the other Advisory Bodies, Committee Members and staff at the World Heritage Centre), and further review of relevant strategic and operational literature.
6. On this basis, we were able to formulate an evidence-based set of recommendations to guide IUCN's future engagement with the Convention. After taking stock of the current IUCN-Convention relationship, we could develop specific recommendations around the questions contained within the terms of reference for this exercise.

Ultimately, we intended the framework to provide a good basis for developing a longer-term engagement strategy with the Convention based on a set of expectations for how the relationship should function, and how it serves IUCN's strategic aims.

#### 1.1.1. Framework

A summary version of the framework is presented below, truncated in the interest of space. Please note that the questions under each of the criteria were intended to steer our discussions with interviewees to arrive at a view on the status of the IUCN-Convention relationship in that particular criteria. We were not able to cover every single question over the course of the exercise, and others questions emerged through our interviews. We assessed the nature of the IUCN-Convention relationship against five pillars: *strategic alignment, reputation, influence, financial health and impact*. The table below illustrates what we would expect from a 'good relationship' (the *desired state*), the types of question we asked in order to assess the current situation, and the type of evidence on which we based our assessment.

Table 4: Review Framework

Pillar	Desired State	Questions	Evidence
<b>Strategic Alignment</b>	The WHC is aligned with IUCN's general mission, as outlined in Nature 2030, as well as its objectives vis-a-vis World Heritage, as outlined in the Promise of Sydney and the Jeju Resolution.	To what extent is the WHC aligned with IUCN's strategic direction for WH, as outlined in the Promise of Sydney and the resolutions from the IUCN Congress at Jeju?	<p>Statements by the WHC (in interviews with Aleph as well as organizational statements published in the last 3 years) reflect IUCN's priorities regarding WH as outlined in the Promise of Sydney and the Resolution at Jeju (September 2012), including the Aichi Targets and proposed Global Biodiversity Framework.</p> <p>This includes four key priority areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) Integrated nature-culture approaches</li> <li>ii) Sustainable development</li> <li>iii) Inclusion of indigenous peoples, civil society and local communities</li> <li>iv) Strengthening credibility.</li> </ul>
<b>Reputation</b>	IUCN's role as AB to WHC enhances IUCN's reputation and provides visibility to its work.	What do stakeholders know about IUCN? With which elements of IUCN's work are stakeholders the most familiar? Have they heard of the IUCN Green List? Are they aware of World Heritage Outlook?	Statements by stakeholders (in interviews with Aleph as well as organizational statements published in the last 3 years) reflect familiarity with, the World Heritage Outlook, World Heritage Leadership the IUCN Green List and other aspects of IUCN's work.
		How familiar are stakeholders with IUCN's role as AB?	Statements by stakeholders reflect familiarity with IUCN's role as AB (namely, that IUCN is an AB to the WHC and what kind of recommendations the IUCN makes).
		To what extent is IUCN's credibility enhanced or undermined as a result of its work as AB to the WHC?	IUCN's partners and other actors in the sector see IUCN as a more valuable and credible partner / player in WH because of its status as AB to the WHC.
		To what extent (and how) do stakeholders distinguish the ABs from the WHC?	Stakeholders exhibit familiarity with instances in which WHC decisions have diverged from IUCN's recommendations and they accord appropriate levels of responsibility to WHC and to IUCN (giving IUCN credit where due and holding WHC responsible where relevant) in considering these decisions.
		To what extent is IUCN seen as a credible technical organisation?	Stakeholders describe the IUCN as a credible technical organisation, rather than as a politically-driven, unscientific, or inconsistent actor.
		To what extent is IUCN valued as a AB by the WHC?	Statements from the WHC express appreciation for IUCN's work. Explanations of why WHC diverges from IUCN recommendations are not grounded in disregard for IUCN's expertise but rather provide alternative reasons, such as political motivations or external pressures for example.

		To what extent is IUCN's role considered to be unique or irreplaceable?	Statements from the WHC and recent documentation from the WHC do not reflect a desire for a replacement or alternative to IUCN as AB.
		Are there any other organisations that could perform this role?	Stakeholders (including IUCN, partners, WHC, and other actors in conservation) identify other organisations that could perform IUCN's role as AB.
<b>Influence</b>	IUCN has the capacity, technical credibility and influence to bring about changes to the Convention.	Is IUCN best placed to advocate reform from within the WHC or as an external partner? What constraints does IUCN currently face in advocating for the changes it wants to see? What advantages does IUCN currently have as AB in advocating for the changes it wants to see?	IUCN staff/members describe its current role within the WHC as enhancing its ability to advocate reform and specify the advantages this provides. Examples are given of instances in which reforms to the WHC were made by IUCN.
		What have been the main improvements in the way the WHC functions over the last decade?	IUCN and other stakeholders can identify specific examples of how the Convention has reformed for the better.
		What are the specific barriers to reform?	IUCN and other stakeholders describe specific systemic, structural or personal barriers within the WHC to reform.
<b>Financial Health</b>	The WHC represents good value for money for IUCN	To what extent does IUCN feel that the financial arrangements with the WHC are appropriate and fair?	IUCN describes financial arrangements with the WHC as appropriate and fair.
		To what extent are the financial arrangements with the WHC sustainable?	IUCN has the willingness, capacity and resources to continue providing the same level of in kind and financial support that it currently provides to the WHC.
<b>Impact</b>	IUCN's relationship with WHC helps to improve conservation outcomes on listed sites. It also helps IUCN to scale up its conservation work?	Does the WHC ultimately improve the conservation outcomes at listed sites?	IUCN and other stakeholders see WHC's decisions and actions over the past 10 years as having measurably improved conservation outcomes at listed sites (including where WHC has ignored IUCN's recommendations).
		Does the IUCN's work as AB help the WHC in improving these outcomes?	Recommendations by IUCN have led to more positive conservation outcomes when compared with sites that IUCN has not recommended.



## Annex 2: ToRs

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