

## Enhancing engagement in the World Heritage Reactive Monitoring process

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### Preamble

The 7th edition of the World Heritage Site Managers' Forum was organised by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICCROM and IUCN, through the World Heritage Leadership Programme. The Forum brought together 18 professionals responsible for the management of 17 World Heritage properties, located in 17 countries<sup>1</sup>.

This edition of the Forum was made possible through the contributions of numerous donors, highlighting the growing interest in supporting the World Heritage Site Managers' Forum as an essential platform to support the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. The participants extend their gratitude to the Republic of Bulgaria for their financial support; the Republic of Ireland, the Republic of Korea and ICCROM for supporting the participation of 9 site managers; and the Republic of Azerbaijan for their contribution to provide English - French interpretation during the Forum. Participants also extend their thanks to the Association of French World Heritage sites and the City of Paris for the coordination and support in the organization of the site visit to the World Heritage property of 'Paris, Banks of the Seine', and to the Fondation Le Corbusier for the site visit to the Maison la Roche, component site of the World Heritage property of 'The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement'.

Site managers recall the World Heritage Committee of the previous statements and declarations of the World Heritage Site Managers' Forum that were presented at 41 COM (Krakow, 2017), 42 COM (Manama, 2018), 43 COM (Baku, 2019), 44 COM (Online/Fuzhou, 2021), 45 COM (Riyadh, 2023) and 46 COM (New Delhi, 2024). These statements highlight key challenges and issues that need to be tackled to ensure that site managers can effectively manage and conserve World Heritage for present and future generations.

### Highlight the importance of the Reactive Monitoring Process for collaborative action

The Reactive Monitoring is a key statutory process of the World Heritage Convention to monitor the state of conservation of World Heritage properties and it is the responsibility of States Parties to engage in the process. Site managers recognise that it is a constructive mechanism to mobilize the international community to provide technical assistance and strengthen conservation and management of World Heritage properties facing challenges. It provides a valuable opportunity for collaboration across all levels – bringing together site managers, national governmental institutions, the Secretariat and the Advisory Bodies.

### Engage a wide range of actors in the Reactive Monitoring process

The effective implementation of the Reactive Monitoring process requires meaningful and timely engagement of a wide range of actors, beyond national heritage authorities. Site managers highlight the importance of engaging national and local representatives, decision-makers, civil society organisations, and relevant NGOs who contribute to conservation and the management of World Heritage properties.

In particular, Indigenous Peoples and local communities associated with World Heritage properties must be actively involved at all stages of the process – from preparation to implementation. Their rights, worldviews and deep connections to these heritage places must be recognised and respected. Inclusive engagement strengthens the legitimacy, transparency and relevance of the Reactive Monitoring process and helps ensure that follow-up measures are realistic, locally grounded, and supported by those responsible for implementing them.

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<sup>1</sup> Albania, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Ecuador, France, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Morocco, Mozambique, North Macedonia, Republic of Korea, Suriname, Sweden, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe.

## **Raise awareness on the duties set out by the Convention/World Heritage requirements to strengthen Reactive Monitoring**

Raising awareness of the Reactive Monitoring process and broader conservation and management requirements among governmental actors and decision makers is essential to create an enabling environment for the long-term protection and effective conservation of World Heritage properties. Site managers highlight the need for stronger understanding and recognition of the commitments undertaken by State Parties within the framework of the Convention. They stress the importance of making information more accessible — for example by translating key documents into national and local languages, by enhancing public communication and sharing of information — to ensure that all relevant administrative levels are informed and engaged in the implementation of the Reactive Monitoring outcomes. Enhanced awareness and support by national local governments can strengthen coordination, improve resource allocation, and reinforce long-term commitments to protect the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties.

## **Acknowledge and support the central role of site managers in the Reactive Monitoring process**

Site managers are the primary actors on the ground responsible for the day-to-day protection, conservation and management of World Heritage properties and their respective buffer zones. As such, States Parties should recognise the essential contribution of site managers to the Reactive Monitoring process and ensure their active involvement in all stages: from the beginning of the Reactive Monitoring process, preparation and implementation of monitoring missions, the drafting of State of Conservation reports, to the coordination and implementation of recommendations and World Heritage Committee decisions.

Targeted capacity building is needed to strengthen site managers' engagement with Reactive Monitoring and other World Heritage processes and provide them with the necessary knowledge and tools to effectively respond to challenges, contribute to informed decision-making, and engage constructively with other actors involved. Networking spaces like the World Heritage Site Managers' Forum offer a unique opportunity for site managers to exchange experiences, share practical solutions, and contribute to building a strong community of practice where they can support each other in facing common challenges. Further efforts should consider the establishment of online platforms and frameworks where site managers can meet and exchange.

## **Way forward**

Looking ahead, site managers emphasise the need for stronger dialogue and collaboration to make the Reactive Monitoring process more accessible, participatory, and better able to support efforts on the ground. Monitoring missions should not only address existing threats but also help identify emerging factors, foster opportunities to strengthen site management and recognize good practices.

The language and structure of mission reports should be clear and easy to understand by those responsible for implementing their recommendations. Proposed measures must be realistic about the timeframe and resources needed to implement them. While some recommendations can be addressed directly by site managers and heritage institutions, others may require long-term efforts, including coordination with other sectors. The active involvement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities is also essential to ensure that follow-up to recommendations is inclusive, relevant and grounded in local realities.

Site managers call for mechanisms such as International Assistance to be better tied to the Reactive Monitoring process. Adequate financial and technical resources are critical to ensure timely and meaningful follow-up to World Heritage Committee decisions and mission recommendations. In many cases, site managers and national authorities require additional support to carry out necessary actions, particularly where long-term or multisectoral collaboration is needed.

Lastly, site managers remind States Parties that the World Heritage Convention is a legal framework established to protect heritage places important for all humanity through a framework of international cooperation. Conflicts and harmful interactions between States Parties endanger heritage places, impacting work of the site managers and the lives of people that cherish, value and protect them.