



General Conference

38th Session, Paris, 2015

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United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

. Item 4.21 of the agenda

38 C/68

3 November 2015

Original: English

PROCLAMATION OF 5 MAY AS AFRICAN WORLD HERITAGE DAY

OUTLINE

Source: 197 EX/Decision 36.

Background: This item was examined by the Executive Board at its 197th session at the request of Angola and Togo on behalf of the Africa Group.

Purpose: The present document transmits to the General Conference the decision taken by the Executive Board at its 197th session and contains, in annex, the above-mentioned explanatory note.

Decision required: paragraph 2.

**African World Heritage Day and Celebration of the Tenth Anniversary
of the Establishment of the African World Heritage Fund**

1. After having examined this item, the Executive Board recommended that the General Conference, at its 38th session, adopt a resolution for the proclamation of an African World Heritage Day and the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the African World Heritage Fund.

2. In light of the above, the General Conference may wish to adopt the following draft resolution:

The General Conference,

Having examined document 38 C/68,

Recalling 182 EX/Decision 20 and the resolution establishing the African World Heritage Fund as a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO,

Also recalling the importance of international cooperation in building the capacity of African Member States to promote and implement the World Heritage Convention through building capacity for the preparation of effective nominations and for sustainable conservation and management of world heritage properties,

Further recalling the global mobilization through #UNITE4heritage led by UNESCO's Director-General,

Welcoming the proposal of the Africa Group, in compliance with the objectives of the World Heritage Convention, to proclaim 5 May African World Heritage Day,

1. *Invites* Member States Parties to the Convention and other players to organize events related to the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the African World Heritage Fund at local, national, subregional, regional and international levels; *also invites* States Parties, National Commissions, governmental and non-governmental organizations, UNESCO Clubs and Associated Schools, and the media to participate actively and contribute as widely as possible to the dissemination of this event; *encourages* multiple African partners, international and regional multilateral agencies such as the United Nations System, the World Bank, the African Union, the Commonwealth and the International Organisation of La Francophonie, the European Union, the African Development Bank and national donors, regional African political communities, such as the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD) and the East African Community (EAC) to support the efforts to protect African cultural and natural heritage;
2. *Approves* the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the African World Heritage Fund and the proclamation of 5 May as African World Heritage Day.

ANNEX

EXPLANATORY NOTE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Africa is the cradle of humanity. Its cultural and natural diversity are matched only by its long history. Rural and urban African territories are the essence of African cultural identity through socio-cultural, economic and spiritual exchanges that have occurred there over time, and given birth to unique creations in the world, expressed through their tangible and intangible heritage. The enhancement of these cultural and heritage resources within local, departmental, subregional and regional communities, which represent new spaces of coherence, strengthens their cultural dimension and undoubtedly improves the living conditions of African people.

2. However, these natural and cultural heritage resources are currently facing many challenges relating to armed conflicts, terrorism, poaching, lack of adequate land management, climate change and the unbridled increase in populations. Despite undeniable qualities, commitments and significant efforts are needed to protect these resources. The strategic action of local authorities gives little space and interest to these invaluable natural and cultural heritage resources.

3. Such disregard for one of the most important reservoirs of cultural diversity is astonishing. Furthermore, we must remember that those who should be the most concerned by their heritage, the local populations and communities and their spokespersons, are not. It is high time that African communities make the necessary efforts to improve the protection and enhancement of their heritage. Many communities are not yet aware of the potential offered by the cultural property and biodiversity that abounds in their territories. Concerns about the history, the heritage and its enhancement have been perceived as a luxury, compared to the challenges of development, such as famine, health and other basic needs. Thanks to the global mobilization led by UNESCO, changes in the perception of people today show that the safeguarding and enhancement of the heritage contribute to development and the fight against poverty. The classification, protection and enhancement of outstanding cultural and natural heritage sites play a major role in sustainable development.

4. This also indisputably helps locally to strengthen people's pride and dignity and develop a sense of belonging, not to mention the creation of jobs and income-generating opportunities and activities. These aspects of local heritage management policy must be explained to African local authorities and require training, awareness-raising programmes and training programmes for local elected officials and their staff. They must develop their capacities in inventory management, publication, archiving and the safeguarding of heritage, as well as its public exhibition.

5. Heritage, in all its forms, testifies to the human experience and aspirations. As a shared experience, it strengthens cultural identity while highlighting the differences and peculiarities of others. African heritage offers a unique opportunity to the sons and daughters of Africa and to young people to discover themselves. It makes them more aware and ensures an intergenerational sense of belonging and ownership of the African world heritage, underscoring its potential as a source of creativity and socioeconomic development, and promotes the status of men and women promoters of heritage in our societies.

II. BACKGROUND

6. Following the conclusions and recommendations of the second cycle of periodic reports (2012-2017), which underlined the need to improve national policies on heritage and the management of

sites, the development and active participation of local populations and national staff, and established cooperation adapted to local realities for a new era of heritage management, the challenges of increasing available resources and expanding the circle of stakeholders working towards the conservation and of African world heritage and the transmission of heritage has become very important.

7. The World Heritage Committee, at its 29th session held in Durban (2005) (Decision 29 COM 11C.2) and the General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention, at its 15th session held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris (2005), decided to establish the African World Heritage Fund as a trust under South African law, launched on 5 May 2005 at Sterfontein in South Africa. The decision was subsequently endorsed by the African Union Conference of Ministers of Culture, held in December 2005 in Nairobi, Kenya and by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its sixth ordinary session in January 2006 in Khartoum, Sudan. The UNESCO General Conference, at its 35th session, approved the establishment of the African World Heritage Fund as a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO (35 C/Resolution 56).

8. The purpose of the Fund is to mobilize governments, donors, non-governmental organizations and the private sector active in Africa to help meet a number of challenges that Africa is facing in its management of the world heritage. The Fund, in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre, undertakes activities aimed at strengthening the implementation and dissemination of the 1972 World Heritage Convention in African States Parties, by strengthening the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the World Heritage Committee for the benefit of the world heritage in Africa.

III. JUSTIFICATION

9. The second cycle of periodic reporting for Africa underscored the challenges met by the majority of African States relating to the identification, conservation, protection and preservation of world heritage properties on the African continent and the implementation of the principles of the Convention in general. Generally speaking, the report noted that taking into account its natural and cultural diversity, Africa is vastly underrepresented in the World Heritage List, in spite of the very high number of African States Parties to the Convention. Moreover, Africa has a significant number of world heritage properties currently on the List of World Heritage in Danger. The plan of action adopted in the course of the second cycle of periodic reporting recommended, among other things, improving the representation of African world heritage sites on the World Heritage List, improving the state of conservation of world heritage sites through better management of risks, greater engagement of local populations and direct economic benefits for these local populations.

10. Taking into account this situation, the Africa Group considered that the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the African World Heritage Fund would be an opportunity for the African people and the international community to reaffirm their commitment to the conservation of African world heritage, conduct an evaluation and identify the main challenges, constraints and opportunities relating to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in Africa.

11. The Africa Group invites the Executive Board to examine, at its 197th session, the opportunities to celebrate the tenth anniversary (including a draft programme and a provisional schedule for the year) and to submit a report on the year of celebration at its 201st session. It also requests the Executive Board to proclaim 5 May African World Heritage Day. The programme for the year would enable the African public and the international community to visit natural parks, buildings, monuments and heritage sites, most of which are inaccessible to the public, aiming at:

- (a) raising the awareness of African citizens regarding the wealth of African world heritage;

- (b) creating a climate favourable to the appreciation of African world heritage;
- (c) preventing the destruction of heritage in all its forms;
- (d) informing young people, the public and the political authorities about the need to protect world heritage against new threats;
- (e) proposing training sessions on the preservation and promotion of heritage for social, cultural and political stakeholders;
- (f) inviting Africa to face the economic and socio-political challenges it faces in the field of conservation of African world heritage.

12. The Executive Board could thus invite Member States Parties to the Convention and other stakeholders to prepare for the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Fund at the local, national, subregional and international levels and to submit to the Secretariat, by 31 January 2016, any related information that they would like to contribute. The Board could also encourage the participation of local communities in these events and contribute to disseminating information about the event as widely as possible. In addition, the Board shall request the Secretariat to submit to it, at its 199th session in 2016, a programme and schedule of the celebration of African World Heritage Day, including all the activities to be undertaken by the States Parties, such as:

- (a) organizing national and international conferences on the subject of the evaluation of the implementation of the Convention;
- (b) organizing workshops, conferences, seminars and awareness-raising campaigns for young people, students, teachers, universities, and staff of museums and cultural institutions;
- (c) organizing communication events on the world heritage sites;
- (d) organizing exhibitions;
- (e) producing publications and films, particularly the indicative list;
- (f) organizing competitions;
- (g) conducting media campaigns.

IV. EXPECTED RESULTS

13. The expected results could include:

- (a) improved information and international awareness of the need to preserve African world heritage;
- (b) mobilization at all levels of government and local communities for cooperation on the protection of heritage, including political decision-makers, academic institutions and the media;
- (c) strengthened international cooperation and communication in the field of African world heritage conservation.

V. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

14. The World Heritage Centre and the Fund could serve as a platform for exchanges, communicating through their strategic partners and their networks on the events organized in the framework of the celebration. The dissemination of the Organization's message would benefit events held by all States Parties. UNESCO experts could be made available to States Parties interested in organizing events relating to African World Heritage Day. The regular programme and budget shall not, however, provide resources for such activities, which may only be financed by extrabudgetary funds.