



Group of 77 and China
Paris Chapter

Statement of the Group of 77 and China
39th session of the World Heritage Committee
Item 5C – Follow-up of the Director-General’s initiative
“The World Heritage Convention: Thinking Ahead”
29 June 2015

Madame Chairperson,

1. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We thank the Director-General for her initiative on “The World Heritage Convention: Thinking Ahead.” We take note of the report which highlights key issues raised during relevant meetings.
2. The G77 and China attach great importance to the World Heritage Convention. We believe culture is a driver of sustainable development which can contribute to poverty alleviation and inclusive growth, helping developing countries overcome challenges to sustainable development. To this end, the G77 and China supported the inclusion of a specific target to strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage in the proposed Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.
3. This is especially relevant in view of the disturbing and tragic events happening around the globe. We wish to take this opportunity to express our deep concern over attacks on cultural heritage sites in Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, and Mali. We applaud UNESCO’s Unite4Heritage campaign, in this regard.
4. We also wish to express solidarity with the people and Government of Nepal in the aftermath of the earthquakes which have caused tremendous loss of lives and severe damage to world heritage sites. It is incumbent on the World Heritage Committee and the international community to do all it can to support countries like Nepal in such times of need in case of natural catastrophes, increasingly frequent due to climate change.
5. We believe that capacity-building and technical assistance must be urgently strengthened not only for protection of world heritage sites, but to improve developing and least developing countries’ participation in the activities of the Convention for their benefit and sustainable development. The perspectives and procedures of the Advisory Bodies must be transparent, inclusive, more outward-looking and diversified. Avenues for South-South cooperation must likewise be expanded. In this regard, we welcome the recent changes adopted by the Advisory Bodies in their evaluation processes with a view to enhancing communication and dialogue with concerned States Parties. We hope that this communication and dialogue process would be further strengthened and institutionalized through appropriate mechanisms such as the Operational Guidelines of the World Heritage Convention, etc.
6. We therefore reiterate the importance of achieving a Representative, Balanced and Credible World Heritage List, in line with the Global Strategy and key tools, such as the upstream process. This should be done by promoting expertise and capacity in

developing countries, so that more comprehensive nomination dossiers can be submitted from the South reflecting the true diversity and richness of world heritage. The upstream process is very valuable in this connection.

7. We also see the new electoral system based on equitable geographic distribution adopted by the Extraordinary Session of the General Assembly of States Parties in 2014 as an improvement which can pave the way for further progress.
8. Given these imperatives, we share the concern over the financial status of the World Heritage Fund. We call for increased financial support for the Convention. Following the spirit of universality of the Convention, we do not believe mandatory fees for nominations would be appropriate as this perpetuates the imbalance we experience. Other innovative approaches such as awareness-raising and developing international partnerships for world heritage can be explored.
9. We also look positively on UNESCO's work to reinforce and adapt all Conventions to new challenges and obstacles generated by actual context, developing appropriate synergies between the World Heritage Convention and other cultural conventions, such as the 1954 Hague Convention, as well as the 1970 illicit trafficking Convention and its new Operational Guidelines recently approved.
10. In conclusion, Madame Chairperson, the G77 and China will continue to support a more balanced and credible World Heritage List and a strong Committee, in order to increase the Convention's relevance for developing and least developing countries and promote equitable and inclusive sustainable development.

Thank you.