

**World Heritage Committee**  
**IUCN Opening statement – item 5b**  
**Delivered by IUCN Director General**  
**Monday, 16 June 2014**

As this is IUCN's first intervention I wish to express our sincere thanks to the Qatari authorities for their gracious hospitality as hosts of this important meeting.

IUCN regards World Heritage as of the utmost importance to our work. World Heritage Sites have an iconic status as the beacons of conservation globally. IUCN is proud to have supported this Convention throughout its history, and as many of you know, IUCN had a central role, with UNESCO, in the 1960s to bring this Convention into being.

This year has been particularly significant for us. We are launching the new *IUCN World Heritage Outlook*<sup>1</sup> website, where the conservation prospects for every one of the 222 natural and mixed World Heritage Sites will be assessed for the first time. The *IUCN World Heritage Outlook* aims to stimulate action on the ground through IUCN's Members, experts and partners. We think you will find the Outlook useful, invite you to our launch today at 13:45, and will welcome your thoughts on how to develop it further.

We have also undertaken a major independent evaluation of our work on World Heritage. The evaluation is publicly available and the link is in paragraph 44 of IUCN's report in item 5b. It tells us that many things are working well with our Programme, and that the Convention has the potential to contribute more to global conservation. But to be fully effective, the Convention, and our work, needs to change. I will refer to three major points from this evaluation.

Firstly the Convention will only retain its value to conservation if it maintains its credibility, thus the Committee has to ensure its decisions are of an irreproachable technical quality. We have heard clearly that part of the means to achieve this quality is

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<sup>1</sup> <http://worldheritageoutlook.iucn.org/>

to ensure that the work of the Advisory Bodies is transparent, and our relationship with States Parties on nominations and monitoring issues is strong and collegiate. These are goals we all share, but we need to get beyond general agreement on principles, to action. For this reason we would like to invite a small group of interested States Parties to IUCN Headquarters to discuss this issue. We also think now is the time to formalise the Upstream Process in the Operational Guidelines, and to strengthen the position of civil society in the Convention.

Secondly, the workload associated with this Convention is clearly unsustainable. The evaluation made the startling finding that the workload pressure is the worst encountered in 16 years of evaluating IUCN programmes. And this was an evaluation that was undertaken before the current and very serious budget situation in UNESCO.

We believe that the root cause of this issue is the annual rhythm of the World Heritage Committee. This leaves no time for States Parties to follow up on decisions of the Committee, no time for dialogue in the evaluation process, inadequate time to prepare and read Committee papers. And it results in an unacceptable human cost on the professional staff of the Convention. IUCN considers that the World Heritage Convention would be much more effective at delivering action on the ground if this Committee met only once every 2 years. I appreciate that this is a provocative point, but we firmly believe this is a key issue that demands attention and decisive action.

Lastly the evaluation emphasised that much more needs to be done on the relationship between World Heritage and development. We cannot compromise on the central task of the Convention to protect *Outstanding Universal Values*, and we must retain the leadership that this Convention provides on the 'no-go' commitment for extractive industry in World Heritage Sites. But we do not yet have adequate measures to secure positive results for people in and around WH sites. As Director General I assure you that for IUCN conservation must contribute to human well being. We look forward to discussing this point with you during this meeting.

All of these points will be raised at the IUCN World Parks Congress, to be held in Sydney this November. I am grateful that the Director General of UNESCO has accepted an

invitation to participate, and we hope to see many of you there. I remind you that this is a once-in-a decade event and that it is closely linked to the interests of the World Heritage Convention.

In closing I wish to thank the Committee, the States Parties, and all the stakeholders in World Heritage, including our partners in UNESCO, IUCN's own World Heritage team, and the other Advisory Bodies, for the exceptional commitment I have witnessed in their work and in the many World Heritage sites I have had the privilege to visit. With reform, I believe this exceptional Convention that IUCN helped create, can retain its credibility, and go from strength to strength.