



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture

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12 March 2003

To: Permanent Delegations of the States Parties of the World Heritage Convention

cc: Advisory Bodies of the World Heritage Committee (ICCROM, ICOMOS, IUCN)

Subject: Proceedings of the World Heritage Marine Biodiversity Workshop

Dear Madam/Sir,

I am pleased to transmit you a copy of "Proceedings of the World Heritage Marine Biodiversity Workshop". It summarises the findings of an expert workshop held in Hanoi, Vietnam 22 February - 1 March 2002 to discuss the application of the World Heritage Convention for conservation of marine biodiversity sites. The workshop was organised with the support of UN Foundation and UN Fund for International Partnerships in co-operation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as its role as IUCN Vice Chair for Marine Affairs.

The aim of the workshop was to identify areas in the tropical marine, coastal and small island ecosystems that would have the potential to be inscribed on the World Heritage List based on their biodiversity values. The workshop was also tasked to suggest innovative approaches into new marine nominations such as transboundary and serial sites. The workshop was organised as part of the work the Secretariat of the World Heritage Convention has undertaken to implement the Global Strategy for a more balanced and representative World Heritage List. Out of the 730 sites there are currently less than ten sites inscribed solely for their marine biodiversity values and 30-40 sites with some marine or coastal components.

The workshop report includes a list of almost 120 areas in the tropical marine realm that the experts identified to be worthy of consideration for World Heritage nomination. Among those sites the experts unanimously recognized 46 sites of being Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and recommended their nomination as World Heritage as high priority (the 'A-list'). The experts also identified areas that have significant components of OUV but that may need further studies to ascertain which components would be of World Heritage value (the 'B-list'). The third category of areas (the 'C-list') consists of areas of which the experts considered to probably have OUV but the information available at the meeting was not adequate to discuss them in further detail. Hence further review is needed to determine the World Heritage value of these areas.

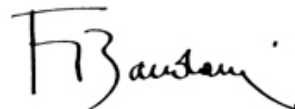
These lists of areas are meant to assist you in your discussions to identify potential World Heritage sites within your country. The lists represents the knowledge of the experts present at the meeting as well as information from different data bases compiled in advance of the workshop. There may well be other areas of World Heritage value that the workshop was not able to identify due to lack of sufficient information. In case you know of such important areas that may merit consideration for nomination as World Heritage and which you find missing from any one of the three lists, I encourage you to bring them to the attention of the Centre so that we could consult the appropriate experts who participated in the workshop and request them to consider those sites and give comments on their potential for satisfying World Heritage criteria.

The staff at the Natural Heritage Section of the World Heritage Centre is at your disposal for any further information you may require on application of the World Heritage Convention for marine, coastal and small island ecosystems or in relation to the workshop findings. Additional copies of the publications can be requested from the Secretariat (s.simmonds@unesco.org).

Please find attached also another publication "Coral Reef Protected Areas in International Instruments", which lists the coral reef sites under the World Heritage Convention, Ramsar Convention and Biosphere Reserves. Its production was co-ordinated by the Division of Ecological Sciences, UNESCO. For any queries on the publication, please contact the Director, Division of Ecological Sciences, UNESCO, 1 rue Miollis, Paris 75732 Cedex 15, France, Tel: +33 1 45 68 40 67, Fax: +33 1 45 68 58 04.

Thank you for your co-operation for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Bandarin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Francesco Bandarin
Director
UNESCO World Heritage Centre