



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
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15 September 2003

To: All States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention*

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

Subject: Comments and Proposals concerning the Decision taken by the 24th session of the World Heritage Committee (Cairns, Australia, 2000) to limit the number of new nominations to be examined each year by the Committee and the number of nominations to be submitted by each State Party (the "Cairns Decision")

Dear Madam/Sir,

I am writing to inform you that during its 27th session (Paris, 30 June - 5 July 2003), the World Heritage Committee adopted a decision (Decision **27 COM 14**) concerning the number of new nominations to be examined each year by the Committee and the number of nominations to be submitted by each State Party (the "Cairns Decision").

In particular, the Committee:

Requests States Parties to send comments and proposals on the Cairns Decision to the World Heritage Centre by 31 December 2003. Comments, sent by post, by facsimile to +33 (0)1 4568 5570, or by e-mail to cairns@unesco.org, will be made available on the World Heritage web site at the following address: <http://whc.unesco.org/cairns/>

Decides to establish, at the beginning of the 28th session of the Committee in Suzhou, China (2004), an open-ended working group to review the comments of States Parties, documents (including the results of the Advisory Bodies' analyses of the World Heritage List and Tentative Lists, and the Report of the 1999/2000 working group on the Representativity of the World Heritage List) and statistics relative to the operation of the Cairns Decision, and to make recommendations to the Committee. For this purpose, the World Heritage Centre will distribute the

necessary documentation as early as possible prior to the 28th session to be held in June-July 2004.

The full text of Decision **27 COM 14** is attached.

The World Heritage Centre has established a web site, whc.unesco.org/cairns/ as requested by the Committee, on which various documents and statistics relevant to the Cairns Decision have already been placed. States Parties are invited to review the documents presented and send their comments to the World Heritage Centre, as recommended in Decision **27 COM 14**. As new information and comments of States Parties are received, the web site will be updated accordingly.

Should you require further information, please contact the World Heritage Centre at the postal or e-mail addresses given above.

Please be assured Madam/Sir, of the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Bandarin'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'F' and a long, sweeping tail.

Francesco Bandarin
Director
UNESCO World Heritage Centre

Attachments: Annex I: Cairns Decision
Annex II: Decision **27 COM 14** of the 27th session of the World Heritage
Committee

**Text of the "Cairns decision,"
adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 24th session (Cairns, 2000)**

In order to promote the effective management of the increasing size of the World Heritage List, the Committee at each ordinary session will set the maximum number of nominations to be considered. In the first instance and on an interim basis, it is proposed that at the twenty-seventh session of the Committee in 2003, the number of nominations examined by the Committee will be limited to a maximum of 30 new sites.

In order to determine which sites should be given priority for consideration, all nominations to be considered at the twenty-seventh session of the Committee must be received in full by the new due date of 1 February 2002 agreed by the Committee as part of the change of cycle of meetings. No State Parties should submit more than one nomination, except those States Parties that have no sites inscribed on the World Heritage List who will have the opportunity to propose two or three nominations.

In order to address the issue of representivity of the List the following criteria will be applied in order of priority¹:

In the event that the number of nominations received exceeds the maximum number set by the Committee, the following priority system will be applied each year by the World Heritage Centre before nominations are transmitted to the advisory bodies for evaluation, in determining which sites should be taken forward for consideration:

1. Nominations of sites submitted by a State Party with no sites inscribed on the List;²
2. Nominations of sites from any State Party that illustrate un-represented or less represented categories of natural and cultural properties, as determined by analyses prepared by the Secretariat and the Advisory Bodies and reviewed and approved by the Committee;
3. Other nominations.

When applying this priority system, date of receipt of full and complete nominations by the World Heritage Centre shall be used as the secondary determining factor within the category where the number of nominations established by the Committee is reached.

In addition to the approved maximum number of sites, the Committee will also consider nominations deferred, or referred, from previous meetings and changes to the boundaries of already inscribed properties. The Committee may also decide to consider, on an emergency basis, situations falling under paragraph 67 of the *Operational Guidelines*.

Review

The system described above is to be reviewed by the Committee after two full years of operation.

¹ In nominating properties to the List, States Parties are invited to keep in mind the desirability of achieving a reasonable balance between the numbers of cultural heritage and natural heritage properties included in the World Heritage List (Paragraph 15 of the *Operational Guidelines*)

² In evaluating these, and all other nominations, the Advisory Bodies should continue to apply a strict evaluation of criteria as set out in the *Operational Guidelines*.

Decision of the 27th session of the World Heritage Committee (Paris, 30 June - 5 July 2003)**27 COM 14**

The World Heritage Committee,

1. Decides to retain the limit of one new and complete nomination per State Party with properties already on the World Heritage List, as the best means of managing the workload of the Committee, the Advisory Bodies, and the World Heritage Centre, and of improving the geographic distribution of properties on the World Heritage List; States Parties that have no properties inscribed on the World Heritage List will have the opportunity to nominate two or three properties;
2. Decides to continue to exempt from this limit transboundary and emergency nominations, changes to the boundaries of properties already inscribed, as well as those nominations which have been deferred and referred by previous sessions of the Committee;
3. Invites States Parties nominating properties to keep in mind the desirability of achieving a reasonable balance between the numbers of cultural heritage and natural heritage properties included in the World Heritage List (Paragraph 15 of the Operational Guidelines, July 2002);
4. Decides to set at **40** the annual limit on the number of new nominations it will review, exclusive of nominations deferred and referred by previous sessions of the Committee, changes to the boundaries of properties already inscribed, transboundary nominations and nominations submitted on an emergency basis;
5. Decides to maintain the deadline for the receipt of complete nominations as 1 February and encourages States Parties to submit draft nominations by 30 September to ensure that nominations have the maximum opportunity of being complete on 1 February (Decision **6 EXT.COM 5.1 Annex 3.9**).
6. Requests States Parties to send comments and proposals on the Cairns Decision to the World Heritage Centre by 31 December 2003. Comments, sent by post, by facsimile to +33 (0)1 4568 5570, or by e-mail to cairns@unesco.org, will be made available on the World Heritage web site at the following address: <http://whc.unesco.org/cairns/>
7. Decides to establish, at the beginning of the 28th session of the Committee in Suzhou, China (2004), an **open-ended working group** to review the comments of States Parties, documents (including the results of the Advisory Bodies' analyses of the World Heritage List and Tentative Lists, and the Report of the 1999/2000 working group on the Representativity of the World Heritage List) and statistics relative to the operation of the Cairns Decision, and to make recommendations to the Committee. For this purpose, the World Heritage Centre will distribute the necessary documentation as early as possible prior to the 28th session.