

# UNESCO World Heritage Work Session Report

Our Sea of Islands Forum, Honolulu, Hawai'i  
Wednesday, 31 January 2007  
8:00 am – 5:00 pm

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## **Session Overview:**

The World Heritage Convention is one of the five global multilateral environmental agreements (the others being the Convention on Biological Diversity, Ramsar, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, and the Convention on Migratory Species). The World Heritage Convention focuses on conservation of outstanding natural and cultural heritage by recognizing the world's best heritage areas on the World Heritage List, as well as by encouraging heritage conservation at the national level. Only States Parties on the Convention can nominate sites to the World Heritage List. Natural sites normally need to be national parks or otherwise legally-protected and managed areas. The concept of customary or traditional management is also starting to gain acceptance with the Convention as a recognized protection mechanism.

World Heritage Convention is a very popular convention. One hundred eighty-three State Parties have ratified the Convention and 138 have sites included on the World Heritage List. There are now a total of 830 sites on the List. These include 644 cultural, 162 natural and 24 mixed sites.

Benefits of nominating sites as World Heritage are manifold: the designation provides international and permanent recognition and high visibility - the governments commit to conserving these areas at the highest international level; it facilitates access to international technical and financial support and expertise; and it can be used to catalyze opportunities to develop sustainable tourism and other income options for local communities.

The main obstacles in the Pacific region for new nominations of (marine) World Heritage Sites include: lack of knowledge on the nomination process – most Pacific countries are new member states of the Convention; the existing guidelines are not necessarily geared towards the Pacific reality; lack of knowledge on implications of World Heritage listing which leads to unwillingness to commit; lack of sufficient management and/or legal protection of potential World Heritage marine areas; and limited institutional capacity to prepare World Heritage nominations.

## **Purpose:**

The session on World Heritage addressed the challenges listed above by:

- Providing information on the World Heritage nomination process, requirements and implications;
- Sharing examples and lessons learned on the use of the World Heritage Convention in the Pacific region;
- Discussing ways and means to better adapt the nomination requirements for the specific situation in the Pacific (e.g., cultural linkages) and gathering recommendations to the World Heritage Committee to this end, noting that the next Committee meeting will be held in New Zealand in June 2007;
- Promoting networking and bringing potential partners together to help in preparing marine World Heritage nominations from Pacific;

- Compiling a draft action plan or a list of next steps to follow up

**Objectives:**

- Increased knowledge and understanding of the World Heritage Convention processes and its application as a marine conservation tool in the Pacific among Pacific government officials and conservation practitioners;
- Next steps/action items identified for each country and organization on how they could advance the World Heritage Convention application;
- New or enhanced partnerships and linkages among Pacific conservation practitioners and governments for World Heritage Convention implementation; and
- Recommendations to the World Heritage Committee for enhancing support for the Pacific region

**Moderators:**

The moderators for this session were Annie Hillary from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration; Hans Thusltrup from UNESCO, Apia Office; Salamat Ali Tabbasum from the World Heritage Centre, UNESCO Paris; and Carlos Garcia-Saez from the World Heritage Centre, UNESCO, Paris.

**Participants:**

Approximately 110 attendees participated in this work session. As this was a plenary session, there was broad representation of islands and island states from across the region including American Samoa, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk and Pohnpei), Fiji, Guam, Hawaii, Kiribati, New Caledonia, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Republic of Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, United States and Vanuatu. Attendees represented a variety of agencies (NOAA, USFWS, USNPS, U.S. Department of State, State of Hawai'i, and UNESCO); local, regional, and international non-government organizations (The World Conservation Union, The Nature Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, and Conservation International); and academe (University of Hawai'i).

**Presentations:**

**1. Introduction and Master of Ceremony (Annie Hillary: NOAA)**

Ms. Hillary offered opening remarks and briefly covered the work session agenda. She outlined the use of the World Heritage Convention as a tool for management and its application as a marine conservation tool, how to apply and how to advance World Heritage in your own countries. She asked the attendees to make recommendations, as the session progressed, to enhance World Heritage Center and let them know how to meet the needs for the Pacific Region. Ms. Hillary also noted NOAA's desire to work with World Heritage to advance marine programs.

**2. World Heritage Pacific Program 2009 Action Plan. (Salamat Ali Tabbasum: World Heritage Centre, UNESCO Paris)**

Mr. Tabbasum offered attendees an overview of 2009 Action Plan for UNESCO's World Heritage Pacific Program. The Pacific Region is underrepresented on the World Heritage list, and a program was developed to encourage and support the eleven Pacific members in the Convention; there are still a few Pacific island states that have yet to sign the Convention. There are sixteen World Heritage Sites in Australia and four in New Zealand.

World Heritage gives international visibility to the country and to the site harnessing institutions and other stakeholders to care about the site. There are important challenges including lack of capacity, knowledge, scientific skill, funds, institutional development, and insufficient management or legal protection. During the forum, it was hoped that these challenges would be addressed.

The objectives of the Pacific program are to ensure representation of the Pacific cultural heritage, promote trans-boundary and partnership projects. The Pacific Action Plan provided funding for nomination to tentative lists, action plans and workshops with the generous support of Italian, Dutch, Norwegian and Spanish Governments. These funds have already been used to help develop national action plans in Palau, Papua New Guinea, FSM, Marshall Islands, and the Solomon Islands. In addition, the World Heritage developed an education kit titled "Our Pacific Heritage," in partnership with New Zealand, to train primary school teachers to use the kit in school systems.

Mr. Tabbasum stated that recommendations from the Forum would be taken to the World Heritage Pacific Meeting to assess what has been achieved and what needs to be done in the next ten years. From this, the committee will draft a paper to present to head World Heritage committees.

### **3. The UNESCO World Heritage Marine Program.** (Carlos Garcia-Saez: World Heritage Centre, UNESCO, Paris)

Mr. Garcia-Saez then provided greater detail on the World Heritage Marine Program. He noted that the Convention should be used as a tool, not a means to an end, and emphasized that the important goal is to manage and preserve natural and cultural marine resources. Marine protected areas are also tools available to manage natural resources, develop participatory process and promote governance.

Due to historical reasons, the World Heritage is dominated by cultural sites. There are some natural and coastal sites, but very few sites dedicated solely to marine environments. The goal is to provide a more strategic way to develop marine nominations and assist in the preparation for Tentative Lists nominations, as well as development of partnerships. Oceania should take advantage of New Zealand being the chair of the committee, and being this the year of the Pacific to support regional initiatives.



Carlos Garcia-Saez leads participants through a World Heritage convention brainstorming exercise

#### **Viewing of World Heritage Cartoon Clip**

As an example of outreach UNESCO World Heritage representatives showed "Patrimonio," a cartoon about preserving and conserving the Subantarctic Islands of New Zealand as a World Heritage Site. The cartoon was well received by the audience.

#### **Brainstorming Exercise to Discuss Knowledge of World Heritage Convention**

This exercise provided participants an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the World Heritage processes and to identify next steps for implementing the Convention. During this session the attendees divided into small groups, each with

a designated facilitator. The groups were asked to discuss and provide input on four questions regarding the role of the World Heritage Convention in the Pacific Region.

1. What does World Heritage Mean?
2. What are the benefits of World Heritage?
3. What are the problems with World Heritage?
4. How can World Heritage link with other activities?

In addition to answering the above questions, groups were asked to identify potential obstacles to progress in implementing the World Heritage Convention and ways of overcoming these obstacles, and to identify potential synergies and opportunities for serial and trans-boundary nominations and new partnerships to aid in implementation. The participants were also asked to list potential activities for implementing the Convention in their countries, or within respective organizations (draft formats were provided).

**Summaries of Brainstorming Activity:**

Below is a list of answers compiled by the participants' small groups during the brainstorming activity.

**What does the World Heritage mean to us?**

- Global recognition of culture and natural values that is unique to Oceania
- Community and national pride
- Tool for learning and sharing culture with the world
- Testament to the stewardship/safe-warding of resources by our ancestors
- Brings country to international forum
- Encourages long-term management of the site
- Increase threats due to international recognition

**What are the benefits of World Heritage?**

- Commitment to long-term protection of the site
- Local economy boost - Tourism
- Ability to access global expertise and funds and increased support from international community
- Unique opportunity for international collaboration, networking with other islands, and sharing of knowledge
- Increased awareness of national culture and pride
- Promoting/upgrading community conservation efforts
- Opportunity for exchange of cultural traditions

**What are the problems\barriers to implementing World Heritage?**

- Great deal of requirements/length of time for application-nomination process
- Limited local capacity and scarcity of funds



Greg Moretti, Brent Tibbatts, Julita Albert, and Ratu Aisea Katonivere brainstorm during a small group exercise



Matiota Kairo and Pulea Ifopo participate in the brainstorming exercise on World Heritage

- Lack of local community support, awareness, understanding of the World Heritage Convention
- Benefits are not clear
- Confusion on implementation arrangements
- Fear that listing might create too much use
- Lack of political will
- Timing of support and level of funding
- Fear of losing local control over the site
- Balance of economic development and cultural values
- Complex difficult nomination requirements

**How can World Heritage link with other conservation activities?**

- Cultural and natural heritage at site level and global level
- Potential to recognize traditional management across Oceania
- Motivation among stakeholders
- Connectivity to other protected areas
- Complement ongoing local, regional and international programmes and initiatives
- Help validate the role of custom and culture in conservation, with potential to promote traditional management approaches
- Allow for international collaboration for research
- Promote interlink of land, sea, people, and culture
- Link local action to global community



Hans Thulstrup leads participants through a World Heritage convention brainstorming exercise

**Presentations continued:**

**4. World Heritage Nomination Process and Requirements.** (Salamat Ali Tabbasum: World Heritage Centre, UNESCO Paris)

Mr. Tabbasum provided an overview of the criteria required to include a site in the World Heritage list. In order to meet these criteria, a potential site must demonstrate: Outstanding Universal Value, Integrity, Maintenance of Ecological Processes, Geological Processes and their integrity. This initiated some discussion regarding the definition of Outstanding Universal Value.

**5. World Heritage Developments in Kiribati.** (Matt Kairo: Acting Deputy Secretary Ministry of Environment, Lands and Agriculture - Kiribati)

Mr. Kairo's presentation offered an outlook of the lessons learned regarding the Phoenix Islands and their nomination process. The main lesson centered on the lack of understanding of the importance of preserving sites both culturally and naturally.

**6. Marshall Islands Tentative List Case Study.** (Jim Maragos: U.S Fish and Wildlife Service)

This presentation offered a brief description of the Marshall Islands Atolls and some consequences of the nuclear testing program there. Mr. Maragos detailed how history and culture are helping in the recovery

of these atolls, and went on to describe the unique nature of these atolls and the importance of incorporating them to the U.S. Tentative List for World Heritage nomination.

**7. Great Barrier Reef and Australia in Pacific World Heritage.** (Ken Heffernan: Heritage Policy Section, Department of Environment and Heritage, Australia)

Mr. Heffernan offered a description of Great Barrier Reef and presented its ranging management, rezoning and public participation as a case study of best practices. He went on to depict Australia as an Asia-Pacific focal point and a forum for better communication in the region. It was also emphasized that it is important to involve people in order to not lose cultural heritage, and to be aware of what communities want to present to the world.

**8. Serial and Trans-boundary World Heritage Nominations for the Pacific.** (Carlos Garcia-Saez: World Heritage Centre, UNESCO, Paris)

Mr. Garcia-Saez presented a review of the criteria to develop serial site nominations (within a country) and trans-boundary serial nominations (serial nominations across several countries). It was recommended to maintain the same framework and management approach for all sites. Currently there are few examples of Natural Serial or Trans-boundary Nominations, and none of them are marine sites.

**9. The Central Pacific World Heritage Project Case Study.** (Hans Thulstrup: UNESCO, Apia)

Mr. Thulstrup presented a case study on World Heritage nominations in the Central Pacific. One of the aims of the project was to promote serial trans-boundary projects throughout the Pacific. Mr. Thulstrup emphasized the importance of developing collaborations and using funds/trust for partnering across the Pacific. He offered the three-phase approach to nomination in Kiribati as one example.

He also stressed that a submission must be put forth by countries, and the need to focus on local communities.

**10. The Experiences of New Caledonia in World Heritage Nomination.** (Joseph Manaute: Assistant, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, New Caledonia)

Mr. Manaute shared the experiences of New Caledonia in the serial World Heritage Site nomination process and provided a review of the information and the process needed in order to develop a successful World Heritage nomination dossier. Mr. Manaute provided these comments on behalf of the governments of France, New Caledonia, and three local governments. He presented the following chronology of the process, noting that it is long but necessary, and then gave a detailed account of the New Caledonia serial site.

1999: Local NGO initiates World Heritage Site nomination, but did not follow prescribed process, as it was submitted to the French Minister but included no local community input.

2003: President Chirac confirms the French Government's commitment to sustain a nomination.

2004: At SPREP meeting (Sept), New Caledonia announces globally a consensual agreement to nominate for World Heritage Site.

2005: Jacques Chirac again confirms support for the nomination process.

2005: June – A serial site is selected based upon technical recommendations from Environmental Ministry.

2005: August – Action plan and methodology built by local authorities.

Three committees were involved in New Caledonia's serial site nomination file preparation: a steering committee, a technical committee, and the French Coral Reef Initiative (IFRECOR) committee.

Mr. Manaute acknowledged that the nomination process is long, noting that you must follow the detailed guide for nomination provided by UNESCO. He recommended that potential sites gather all relevant information before undertaking the process. During Phase I of the New Caledonia nomination process, justification for the serial site's value was developed. Phase II saw the development of a management plan. The support for the nomination included 30 years of marine research data and funds from French Ministries and the New Caledonia government, as well as funds from the provinces. Public participation included many community meetings/consultations including Senate and customary/traditional leaders and authorities.

New Caledonia has nominated a serial site. There are six sites, which together offer full representation of all reefs in New Caledonia. Each site has unique characteristics (i.e., the northern site offers a more pelagic/oceanic influence, while the south offers greater continental influences). The sites also offer a latitudinal gradient, from tropical in the north, to temperate in the south. In all, the serial site covers 1,574,300 ha including 7,284 sq. km of reef and 1,600 km of barrier reef; 15,000 marine species; 350 hard and 400 soft corals; 1,700 fish species; and iconic species such as humpback whales, turtles, and seabirds – as it contains a critical nesting area of the Pacific).

Mr. Manaute indicated that a serial site must have an umbrella plan that coordinates each management plan. The Principles of Management for this site were:

- Sustainable Development Principle: World Heritage Site nomination does not mean that the area will be sealed off. The site will include human uses, as long as they are sustainable.
- Participative Management Principle.
- Coherence of Management at the scale of the New Caledonia archipelago.

The master site plan calls for maintaining the site's integrity; knowing the site's status through monitoring; protecting and preserving the site; and participatory management. The plan must also address the following threats: fisheries, coastal urbanization, mining, domestic pollution, agriculture, and aquaculture.

#### **11. Lessons Learned Case Study from East Rennell World Heritage Site.** (Salamat Ali Tabbasum: World Heritage Centre, UNESCO, Paris)

Mr. Tabbasum presented a case study on lessons learned from the East Rennell World Heritage Site in the Solomon Islands. The Solomon Islands has one of the largest raised coral atolls in the South Pacific. East Rennell was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1998. From 1999-2004 civil unrest resulted in a limited government in the Solomon Islands, but the site continues due primarily to community involvement. There are five villages, twenty-one chiefs and one Paramount Chief of East Rennell with customary ownership of the area. Traditional practices are part of daily life in the area, and there is no management plan for the site.

The community is more or less harmonious, with strong leadership based on consensus. This community management relies upon strong leadership, cooperation among villages and chiefs, and consensus based upon contributions of all communities involved.

The communities have been further united through the East Rennell Trust Board, an NGO focused on ecotourism and the sustainable use of East Rennell. Sustainable development options have been developed that meet the needs of local communities. For example, New Zealand has funded nine eco-lodges, which generate income for communities. In addition, there are several small grant opportunities for small business such as ecotourism; poultry; beekeeping and honey production; vegetable production;

sustainable commercial logging/fishing; and furniture making. Numerous organizations have pledged support for these small businesses and to help build ecotourism capacity among locals. Mr. Tabbasum emphasized that these programs are not intended as a rural development model, as that is a national responsibility. He went on to state that the World Heritage Convention is a conservation instrument and that in order to avoid disappointment or opposition it is important to ensure that there no unrealistic expectations result from World Heritage nomination.

He concluded his presentation with a 'way forward' based upon the lessons learned. He emphasized the following factors as being integral to success: recognize traditional management where it exists; documentation of traditional management practices and an integration of these with any 'western-style' management; and supporting community-based organizations, boards, and committees. In addition, it is important that efforts by all donors, agencies and organizations be coordinated so that communities have time for their daily activities, as having numerous individual agendas can be overwhelming.

Audience questions and answers, taken at the end of this session, are captured below.

Question: Is there an aid-overkill problem in East Rennell?

Answer: All development projects are community driven and East Rennell's Trust Board is aware of all projects.

Question: Is there equitable distribution of benefits from these development programs? If not, is there any effort to better understand the socio-economic impacts to help alleviate this kind of inequity?

Answer: Benefits do not flow evenly through the whole community and there is currently no mechanism to distribute benefits equally. CUSO (a Canadian volunteer organization) volunteers are currently conducting socio-economic surveys to better understand the situation.

Question: In many countries land acquisition is a very lengthy and involved process. Therefore, whichever site is being considered for World Heritage nomination, is important that [UNESCO] choose areas that already have existing protected status and that have undergone all preliminary clearance.

Answer: UNESCO does not make the decision of which sites will be nominated. All UNESCO can do is assess whether or not a nominated site qualifies and is well protected – not tell anyone which sites to nominate. Communities and national governments choose sites for nomination.

### **Discussion and Conclusions:**

After the presentations, a plenary session was held to wrap up the World Heritage session and to develop recommendations to UNESCO regarding the World Heritage nomination process. Utilizing the information acquired during the brainstorming session, a list of the primary benefits and most important questions/recommendations was developed regarding the role of the World Heritage Convention in the Pacific.

#### **1. What does World Heritage mean?**

- Accords a unique link between natural marine and cultural boundaries
- Brings international recognition to Pacific nations and values
- Source of pride



2. **What are the benefits of World Heritage?**
  - Value for local people, local pride and awareness
  - Commitment for long-term protection
  - Tourism (boost local economies)
  - Support from international community
3. **What are the problems with World Heritage?**
  - Lots of requirements/length of time
  - Government bureaucracy and lack of national government political will
4. **How can World Heritage link with other activities?**
  - reinforce and complement initiatives, local networks, global initiatives or conferences
  - potential to recognize and promote traditional management approaches, linking culture and nature
  - link site level action to global community
5. **What resources and assistance are especially important to implement those activities?**
  - Scientific evaluation for justification, funds and human resources
  - Public education and awareness to mobilize community, political support and funding
  - Tangible cost-benefit analysis of World Heritage Convention
  - Higher education for local people

**Recommendations for UNESCO World Heritage Centre:**

Recommendations to the World Heritage Committee, the World Heritage Centre, States Parties and international community were drafted with regard to enhancing use of the World Heritage Convention in the Pacific, especially for marine sites. These recommendations included:

- Keep the process as simple as possible
- UNESCO should be included as part of national consultations for Tentative Lists and nominations
- Minimize cycles of submission and evaluation
- Provide greater financial assistance
- Ensure that local communities and local (traditional) governments are properly consulted
- Provide study tours (exchanges) between communities and local governments
- Develop monitoring protocols that are simple and affordable for Pacific countries and communities including the evaluation of management effectiveness
- UNESCO should have an office in Palau (Micronesia)
- Help to increase capacity of local human resources
- Provide World Heritage support for sites and proposals in Papua New Guinea
- Need of something implemented after so many consultations
- Political support to commit governments, regional Pacific meetings including World Heritage
- Better explained criteria for nomination
- Develop a guide on criteria through case studies
- Develop a catalogue of traditionally-managed sites
- Inform U.S. National Park Service on Pacific developments
- Provide financial support to revise tentative lists

For more information on the World Heritage Convention, visit: <http://whc.unesco.org>