



World Heritage Site Managers' Forum

General Information

Dates: 26 June– 4 July 2019

Venue: Baku, Azerbaijan (Baku Congress Center)

Host: Republic of Azerbaijan

Organizers: Republic of Azerbaijan, ICCROM

Partners: World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS, IUCN

Deadline for registration of applications: 26 April 2019

Background

The World Heritage Convention sets out the responsibilities of the States Parties to identify, protect and manage natural and cultural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). While appropriate conditions for proper protection are nearly always generated at State level, most of the obligations associated with the inscription of a site on the World Heritage List are usually met at the level of the specific sites themselves, and this is best achieved with the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. Their knowledge of the Convention and their understanding of the World Heritage system has a significant impact on the protection of the OUV. Within each group of stakeholders, a single manager often emerges as the key responsibility holder who oversees and leads site-specific managerial decision-making and who, for the purposes of this introductory note, we will call World Heritage “Site Manager”. Depending on the type of heritage at stake, a Site Manager can come from very different realities – the public or private sector, heritage or non-heritage organizations, etc. He/She is often the person who plays the most crucial role in ensuring the implementation of the Convention. A Site Manager reconciles the expectations and requirements of the international heritage community with the needs and potential of the specific heritage site with which he/she is involved.

The level of protection of a World Heritage property's OUV and its state of conservation are monitored by the World Heritage Committee, supported by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies (ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN), through processes known as 'Reactive Monitoring' and 'Periodic Reporting'. The Reactive Monitoring process responds to a certain situation at a certain time and involves the collection of data from the States Parties concerned, dispatching Reactive Monitoring missions to the site, and the drafting of state of conservation reports (SOC) by the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies. These reports are then examined at the annual session of the World Heritage Committee and the decisions, which



are adopted, are sent to the States Parties concerned for implementation. Responsibility for carrying out these requests lies primarily in the hands of the Site Managers. However, too often, they have no or limited direct involvement in the information exchange and development of content for the related recommendations. The recommendations then land on their desks and, in the absence of a consolidated understanding of the entire decision-making process, Site Managers are not empowered to act upon them effectively or help other stakeholders engage in the World Heritage processes to this same end.

Considering the World Heritage List includes over 1.000 properties and a global territory of over 276 million hectares under its protection, increased understanding of the World Heritage decision-making processes among Site Managers becomes crucial in order to achieve more effective protection of OUV. It is also equally important that the task of managing a site does not sit on one individual site manager, but on the coordinated efforts of a “site management team”. Providing ample capacity building opportunities for the site management team will allow the Convention to fulfill its potential as a tool and catalyst for World Heritage protection and heritage protection in general. At the same time, future improvements to the World Heritage decision-making procedures must build on and respond to greater engagement of those dealing with World Heritage on a day-to-day basis.

Stronger bridges should be built between the procedural core of the World Heritage system and its outer segments – those in the field whose ongoing work to safeguard the OUV of World Heritage properties constitutes the real expression of the Convention. It is in this context that the Republic of Azerbaijan, as host of the 43rd World Heritage Committee session, is fully committed to continue the admirable initiative of the ‘World Heritage Site Managers Forum’ to unite representatives from World Heritage properties with those at the heart of World Heritage procedures.

The Statements of participants from the 1st and 2nd editions of the Site Managers’ Forum, which took place in Poland (Krakow, 2017) and Bahrain (Manama, 2018) can be found here: [2017](#) | [2018](#).