



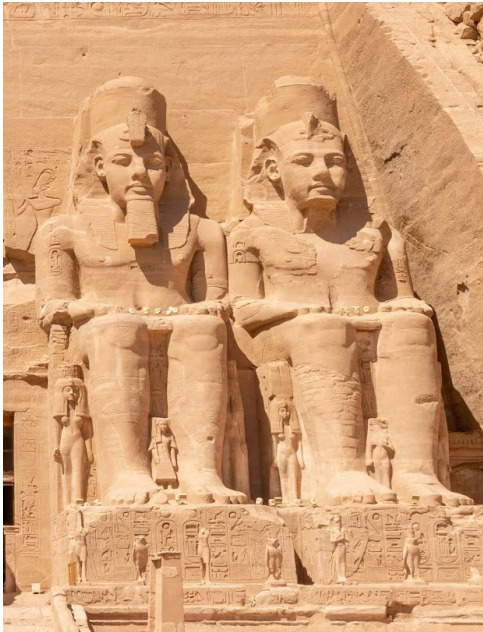
UNESCO World Heritage Convention 1972: An Introduction

RESEARCHER: Hoseah Wanderi

TOPIC: UNESCO World Heritage Convention 1972: An Introduction

THEME: World Heritage Site

DEPARTMENT: Antiquities, Sites & Monuments



Statues of Pharaoh Ramesses II
Source: iStock

Lesson Objectives

1. To describe the challenges and threats faced by World Heritage sites.
2. To discuss the mitigations needed to protect World Heritage sites.

Learning resources

1. Text
2. Video
3. Photo

Benefits of the Convention to heritage

The benefits of the WHC to heritage are:

- **Synergies:** International community cooperation makes the load of conserving heritage lighter by sharing experiences, best practices and expertise.
- **Access to the World Heritage Fund** to assist State Parties in identifying, preserving and promoting World Heritage sites. The fund may also include emergency assistance.
- **Prestige:** The World Heritage List is a class of superlatives and therefore inscription on the list is a source of pride for any country as it enhances the country's visibility on a global scale.
- **Promotion of heritage** at the global level.
- Promotion of heritage as an **engine of socio-economic development.**

Structure of the Convention

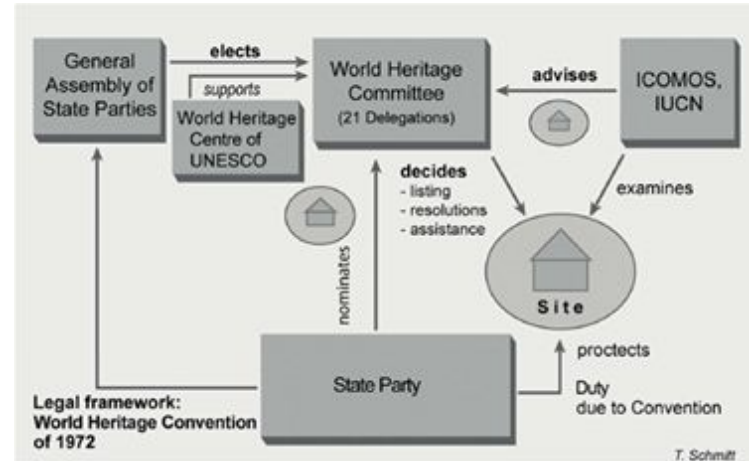
The Convention is comprised of:

- Members of the convention, that is, State Parties that have ratified or accepted and acceded to the convention (Annex 1 of Operational Guidelines).
- Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection of the Cultural and Natural Heritage of OUV, also known as World Heritage Committee comprising 21 members.
- UNESCO World Heritage Centre as Secretariat to the World Heritage Committee, referred to as "the Secretariat".
- Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee including:
 - International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM).
 - International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).
 - World Conservation Union formerly, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).
- Site managers, stakeholders and partners in the protection of World Heritage properties.

Responsibilities under World Heritage Convention

The WHC spells out responsibilities for state parties. Such responsibilities include:

- The State Party is in charge of Heritage inventory, Tentative List, WH nomination, and management and protection of WH properties.
- UNESCO World Heritage Centre as the focal point and coordinator in UNESCO for all World Heritage matters. They coordinate day to day follow up on the Convention, including advice to Member States and facilitating international assistance to WHF for WH properties.
- Advisory Bodies conduct evaluation regarding nominations, and provide technical advice to WH Committee, WH Centre and Member States.
- The World Heritage Committee, the 21 State Members elected by UNESCO General Conference for 6 years (4 years on voluntary basis), are decision-makers and responsible for implementation of WH Convention.



Interactions within the Convention
 Source: NMK - Antiquities, Sites and Monuments

World Heritage List (WHL)

There are four categories under the WHL:

- Cultural sites,
- Natural sites,
- Mixed sites and
- Cultural landscapes.

Ten criteria are used to determine whether a site qualifies to be listed as a World Heritage Site ([The Criteria for Selection, UNESCO](#)). The first six criteria are used for cultural heritage and the remaining four are for natural heritage.

These criteria are:

- (i) To represent a masterpiece of human creative genius.
- (ii) To exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design.
- (iii) To bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.
- (iv) To be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.

- (v) To be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.
- (vi) To be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria).
- (vii) To contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.
- (viii) To be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features.
- (ix) To be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals.
- (x) To contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Challenges and threats in the modern world

Challenges experienced in the management and protection of WH properties include:

- Climate change
- Infrastructure development and modernization
- Extreme weather including drought or flooding
- Invasive species causing competition into native natures
- Gazettement and conservation of trans-boundary sites within disputed territories.

World Heritage sites in Danger List

Regions	Cultural	Natural	Mixed	Total	%
Africa	4	12	0	16	30
Arab States	22	0	0	22	41
Asia and the Pacific	4	2	0	6	11
Europe and North America	3	1	0	4	3
Latin America and the Caribbean	5	1	0	6	11
Total	38	14	0	54	100

*World Heritage Sites In Danger List
Source: World Heritage Convention*

World Heritage Sites In Danger by region (Africa)

Countries	Properties
DRC	5
Libya	5
Mali	3
CAR	9
Côte D'Ivoire	1
Egypt	1
Kenya	7

Countries	Properties
Guinea	1
Madagascar	1
Niger	1
Senegal	1
Uganda	1
Tanzania	1

World Heritage Sites in danger in Africa

Source: World Heritage Convention

Mitigations needed to protect World Heritage Sites

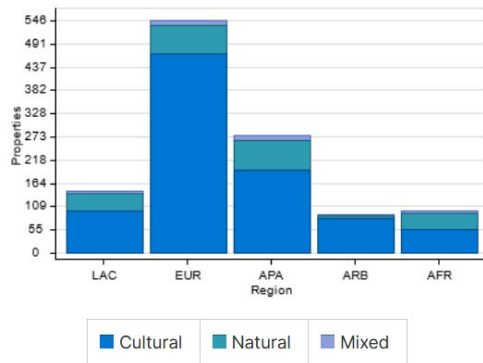
WH Sites need to be protected for posterity. Some of the mitigation measures to consider include:

- Care for fragile habitats to conserve biodiversity for example, reduced or zero use of plastics and use of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power.
- Consultative development planning with all stakeholders especially in the infrastructural development.
- Conducting credible environmental, social and heritage impact assessment studies before any major development is approved.
- Cooperation between government conservation agencies and non-governmental organisations, with a focus on heritage matters and involvement of local communities to correct negative trends in heritage loss.
- Capacity building of developers and planners both in private and public institutions about care of heritage.
- Community sensitization about the human induced threats to heritage. In addition, using community knowledge to continue managing and protecting heritage sites.

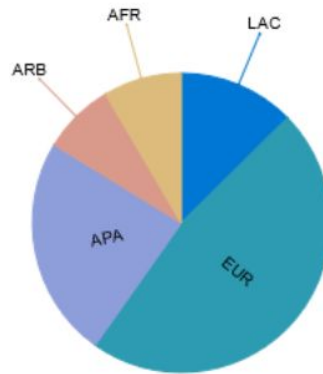
Status of World Heritage Sites in Africa and the World

95 countries in Africa have World Heritage Sites including:

- 52 cultural
- 38 natural
- 5 mixed (both cultural and natural heritage)



World Heritage Sites in Africa vs other regions
Source: World Heritage Convention



Countries	Properties
South Africa	10
Ethiopia	9
Tunisia	8
Tanzania	7
Senegal	7
Kenya	7
Egypt	7
Algeria	7

World Heritage Sites in Africa
Source: World Heritage Convention