

PACIFIC 2009 ROUNDTABLE, NEW ZEALAND

Following the recent World Heritage Periodic Reports for Asia and the Pacific, a new world heritage programme “*Pacific 2009*” has been proposed by UNESCO with a focus on consultation, capacity building, education and the preparation of tentative lists and nominations for properties for inclusion in the World Heritage list, using a cooperative partnership approach.

A Roundtable meeting was organised October 17-22 in New Zealand for representatives of Pacific Island countries and territories, the Advisory Bodies and representatives of the World Heritage Centre. The Roundtable was set within the framework established by the Global Strategy meetings held in the Pacific (Fiji 1997 and Vanuatu 1999) to develop a credible, balanced and representative World Heritage List and in the context of the recent Representivity Report presented by ICOMOS to the 28th Session of the World Heritage Committee in July 2004, which had proved disappointing in its lack of Pacific region material.

During 2004, visits by staff of the World Heritage Centre to the Pacific had been undertaken to raise awareness, a Pacific version of “the world heritage in young hands” education booklet was prepared and a range of capacity building exercises was initiated. International funds are being assembled to support a range of projects from training to study tours, and priorities needed debate and definition.

Working from the basic information in the regional World Heritage Periodic Reports, Giovanni Boccardi and Ali Salamat Tabbasum arrived at Whakapapa, Tongariro National Park for the Roundtable, to meet with an enthusiastic group of about 75 representatives of the Pacific Region. We were greeted by the Paramount Chief and warriors of the Ngati Tuwharetoa Tribe, amongst the steaming hills and lake of Waihi, a memorable and auspicious start to proceedings.

Paramount Chief Tumu Tu Heuheu, New Zealand delegate on the World Heritage Committee chaired the Roundtable and presided at a series of events through the week which included impressive formal ceremonies and warm welcoming dinners at Waihi and Waitetoko maraes.

The NZ Department of Conservation staff led by Andrew Bignell efficiently organised proceedings, provided unforgettable experiences of New Zealand’s cultural site management in the magic landscape of Tongariro National Park, amidst several late season snow falls.

I attended the meeting representing international ICOMOS, as one of the partner organisations of the programme.

Delegates received short presentations from the World Heritage Centre (Ali Salamat Tabbasum and Giovanni Boccardi), ICOMOS (Sheridan Burke), IUCN (Bruce Jeffries) and ICCROM (Gamini Wesijurya). A range of site

specific studies, including a series presented by Stephen Hill (UNESCO Jakarta) followed by Alex Marsden on the subject of tentative lists and Anita Smith on regional training opportunities broadened the discussion and engagement for all. David Walker explained the initiatives of the Asia Pacific Focal Point, developed by the Australian government, and there was strong support for its use as a communication tool for *Pacific 2009*.

Roundtable discussions built awareness and cooperation and a draft action plan emerged from the small drafting group, which is presently being circulated prior to finalisation, seeking specific commitment to actions, particularly over the next two years.

The final report of the Pacific 2009 Roundtable will be sent to the forthcoming Extraordinary meeting of the World Heritage Committee in early December.

A major issue to emerge immediately discussion began was the desire to develop the Pacific 2009 programme from the ground up - nation by nation setting priorities in partnership with a range of funders and stakeholders, over the next 5 years (with a review after 2 years).

In preparing the Action Plan the Roundtable noted the need to take into account the special circumstances faced and shared by the Pacific countries

- Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs) generally have very small land areas and populations (though very large sea areas)
- Heritage management agencies are small, handle many functions and have very limited resources
- Distances between countries are enormous, and travel can be a significant cost (inhibitor) for activities.

The Roundtable noted that whilst membership of the Convention is now very high in the region, implementation levels are very low. The reasons were much discussed over the week - the question of benefits vs. costs of participation in the World Heritage Convention and the necessary resources (expertise, financial etc) required were constantly debated and experiences shared. The lack of basic heritage legislation in many PICTs was a unifying problem, and one in which New Zealand and Australia ICOMOS have useful experience to share in policy development and implementation.

Many potential World Heritage Sites in this region are natural and spiritual heritage sites, about which several other conventions already operate - the Apia convention, CBD and Ramsar. The Roundtable delegates emphasised time and again that it is vital that work on World Heritage be **integrated** with work under those conventions. Participants also noted that whilst there is considerable information available about natural heritage values, there is no parallel level of work for cultural heritage, and identified some specific projects to fill gaps.

For the three Advisory Bodies, very specific roles emerged through the drafting of the Action Plan, which are outlined below - a regional conference on Pacific heritage themes being amongst the most important.

In particular, the need to create a regional support person for the *Pacific 2009* programme, located in the Pacific was strongly voiced to the World Heritage Centre.

The potential major role that the Asia Pacific Focal Point (APFP), might play as a disseminator of information was increasingly evident.

The importance of regional cultural heritage training centres such as Deakin University was well recognised.

For ICOMOS, a number of possible roles and actions emerged, the most imminent of which was a proposal for a workshop/conference to develop the analysis of the themes of Pacific history, to assist in developing transboundary cultural (or mixed) nominations. It was suggested that this might be a launching for ICOMOS Pacifika, possibly in New Caledonia in early /mid 2005.

Other proposals for ICOMOS action included:

1. Identification of existing studies of the benefits of WH listing
2. Identification of inventory/ data to support tentative list development (Possibly an outcome of the ICOMOS Pacifika conference?)
3. Assisting two PICTs NBSAPs to do a case study to extract a tentative list of natural (or mixed) heritage sites from available information, comparative analysis, etc
4. Ongoing involvement with training courses (such as Deakin University/ Australia ICOMOS)
5. Identification of existing Conservation Management Plans that can be reviewed as models exemplars in PICTs
6. Working with one or more sites to develop a Management Plan
7. Improving information on ICOMOS and IUCN in sub-regional development programmes
8. Placing models and policies for heritage legislation on APFP (eg Australia ICOMOS legislation policy)
9. Assisting in the provision of expert advisers via volunteer programmes and exchanges, sharing knowledge with site managers in PICTs
10. Strengthening technical capacity building relationships between PICTs and Advisory Bodies, identifying supportive programmes and projects.

Some of these actions are best initiated at an international level: for example 1,3, 7,10; others at a regional level of activity: the themes conference and actions 2 , 3,4,5; some would be undertaken bilaterally 3, 6,9; others are predominantly national tasks 1,2, 8; and several actions need to be undertaken at all levels such as 9 and 10 .

For international ICOMOS, the provision of cost/benefit example studies, support for developing case studies and improved information in sub-regional development programmes are critical actions, as is ongoing engagement in the *Pacific 2009* action plan process (eg Review in 2006).

For Australia ICOMOS, prime tasks involve supporting the regional conference in 2005 with the launch of ICOMOS Pacifika (whose members can take an active role in many of the *Pacific 2009* action plan implementation activities), ongoing involvement with Deakin University in regional training and development of the ICOMOS Volunteers programme to assist and support PICT site managers in a range of activities to build world heritage capacity in the region.

The meeting closed with a Poroporoaki, where the songs exchanged through the week were sung again in farewell.

The final *Pacific 2009* Action Plan and delegate list is to be added to the Asia Pacific Focal Point Website, www.heritage.gov.au/apfp/

Sheridan Burke
Vice President, ICOMOS