

## Terms of reference for the Icomos World Heritage Panel

November 2015

### Introduction

ICOMOS is the professional advisor on cultural heritage to the World Heritage Committee: it is one of the Advisory Bodies designated in the 1972 World Heritage Convention.

One of its principal functions is the evaluation of nominations made each year to the World Heritage List by States Parties to the Convention.

This task has been assigned to the World Heritage Panel of ICOMOS which is required to develop working methods that are as fair, rigorous and professional as possible.

The Panel is established by the President of ICOMOS.

### Specific Tasks of the World Heritage Panel

- Conduct a rigorous evaluation of all nominations of cultural and mixed properties to the World Heritage List.
- Where necessary, identify specific additional information to be requested from States Parties in order to finalise the ICOMOS recommendations.
- Determine the ICOMOS recommendations in relation to each new nomination, in line with the requirements established in *the Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.
- Ensure that the recommendations by ICOMOS are consistent and professionally sound, reflecting both diverse and specialised expertise.

### Composition

The ICOMOS World Heritage Panel includes:

- Members of the ICOMOS Board who represent all regions of the globe and have a vast range of expertise and experience.
- International experts, invited for their specific field of expertise. These are invited on an annual basis, according to the characteristics of the nominated properties to be examined, and subject to the available financial resources to support their attendance.

The ICOMOS World Heritage Panel is supported by the attendance and active participation of:

- ICOMOS advisors, who are responsible for studying the nomination and associated reports, drafting a preliminary evaluation for each dossier and presenting each of the dossiers to the Panel. Advisors are selected on the basis of World Heritage expertise, as well as a high level of international knowledge in particular professional disciplines.
- Senior staff of the ICOMOS World Heritage Units based at the ICOMOS International Secretariat in Charenton-le-Pont.

The Panel contains expertise in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, and represents the various professional, geographic and cultural perspectives necessary to ensure the quality of the decision making process.

## **Duties**

Each member of the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel undertakes to attend the whole of the meeting, and to actively take part in the work of the Panel. In particular, each Panel member agrees to review several files in detail and provide a technical report and comments.

All Panel members must take care to avoid the potential for perceptions of conflicts of interest. In all cases, an ICOMOS Panel member whose nationality is the same as that of the subject of the evaluation must absent himself from discussion and decision making processes.

The Panel members undertake to respect the confidentiality of the discussions that occur, including the agreed ICOMOS recommendations. In finalizing and releasing the outcomes of the evaluations, communications with States Parties should be conducted by the ICOMOS International Secretariat.

*The Policy for the implementation of the ICOMOS World Heritage Mandate* is signed by each participant of the meeting.

The funds available to support the composition and operation of the World Heritage Panel are limited. In most cases, Panel members are required to partly or wholly fund the expenses associated with their participation.

## **Process**

The ICOMOS World Heritage Panel meets in two sessions for each evaluation cycle. The primary Panel process takes place at the end of November/beginning of December in order to meet the evaluation timetable established by the World Heritage Committee. A smaller second meeting is organised in March of the following year to examine any additional information sent by States Parties in response to requests by ICOMOS (the deadline for additional information is currently established as 28 February of each year).

### Preparatory work

- The materials considered by the Panel include: nomination dossiers, additional materials submitted by the State Party, correspondence exchanged with the State Party during the evaluation cycle, the report of the technical evaluation mission, the reports provided by the desk review experts, advice provided by the ICOMOS National Committee(s) and any relevant research material collected by the ICOMOS Evaluation Unit and its Advisors.
- Electronic versions of the nomination dossiers as well as information documents are made available to Panel members before the beginning of the meeting. At this stage, the allocation of files to the Panel members is finalised by the ICOMOS Evaluation Unit in consultation with the ICOMOS Officers responsible for World Heritage. Panel members are expected to review in detail all the electronic materials provided prior to the commencement of the Panel meeting and to provide a report on the nominations they are assessing.
- Based on a thorough review of the nomination dossier prepared by the State Party and all of the reports requested through the ICOMOS networks, the ICOMOS advisors produce a draft evaluation document in English or French for discussion with the World Heritage Panel.
- The draft evaluations mirror the format of the final evaluation reports presented to the World Heritage Committee by ICOMOS and include a brief description and history of the property, a summary of its legal status and protection, management and state of conservation, comments on the above aspects and an analysis of the criteria on the basis of which they are nominated.
- The draft evaluation documents are provided to Panel members by the ICOMOS Evaluation Unit prior to the meeting.
- All materials collected in relation to each file are available in hard copy at the office of the ICOMOS International Secretariat for the duration of the World Heritage Panel session for the use of Panel members.

### Meetings of the World Heritage Panel

- Each member of the World Heritage Panel of ICOMOS is allocated a certain number of dossiers, depending on the number and nature of the nominations and his/her field of competence, which the member undertakes to examine in greater detail.
- The meeting is chaired by the ICOMOS Officer responsible for World Heritage.
- The ICOMOS World Heritage Panel meeting consists of the presentation by the advisors of the nominations, accompanied by multimedia projections of illustrations, plans and photographs, and the presentation by the panel members of their reports which include draft recommendations, followed by a debate and the adoption of a recommendation.
- All members of the Panel may speak during the discussion, according to the order determined by the Chairperson.
- Decisions are made on the basis of consensus wherever possible and must always be in conformity with the *Operational Guidelines*.

- The Panel must consider the nomination according to the requirements of the Operational Guidelines, and makes use of checklist tools to ensure that all of these are carefully considered.
- The recommendation adopted at the Panel meeting may be finalised at the first meeting of the Panel, or might be tentative, depending on the outcome of identified requests for additional information. In these latter cases, the final recommendation is decided at the second Panel meeting (March).
- The final session is devoted to reviewing and checking the Panel recommendations and their consistency as well as the letters to be sent to States Parties and their content.

#### Follow up

- After the Panel December and March meetings, revised evaluations are prepared in line with the Panel recommendations, translated into both working languages and dispatched to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

## **Policy for the implementation of the ICOMOS World Heritage mandate**

The purpose of ICOMOS' involvement with the World Heritage Convention is provision of the highest available degree of professional expertise in the evaluation of World Heritage nominations and other aspects of implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

The purpose of this document is hence to ensure that the credibility of ICOMOS in performing these functions is above question and to this end it brings together a variety of practices and decisions that have been previously adopted.

Further to the above, ICOMOS understands that in dealing with this area, situations that have potential to create perceptions of conflict of interest are as damaging to the credibility of its work as those in which an actual conflict may exist. This policy is hence designed to avoid both situations where misperceptions may arise and those that raise real questions concerning the validity of its professional opinions.

Experts in the ICOMOS World Heritage system include all persons involved in the process of evaluation of nominations, state of conservation reports, reactive monitoring and other missions and programmes, including amongst other experts consulted by ICOMOS, its World Heritage Panel (i.e: the Panel appointed by the Board of ICOMOS to evaluate the work of the organisation in the area of World Heritage and the President of ICOMOS, experts presenting nominations and the state of conservation reports to the Panel and World Heritage Committee, those conducting evaluation missions and other officers of the organisation.

In order to avoid possible conflicts of interest the following shall apply:

- 1 ICOMOS bases its evaluations and other opinions on research and peer review.
- 2 Whilst as a standard practice ICOMOS consults the national committees concerned with a property that is being evaluated, in all other steps of the process it draws only on experts from countries other than the State Parties concerned.
- 3 ICOMOS does not use in its evaluation of a property or for State of Conservation reports relating to it, or assessment of threats to it, experts who have been involved with the preparation of its nomination file, the development of the management system or plan or any other study, or with the preparation of a state of conservation report submitted by the State Party.
- 4 In regards to advancing the nomination of a property, experts involved in ICOMOS' World Heritage work are required to disclose to ICOMOS any direct advice given on particular nomination files along with the particular circumstances of the service provided. This applies to mission experts, desk reviewers, Advisors, and members of the World Heritage Panel. This is not intended to include academic commentaries of a general nature. National committees and International Scientific Committees shall be asked to disclose any involvement they have in World Heritage nominations, as well as identifying individual members involved in such work. World Heritage Panel members shall not participate in any discussions related to nominations, SOC Reports related to sites in their own countries.
- 5 All experts and members involved in the preparation of nominations files, that includes advising or providing recommendations or in any way furthering such a nomination but excluding any academic work not related to a specific nomination, shall not take part in any discussion of the nomination at the WH panel or undertake missions or desk evaluations for these nominations.
- 6 ICOMOS does not utilise in field evaluations experts who are currently serving as representatives of their countries on the World Heritage Committee.

- 7 Experts are all made aware of the ICOMOS Ethical Principles and are required to abide by its principles.
- 8 In order to ensure equitable handling of all nominations and state of conservation reports, ICOMOS does not entrust external missions to any of those whom it employs in its International Secretariat or in any other capacity to process World Heritage nominations, nor does it involve those serving on its World Heritage Panel, or its International Board.
- 9 During discussion of a report or situation that concerns their own country, members of the World Heritage Panel must absent themselves from discussion and decision making processes.
- 10 The recommendations to the World Heritage Committee adopted by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel, or a working group mandated to evaluate additional information, are final and may not be changed or amended in any way other than by the Panel itself.
- 11 When new information concerning a nomination is submitted by a State Party before 28 February, a revised evaluation will be submitted to the World Heritage Panel, or a working group convened for this purpose, in order that the recommendation to the World Heritage Committee may, if appropriate, be amended. New information received after 28 February will only be examined for submission to the following year's session of the World Heritage Committee.
- 12 The recommendations and opinions of ICOMOS experts, the World Heritage Panel are confidential and individuals may not in their independent capacity engage the media, representatives of the State Party or any other individual or organisation that may or may not have an interest in the property concerned. Furthermore, officials of ICOMOS and members of its World Heritage Panel may not disclose the discussions that have taken place in the panel to any person or organisation that was not present in those discussions.
- 13 In the event that a member of the World Heritage Panel or an expert used in ICOMOS World Heritage processes fails to implement any aspect of this policy, sanction/s shall be applied. These shall be determined by the Board of ICOMOS, or any sub-committee thereof to which such authority is delegated and shall be relative to the severity of the breach. However, in cases where it is believed to have compromised the credibility of ICOMOS as an objective and unbiased adviser to the World Heritage Committee and UNESCO, the individual concerned shall automatically be debarred from further participation in ICOMOS work associated with World Heritage matters and other areas of its work where it is important that the organisation project an image of impartiality.
- 14 In the event that there is evidence that an employee of the organisation has breached this policy, disciplinary action in accordance with prescribed processes shall be implemented.
- 15 Every person employed or otherwise paid by ICOMOS in its International Secretariat, or other capacity to process World Heritage nominations, and all participants in the World Heritage Panel shall sign a copy of this statement and submit it to the Secretariat before taking up such duties.
- 16 A copy of this policy must be provided to every other individual formally involved with ICOMOS World Heritage work all of whom must indicate in advance that they understand and will abide by its terms.

**Approved for implementation**

**ICOMOS Board**

**17 January 2006 and as amended in November 2007, in October 2010, in October 2012 and in October 2015.**

I (full names) .....  
declare that I have read, understand and will abide by the above in all aspects of my involvement  
with the work of ICOMOS concerning World Heritage matters, and understand that my failure to do  
so may result in my removal from such areas of responsibility.

Date

Signature