

# The role of ICOMOS members and Committees in the context of World Heritage

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## Introduction

ICOMOS is an international non-governmental organisation of professional members and institutions with expertise in cultural heritage. It is also appointed as an Advisory Body to the World Heritage Committee by the UNESCO Convention Concerning The Protection Of The World Cultural And Natural Heritage 1972.

As with any community of experts, there may be differences of professional opinion among ICOMOS members on World Heritage matters. Nevertheless, in its role as an Advisory Body, ICOMOS must speak with one institutional voice, in a balanced and coordinated way that reflects broad international experience and expertise. Moreover, in order to maintain the credibility of its institutional advice, that advice and the process for formulating it must be demonstrably free from bias or influence.

The objective of this section is to clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of ICOMOS and its Committees and members in World Heritage work, and to define good practice rules.

## 1. Respective roles and responsibilities

### The Role of ICOMOS International

The World Heritage work at the ICOMOS International Secretariat has been organised into two separate units: the World Heritage Evaluation Unit and the World Heritage Advisory Services and Monitoring Unit. The former oversees the evaluation procedure of new nominations each year and the upstream process which assists the development of nominations. The latter handles the advisory services to States Parties, mostly linked to the state of conservation and other affairs concerning inscribed sites.

ICOMOS' recommendations for new nominations are prepared and decided upon by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel, which consists of some representatives from the ICOMOS Board, some invited representatives of ICOMOS International Scientific Committees and other expert organisations, and a number of invited experts, selected to reflect the nature of the nominations to be assessed during the cycle for that year. The ICOMOS President acts as the Chair of the Panel or appoints the Chair or co-Chairs, who then appoint the Panel members each year so as to achieve gender and regional balance as well as appropriate expertise. The nominations are presented to the Panel by a group of advisers without voting rights, who are then tasked with preparing the evaluation texts in accordance with the Panel's decisions. ICOMOS recommendations provided within the framework of Upstream advice are also presented to the World Heritage Panel for its consideration.

It is ICOMOS International's responsibility to:

- Administer and carry out the evaluation process, produce the final evaluation reports and recommendations, and present these to the session of the World Heritage Committee (the deciding body);

- During the nomination process, supply support and continuous information to States Parties, as well as provide specific assistance in the framework of the upstream process;
- Continuously monitor the state of conservation, management and threats to inscribed World Heritage properties;
- Carry out missions and studies on specific matters or sites, follow up on decisions and requested additional information, and provide all types of assistance commissioned by the World Heritage Committee and UNESCO World Heritage Centre; This assistance includes in particular Upstream advice on Tentative Lists and potential sites to be nominated, as defined by the Operational Guidelines and coordinated by the WH Centre
- Report and forward questions and opinions to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre;
- Participate in the Periodic Reporting process and the follow-up of individual World Heritage properties;
- Engage in the development and promotion of the World Heritage Convention and the World Heritage system;
- Carry out – within ICOMOS or in collaboration with others – more extensive studies, overviews and evaluations; and
- Comment on assistance requests within the framework of the World Heritage Fund.

### **The Role of ICOMOS International Scientific Committees**

ICOMOS International Scientific Committees provide much of the global expertise that maintains the credibility of ICOMOS within the World Heritage System. Their role and responsibilities include:

- At the request of ICOMOS World Heritage Units, to propose experts for missions and desk reviews for ICOMOS evaluation, monitoring or advisory activities;
- To continually monitor the state of conservation, management, and threats to World Heritage properties within their field of expertise;
- To contribute to thematic studies in their field of expertise, at the request of ICOMOS;
- To deepen knowledge and understanding of individual typologies or themes of heritage within their field of expertise, as well as identify and deal with specific problems in this field, through seminars, studies and publications.

### **The Role of ICOMOS National Committees**

ICOMOS National Committees have an important role to play in the World Heritage process in relation to World Heritage matters within their own country. This role must be exercised with care to avoid giving any impression that the National Committee speaks for ICOMOS at the International level. Their role and responsibilities include:

At any stage:

- At the request of ICOMOS World Heritage Units, identify experts for missions and desk reviews for ICOMOS evaluation, monitoring or advisory activities

During the process of preparing a World Heritage nomination:

- May organize or take part in seminars, symposia and expert meetings while a nomination is being discussed, in order to aid comparative analysis and a better knowledge and understanding of the matter;

During evaluations of World Heritage nominations in their country:

- As a committee, comment on nominations from their country to the World Heritage Evaluation Unit;
- If requested, support the work of the ICOMOS World Heritage Evaluation Unit, being on hand to assist the ICOMOS expert undertaking the evaluation mission, answering questions and providing clarifications and additional information where necessary;

After inscription of World Heritage properties:

- Monitor the state of conservation and management of and threats to World Heritage properties, as well as request international missions on specific threats. The National Committee can always contact ICOMOS World Heritage Advisory and Monitoring Unit on these matters;
- Represent the membership and forward information from members in their country;
- Prepare Heritage Alerts and other information on threats, if needed;  
→ [See the section on Heritage Alerts](#)
- Participate and assist in the preparation and carrying out of Reactive Monitoring and special missions;

## **The Role of Individual ICOMOS Members**

Individual ICOMOS members, in their professional capacity, undertake much of the work for States Parties that leads to World Heritage nominations. This role must be exercised with care to avoid conflicts of interest, and also avoid giving any impression that the member can speak for ICOMOS at the International level. Their role and responsibilities in the international work of ICOMOS include:

- To monitor the state of conservation and management of and threats to World Heritage properties in their own country and when travelling abroad, and report this directly to the National Committee.
- At the request of ICOMOS World Heritage Units, undertake expert missions and desk reviews for ICOMOS evaluation, monitoring or advisory activities

## **2. Good practice rules**

ICOMOS International should:

- Consult with National Committees and International Scientific Committees for potential names of experts for missions and desk reviews
- Inform NCs of missions to be carried out in their country
- Never engage as an expert for an upstream or evaluation work an individual who has been involved in the preparation of the nomination dossier

National Committees should:

- Always communicate on World Heritage matters with ICOMOS International, and never contact the UNESCO World Heritage Centre directly
- Share with ICOMOS International the work they have done on seminars or expert meetings, to aid comparative analysis and understanding of World Heritage
- When they provide advice to their State Party on its nominating strategy, always make clear that they speak in the name of their Committee and that their opinion does not commit ICOMOS International

- Inform ICOMOS International when they have provided advice to their State Party
- Not provide advice on or discuss with their State Party a nomination once it is under evaluation by ICOMOS International
- Never comment publicly, as a Committee, on a nomination under evaluation, or on the published evaluation
- Never make categorical statements in public regarding World Heritage matters on which ICOMOS is not authorised to decide, such as deletion from the World Heritage List, or inscribing a property on the World Heritage list or on the List of World Heritage in Danger
- Request that their members do not engage with the press or any other media about a nomination under evaluation, or on the published evaluation.

International Scientific Committees should:

- Always communicate on World Heritage matters with ICOMOS International, and never contact the UNESCO World Heritage Centre directly
- Share with ICOMOS International the work they have done regarding heritage themes, typologies and other relevant topics within their field of expertise
- Never comment publicly, as a Committee, on a nomination under evaluation, or on the published evaluation
- Never make categorical statements in public regarding World Heritage matters on which ICOMOS is not authorised to decide, such as deletion from the World Heritage List, or inscribing a property on the World Heritage list or on the List of World Heritage in Danger
- Request that their members do not engage with the press or any other media about a nomination under evaluation, or on the published evaluation.

ICOMOS members should:

- Always make clear to a meeting in which name they are speaking, working, or participating: either as an individual, as a representative of an ICOMOS National Committee or International Scientific Committee, or as a representative of ICOMOS International
- When they provide advice to their State Party on its nominating strategy, always make clear that they speak in their professional capacity and that their opinion does not commit ICOMOS International
- Fully disclose their potential conflicts of interest at all times, and never undertake to contribute (with or without remuneration) to the evaluation of a property where they have previously been involved in the preparation of the nomination for that property
- When serving with the delegation of their State Party to the World Heritage Committee, ensure that any comments on evaluations are respectful of ICOMOS and its evaluation process
- Never engage with the press or any other media regarding a nomination under evaluation, or on the published evaluation.

## Other international conventions

### UNESCO

As an organisation with associate status, ICOMOS has a long history of providing professional and technical advice to UNESCO, and is involved in many of its programmes.

As an Advisory Body to the World Heritage Committee, ICOMOS actively supports the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Its activities in relation to other UNESCO Conventions and programmes are briefly summarised below.

#### **Underwater cultural heritage**

The UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, adopted in 2001, entered into force on 2 January 2009. ICOMOS through its International Scientific Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage (ICUCH) actively took part in the development of the Convention. The ICOMOS Charter on the Protection and Management of Underwater Cultural Heritage (1996) is an annex to the Convention.

At the first Meeting of States Parties to the Convention in March 2009, ICOMOS was officially designated as advisor to the Scientific and Technical Advisory Board of the Convention.

ICUCH also regularly attends regional workshops and meetings organised by UNESCO to build capacity and promote the Convention, and it is participating in the development of a series of UNESCO Category 2 field training centres for underwater archaeology.

#### **Intangible cultural heritage**

Since 2010, ICOMOS has ranked among the NGOs accredited by the Intergovernmental Committee to provide advisory services in the context of the UNESCO Convention of 2003 for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Non-governmental organisations accredited may be selected by the Committee as members of the Consultative body, which examines nominations for inscription on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, proposals for programs, projects and activities that best reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention, and requests for international assistance, and they may attend meetings of the Committee in an advisory capacity.

The monitoring of this Convention and attendance at its statutory meetings is ensured for ICOMOS by its International Scientific Committee on Intangible Heritage (ICICH).

#### **The Hague Convention & Protocols**

ICOMOS contributes to this Convention, both as an individual organisation and through its participation in the Blue Shield. Upon invitation by UNESCO, it regularly attends the meetings of the High Contracting Parties to the Hague Convention of 1954 for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict; of the States Parties to the 2nd Protocol of the Hague Convention, and of the Committee for the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict.

ICOMOS contribution is ensured, among other, by its International Scientific Committee on Risk Preparedness (ICORP) and its International Scientific Committee on Legal, Administrative and Financial Issues (ICLAFI) together with the International Secretariat.

ICOMOS also attends meetings linked to the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property

## **Council of Europe**

### **Florence Landscape Convention**

Through its International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes, run jointly with the International Federation of Landscape Architects (IFLA), ICOMOS has regularly participated in the workshops organised for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention.