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Организация
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

CULTURE SECTOR / SECTEUR DE LA CULTURE
WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE / CENTRE DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL

To: - Permanent Delegations of all States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention*
- National Commissions for UNESCO

Ref.: CL/WHC-07/01/AWH/AS

26 January 2007

Subject: Follow-up of the World Heritage Committee's decision related to the Thematic Initiative "Astronomy and World Heritage".

Madam/ Sir,

I would like to follow up to my communication of 27 September 2005 - CL/WHC-05/09 - regarding the thematic initiative "Astronomy and World Heritage" (copy attached).

Last year, several State Parties, recognizing the importance of this Initiative, designated Focal Points who will be responsible, in coordination with the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, for the implementation of the Initiative. The network of cooperation between these Focal Points could be developed through the Date Base created thanks to the financial support of the Royal Astronomical Society of the United Kingdom, available on the web-pages of the World Heritage Centre:

http://whc.unesco.org/pg.cfm?cid=281&id_group=21 and
http://whc.unesco.org/pg.cfm?cid=281&id_group=21&s=home.

I informed the World Heritage Committee during its 30th session (Vilnius, 8-16 July 2006 - WHC-06/30.COM/6) on some progress accomplished following the decision (29 COM 5.1) adopted at its 29th session (Durban, South-Africa, July 2005) concerning this Initiative.

I am pleased to inform you that we are currently discussing collaboration with numerous scientific institutions and programmes as well as with the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and its Commission on History of Astronomy.

As you know, the implementation strategy of the Initiative elaborated during the first international expert meeting (UNESCO Venice Office, March 2004) could be applied through three main phases as follows:

Phase I aims at (a) acquiring an in-depth knowledge of the outstanding properties connected with astronomy in all geographic regions through their identification, study and including the most representative of these properties on the national tentative lists; (b) creating networks of cooperation between scientific communities, governmental bodies and site managers; (c) promoting the most outstanding of these properties through their nomination on the World Heritage List.

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Phase II aims at (a) promoting international cooperation in order to safeguard and promote these properties; (b) providing a platform for capacity building; (c) raising public-awareness through educational activities.

Phase III aims at (a) fine-tuning the results of the research and capacity building activities; (b) ensuring the sustainability of results; (c) monitoring the ongoing development of pilot projects.

As discussed during the presentation of the thematic initiative on Astronomy and World Heritage to the Permanent Delegates of Member States to UNESCO in June 2004, one of the activities would be the development of a project proposal for the nomination of serial transnational properties (ex. "The Worlds' Ancient Observatories" or "The Worlds' Astronomy Routes").

The World Heritage Centre will be grateful if between those State Parties, which wish to participate in the Initiative, a State party would host and organize the first International Seminar on serial nomination of properties connected with astronomy. Two main objectives of this seminar are the elaboration of the Guidance for the nomination of the astronomical properties and creation of the Scientific Committee in charge of this project. The major theme of this transnational nomination could illustrate the influence of the astronomical observations and scientific researches on the development of the architectural typology from megalithic monuments to modern observatories.

I would like to invite State Parties which wish to participate in this Initiative to include the properties relating to astronomy in their Tentative List. I would be also grateful for your suggestions/comments concerning the development of the above-mentioned project proposal as well as the above-mentioned International Seminar.

As noted by the UNESCO General Conference at its 33rd session, this Initiative contributes to the preparation of the International Year of Astronomy (2009), and will provide an opportunity to raise public awareness, especially with young people, about the safeguarding of scientific heritage, and to enhance the links between science, education and culture.

To facilitate transmission of your comments, please note that correspondence may be addressed to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre by mail, by fax (+33.1.45.68.55.70); or by e-mail (a.sidorenko@unesco.org).

With many thanks in advance for your kind cooperation, please accept, Madam/Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Francesco Bandarin
Director
UNESCO World Heritage Centre

- Cc:- Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee (ICOMOS, ICCROM and IUCN)
- National Focal Points and expert's group of the Initiative "Astronomy and World Heritage"
 - Assistant Director-General for Culture
 - Mrs Anna Sidorenko-Dulom, Coordinator of the Initiative "Astronomy and World Heritage"