



WORLD HERITAGE WATCH

Civil Society Statement to the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee

- On Civil Society Participation -

Bonn, Germany, 28 June – 8 July, 2015

Civil Society Organizations having attended the conference "The UNESCO World Heritage and the Role of Civil Society" organized by World Heritage Watch on the 26-27th June 2015 appreciate the opportunity to address the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee, and thank the Government of Germany for graciously hosting us.

We will circulate a document on the outcomes of the conference, which will call for a series of actions relating to both cultural and natural World Heritage. We would like to take this opportunity to bring to the Committee's attention a key point of consensus requiring urgent action.

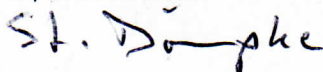
We are committed to the World Heritage Convention as the global framework to identify and safeguard our planet's unique cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value for future generations. The Convention protects the world's most iconic and best known sites to the general public for the benefit of all people of this world. Thousands of individuals, local communities, NGOs and other civil society organizations as well as indigenous peoples work on a daily basis, as professionals or volunteers, to identify and promote, conserve and restore these properties. We raise hundreds of millions of dollars each year for individual WH sites, and support national governments to fulfil their obligations under the Convention. This opens a way to a mutually beneficial relationship which we seek to develop further.

We are committed to working together to strengthen our engagement with the members of the WH Committee, States Parties, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies, and to addressing the lack of systematic and structured dialogue and involvement with the bodies of the Convention, in particular the WH Committee. We welcome the discussion on this issue initiated by the Director General of UNESCO as reflected in the document "The World Heritage Convention: Thinking Ahead" (WHC-15/39.COM/5C). It is time for the Committee to give civil society a formal role in the processes of the Convention, in a spirit of open dialogue and cooperation, thus fostering our mutually beneficial relationship.

We therefore ask the WH Committee to recognize the contribution of civil society organizations to the good governance of the Convention and to welcome the initiative taken by civil society to hold a Civil Society Conference prior to the annual session of the WH Committee and present their results to the Committee Meetings. We urge the WH Committee to explore, through the WH Centre, with Civil Society Organisations opportunities for strengthening civil society participation in the implementation of the Convention, for consideration at the 40th session of the World Heritage Committee in 2016.

As Civil Society Organizations working in support of both cultural and natural World Heritage, we stand ready to support the Secretariat, States Parties, Advisory Bodies and the Committee in this process.

Bonn, 27 June 2015



Stephan Doempke
Chairman, World Heritage Watch
on behalf of the attendants of the conference