



# New Visions for the List of World Heritage in Danger

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# New Visions for the List of World Heritage in Danger

## Index

1. Introduction	2
2. Background to the project	5
3. Research approach	6
3.1 Online survey	6
3.2 Video interviews	6
4. Key results - Current perceptions of the List of World Heritage in Danger	8
4.1. Origin and current functioning of the LWHD	8
Awareness of the LWHD	8
Challenges in implementing the LWHD	10
4.2. Decision-making processes of the LWHD	11
Dialogue and communication	12
Pathway 'off the list'	14
Clarity and coherency of Decisions	16
4.3. Political dynamics of the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger	17
World Heritage Status vs World Heritage Protection	17
4.4. Perceptions of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger	19
Outcomes of Danger-listing	19
"Danger shaming"	24
4.5. Distribution of funding and resources	26
"All stick and no carrot"	26
4.6. New approaches to heritage	27
4.7 Improving the perceptions of the LWHD	29
5. Conclusions	31
6. Recommendations	34
7. Advocacy sheet	47
References	49
Annex A: Online Survey about the Perception of the LWHD	50
Annex B: Guide of interview questions	53
Annex C: Key of recurring themes evoked during the interviews	55

## Acronyms

BBM	Beyond Borders Media
DSOCR	Desired State of conservation for the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger
ICCROM	International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments of Sites
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LWHD/DL	List of World Heritage in Danger/Danger List
OGs	Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
SPs	States Parties
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environmental Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
WH List	World Heritage List
WH Convention	World Heritage Convention
WH Committee	World Heritage Committee
WH Centre	World Heritage Centre

# 1. Introduction

When the World Heritage Convention (WH Convention) was established in 1972, it introduced a World Heritage List (WH List) of cultural and natural properties that would be proposed by States Parties (SPs) for inscription and included on this List if they were considered by the World Heritage Committee (WH Committee) to have Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, a List of World Heritage in Danger (LWHD) was included in the WH Convention as a key protective tool. The LWHD is a core mechanism of the implementation of the WH Convention and is designed to function as an alert system and to mobilize support to protect endangered heritage. It raises the awareness of the international community about the urgent conservation needs of specific sites and allows the WH Committee to allocate priority financial support from the World Heritage Fund. In addition to this, the LWHD aims to mobilize voluntary contributions and resources from private institutions and SPs engaged in the conservation of sites of OUV and promotes the assistance to Less Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) from other SPs (UNESCO, 1972).

The WH Convention is one of the most important global conservation instrument. The Convention itself came about as a reaction to the threats to heritage in the aftermath of World War II. At the time, there was a heightened international awareness of the need to preserve and protect both cultural and natural heritage. A crystallizing moment came in the early 1960s, when international solidarity and a successful campaign by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) saved the Abu Simbel Temples in Egypt from being flooded by the construction of the Aswan Heights Dam. At that time, many experts believed that a choice had to be made between culture and development. UNESCO has shown that both aspects were important and did not necessarily conflict with each other (UNESCO, n.d.). The events in Egypt emphasized the shared sense of responsibility in safeguarding sites that have OUV, and eventually led UNESCO to develop a draft convention on the protection of cultural and natural heritage (UNESCO, 1972), which would later be ratified by 194 States Parties.

Based on the need to protect and conserve sites considered to be of OUV, Article 11.4 of the WH Convention outlines the provisions for maintaining a LWHD of World Heritage sites that are threatened by serious and specific dangers and require major operations for their conservation. The WH Convention establishes two categories of danger: Ascertained danger, which refers to imminent and specific threats to the conservation of sites, such as deterioration of the materials

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<sup>1</sup> To be inscribed on the World Heritage List, a site must be considered to have Outstanding Universal Value, or OUV, and meet at least one of 10 selection criteria established in the Operational Guidelines (OGs). The OGs were defined after the WH Convention was drafted. The criteria can be regularly revised by the WH Committee to reflect the evolution of the World Heritage concept. These criteria range from the importance that a site may have in the history of mankind, the cultural and/or technological value of a site, and the exceptional superlative value for humanity, the natural ecosystem, biological processes and communities of plants and animals.



and the structure, as well as human encroachment, industrial development and pollution that will eventually lead to threatening the integrity of the site, serious decline in the population of specific endangered species of OUV, severe deterioration of the natural beauty or scientific value of the site, etc.; Potential danger, which refers to threats that could have deleterious effects on the inherent characteristics of the site and on its state of conservation, such as changes in climatic conditions, lack of conservation policies or modification of the legal protection, threatening effects of town planning, outbreak or threat of armed conflict, etc.<sup>2</sup> Listing properties on the LWHD is part of a wider mechanism of monitoring and conservation measures. It entails the development of corrective measures and a Desired State of Conservation for the Removal of the property from the LWHD (DSOCR), and often sees on-site monitoring visits carried out within the Reactive Monitoring framework.

The overall goal of the LWHD is to see the conservation issues addressed and the properties taken off the LWHD. A rarely seen negative outcome is the permanent deletion of a property from the WH List. This may occur if, after inscription of a property on the LWHD, the state of conservation of the property has not improved, the intrinsic qualities of the site for initial consideration on the WHL remain under threat, and the State Party has not taken the necessary corrective actions (see OGs, paragraph 192).



Since its establishment, only three properties have been deleted from the WH List: the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Oman (deleted in 2007), the Dresden Elbe

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<sup>2</sup> Detailed guidelines on the criteria and procedure for inscribing sites on the LWHD are outlined in the OGs, paragraphs 177-191 (UNESCO, 2021).

Valley in Germany (deleted in 2009) and most recently, the Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (deleted in 2021). The deletion of properties is considered a loss for the international community, as the purpose of the WH List is to ensure that properties are protected and passed on to future generations.

Over the 50-year lifespan of the WH Convention, 88 properties have been listed at least once on the LWHD and 34 subsequently removed from this list, and the mechanism has led to many cases of material improvements and better conservation practices at site level. Despite its many successes, the Danger-listing mechanism has acquired increasingly negative connotations and the discussions surrounding the LWHD have become more controversial. The reasons for putting properties on the LWHD and the benefits related to their inscription are being overshadowed by the notion of listing as a very negative consequence to be avoided at all costs. Many of the fault lines result from gaps in procedural communication and the perception of Danger-listing as a sanction or judgement rather than a constructive conservation tool. These negative perceptions of the LWHD are increasingly widespread amongst World Heritage stakeholders and represent an obstacle to the effective implementation of the WH Convention, which negatively impacts the conservation of the properties.

In the last decade, armed conflicts in the Arab States region have posed challenges to the conservation process of the sites inscribed in the LWHD. Given this scenario, the timing and feasibility of the DSOCR processes needed to be re-evaluated. The WH Centre and the Advisory Bodies are continuing to support the SPs in armed conflict situations in the identification of the necessary corrective measures and the DSOCR of the sites that are on the LWHD (see the case of the Ancient City of Aleppo in Syria<sup>3</sup>). However, the difficulties triggered by armed conflicts, including security matters that have been preventing monitoring missions to take place, may have had a negative impact on the perception of the added-value of the LWHD in improving the preservation of the inscribed sites.

In this context, the WH Committee decided to carry out a global study to reflect on the current image of the LWHD, its benefits and areas for improvement. The objectives were also to improve the understanding of the LWHD amongst actors involved in World Heritage processes and the public in general, to enhance communication between the parties involved in World Heritage, to reverse the negative perception of the LWHD and to improve approaches to Danger-listing properties for better protection and conservation. With financial support from Norway, in 2021 the WH Centre commissioned the international communications agency, Beyond Borders Media (BBM), to develop the study *"Uplifting the Perception of the List of World Heritage in Danger"*. The results of this study have been synthesized and are presented in this report *"New Visions for the List of World Heritage in Danger"* together with recommendations to form the basis of a communication strategy.

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<sup>3</sup> Five Years of Conflict: The State of Cultural Heritage in the Ancient City of Aleppo (UNESCO, 2018). Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265826>

## 2. Background to the project

The overall objective of the report “*New Visions for the List of World Heritage in Danger*” is to explore the current reputation of the LWHD, as well as potential areas of the tool that could be improved. It is based on qualitative research conducted between April 2021 and April 2022 on perceptions of the LWHD. The aim of this report is to consider the perspectives of multiple World Heritage stakeholders and include their views into the overall decision-making process. With the support of UNESCO and two World Heritage experts, Gamini Wijesuriya (former ICCROM staff member, ICOMOS member, and cultural heritage professional) and David Sheppard (former IUCN staff member and former SPREP Director General, and natural heritage professional) both also conducted in 2019 an evaluation of the World Heritage Reactive Monitoring process on behalf of UNESCO; two research instruments were developed: an online survey and an interview guide for semi-structured interviews. An extensive analysis of points of view and current discourse on the LWHD was carried out, with due consideration given to geographic representation and gender balance of interviewees and respondents, and the inclusion of stakeholders engaged in both natural and cultural heritage. The research was conducted in an open and consultative manner and is based on a wide range of information, including:

1. The results of a detailed anonymous online survey (available on the website of the WH Centre and disseminated via newsletter to World Heritage stakeholders and open to anyone with an interest in the LWHD).
2. A series of semi-structured interviews with key World Heritage stakeholders (States Parties, Committee members, Advisory Bodies, WH Committee, NGO representatives, local communities, decision-makers, etc.),
3. Review of relevant documents and academic articles.

This report presents the key findings and overall conclusions of the study and identifies core aspects of the current LWHD processes that require proactive approaches. These include addressing the increasing political influence on the decision-making process for inclusion of sites in the LWHD, improving communications, extending the participation of civil society and other groups, and clarifying procedures. Recommendations on approaches to reverse negative perceptions are outlined and proposals are made for how to raise the profile of the LWHD as a positive tool, enhancing understanding and highlighting its importance for the protection of the OUV of World Heritage properties. Recommendations on approaches to reverse negative perceptions are outlined and proposals are made for how to raise the profile of the LWHD as a positive tool, enhancing understanding and highlighting its importance for the protection of the OUV of World Heritage properties.

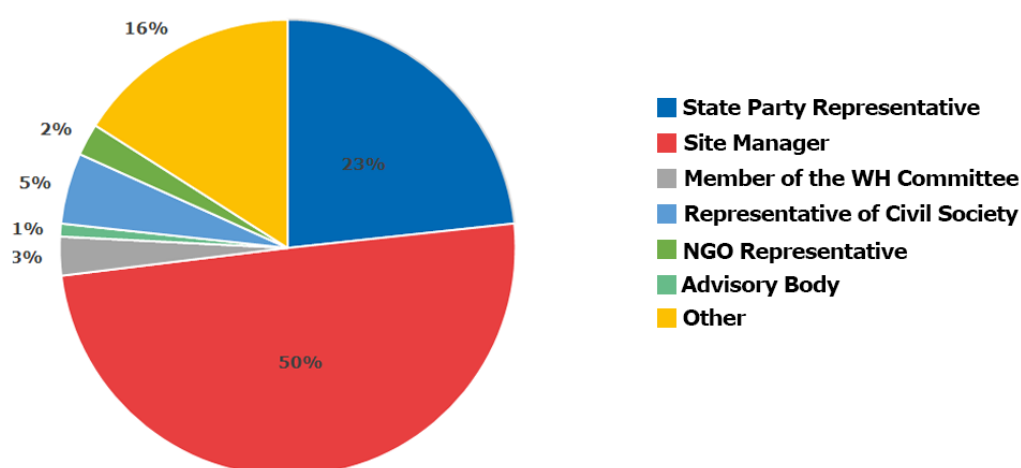


## 3. Research approach

### 3.1 Online survey

An online survey was launched from 19 August until 10 October 2021 in the two working languages of the WH Convention, English and French. The survey was anonymous and made available on the WH Centre's website and distributed to a number of NGOs through the World Heritage Watch newsletter, so that all interested parties had the opportunity to complete it. Survey questions gathered information on attitudes to the LWHD in the form of multiple-choice questions and gave respondents the opportunity to add free commentary. For this report, only fully completed surveys were considered. A total of 220 stakeholders responded to the survey (see fig. 1). Some survey questions were answered by a significantly smaller number of respondents (28 in total), as these questions were based on whether the respondents had participated in LWHD processes. This explains why statistics in some cases are based on a lesser number of respondents than in other cases. In the case of the survey, the Europe and North America region is heavily represented, alongside the Asia and the Pacific region.

Figure 1: Survey respondents by relationship to World Heritage



#### **Distribution of survey respondents by region:**

- Africa – 21
- Asia and the Pacific - 75
- Europe and North America – 80
- Latin America and the Caribbean - 17
- Arab States - 27

### 3.2 Video interviews

A series of online interviews were conducted with World Heritage stakeholders (between April 2021 and April 2022). The interviews were conducted in an open-

ended conversation, allowing each participant to emphasize the points that they considered most relevant. With this method, an attempt was made to go deeper into the most significant information based on first-hand experiences. For confidentiality reasons, all interviews were anonymized. Interviewees with knowledge of the LWHD were identified with the support of UNESCO as well as independently by BBM and were grouped into six categories:

- State Party representatives (from heritage offices, ministry of culture/environment and/or related departments)
- Site Managers
- Members of the WH Committee
- Former or current representatives of the Advisory Bodies
- Representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations
- Academics and/or heritage specialists

In conducting this research, BBM prioritized a balanced approach and sought to contact representatives from all regions and stakeholders equally. Forty-four interview invitations were sent out and thirty successful interviews were scheduled. The data provided by the interviewees were organized using a system for identifying key recurring themes (more detail on the data analysis from interviews can be found in Annex C). In the case of the interviews, it is worth noting a more active participation from the Arab States and Europe and North America regions. The distribution of the interview sample can be seen in table 1

**Table 1: Number of contacts established and number of interviews by region and stakeholder**

<b>Regions / Stakeholders</b>	<b>Contacted</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>
Africa	5	4
Arab States	6	6
Asia - Pacific	6	1
Europe & North America	5	5
Latin America and the Caribbean	5	4
Advisory Bodies (former/current staff)	5	2
Academic/ Heritage experts	6	4
NGO representatives	6	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>30</b>

The number of responses to both the interview and the survey in the different regions can be considered as a barometer to measure the level of interest in the LWHD. This indicator should be taken into account when designing strategies for outreach and establishing communication priorities in the different regions.

## 4. Key results - Current perceptions of the List of World Heritage in Danger

Following an extensive review of responses given by survey participants and interviewees, a number of recurring thematic areas were identified. An analysis of attitudes in these areas provides a clear insight into the major areas of the LWHD that are either positively, negatively perceived or considered problematic. An analysis of each of these areas is presented in the sections: (4.1) Origin and functionality of the LWHD; (4.2) Decision-making process of the LWHD; (4.3) Political Dynamics of the WH List and the LWHD; (4.4) Perceptions of being inscribed in the LWHD; (4.5) Distribution of funding and resources, (4.6) New approaches to heritage, and (4.7) Improving the perception of the LWHD.

The report focuses in on the 'image crisis' that the LWHD is currently undergoing, tracing the interplay of causal factors, including; centralized approaches to World Heritage, perceived gaps in decision-making, over-politicization, far-reaching negative discourse on the LWHD and perceptions of shame and 'red listing', a lack of confidence in the availability of funding and resources, and the perception that concepts and approaches to heritage have stagnated over the decades of the WH Convention.

### 4.1. Origin and current functioning of the LWHD

#### Awareness of the LWHD

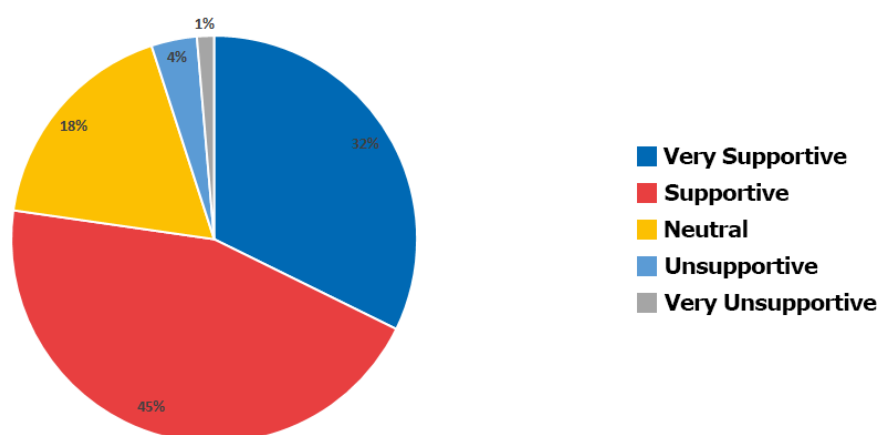
With regards to awareness and understanding of the aims and role of the LWHD, both the online survey and interviews show that there is widespread awareness amongst WH stakeholders of the purpose of the LWHD to protect sites in danger; to mobilize resources and to activate national and international actors for the protection of heritage sites against identified threats. Comments evoked the ability of the LWHD to increase the awareness of both the international community and the SPs concerned themselves of conservation needs of properties (especially lesser-known properties), to increasing awareness of the WH Convention and to function as a warning and prevention system. Other common ways of understanding the function of the LWHD are mentioned below: (1) as a list of "heritage in danger" that includes sites that may eventually be "removed from the WH List altogether"; (2) as a list of properties that "have been removed from the WH List because they have lost their OUV"; (3) as a warning to SPs of impending removal. These responses demonstrate that there are important ideas that do not necessarily reflect the function of the LWHD as stated in the WH Convention.

Many interviewees emphasized that mobilizing resources and international cooperation to support States Parties in managing the threats to WH properties has been the goal of the LWHD since the Convention came about, and they see

the tool as the core of the Convention. The historical context of the WH Convention was frequently referred to by interviewees to underline the original vision of 'international cooperation for conservation and protection'. One of the most frequently mentioned success stories was the successful international appeal launched by UNESCO to protect the Abu Simbel temples (see introduction, pp. 4-6), which is remembered as a historic milestone that changed the understanding of the world's most important cultural and natural sites.

*"If we did not have the idea of drawing attention to the need to protect sites of immense value for future generations, and the need to mobilize the international community to do so, we would not have a WH Convention" (interview, Former State Party representative, Arab States, 2021.09.02).*

Figure 2: General Attitudes from the survey respondents to the LWHD



As shown in fig. 2., most survey respondents were either supportive or very supportive of the LWHD. While the results demonstrate a strong endorsement of the LWHD as a general concept/tool, a more nuanced picture emerges if looked at by stakeholder group. This reflects the different applications and contexts in which the LWHD is used, and the relative proximity of each stakeholder to the impacts on the ground of Danger-listing. Although the States Parties representatives response was mostly positive and a high degree of support can be seen across all stakeholder groups, the support decreases slightly and more 'neutrality' emerges the closer the respondent is to the direct impacts of Danger-listing (Site Managers, NGOs, local communities, civil society).

## Challenges in implementing the LWHD

The results of interviews reflect a similar trend. Although most interviewees support the LWHD as a concept, many gave examples of its problematic implementation. Several interviewees consider that the implementation of the WH Convention has significantly changed over time and that the objective of the LWHD "has been distorted". This view was often accompanied by reflections on the need to return to the 'starting point' of the Convention, while at the same time adapting to new realities and more inclusive perspectives on conservation and heritage.

*"Although the text of the Convention has not changed, the way it is being implemented is not reflecting global trends such as mass tourism and climate change, as well as evolving perceptions of the nature of heritage itself and conservation approaches" (interview, Former State Party representative, Europe & North America, Academic on heritage affairs, 2021.07.21)"*

Many interviewees noted that countries avidly pursue World Heritage inscription because it is a source of pride and can boost tourism and national reputation. In other words, the inscription on the WH List is a conservation mechanism that adds symbolic value to the sites. As always, the growth in the symbolic capital of the properties (and of the inhabitants who live in them or are in some way linked to them) is rapidly reversible into financial capital. They contrasted this with the -often strong- resistance of countries to accept the inclusion of WH properties in the LWHD. This disjoint between the apparent valuing of a site to acquire WH status, versus the resistance to having it on the LWHD protective mechanism, is seen as a double standard by many interviewees. This is reflected in the apparently paradoxical viewpoint expressed by a number of States Parties representatives, that the LWHD is a good concept, but does not apply to their specific cases. While it was acknowledged that the WH Convention retains strong global convening power, this situation has led many to consider that its ultimate goal of protecting World Heritage is being seriously undermined. When identifying the root causes for this resistance to the LWHD, one essential issue raised during this study by 10 out of 30 respondents was the predominance of European expertise and a 'Eurocentric' interpretation of OUV that has existed since the Convention came about. In the same vein, 15 out of 30 the interviewees noted the substantial presence of European and North American properties on the WH List, with one interviewee even referring to this as a means of "*demonstrating the dominance*" of the regions through soft power mechanisms. This trend can be clearly observed in the distribution of properties inscribed on the WH List according to regions and categories to date (see table 2).



Table 2: Number of properties inscribed in the WH List (WHL below) vs. properties in the LWHD by region

UNESCO Region	CULTURAL		NATURAL		MIXED		TOTAL		PERCENTAGE	
	WHL	LWHD	WHL	LWHD	WHL	LWHD	WHL	LWHD	WHL	LWHD
Latin America and the Caribbean	100	4	38	2	8	0	146	6	13%	12%
Europe and North America	468	3	66	1	11	0	545	4	47%	8%
Asia and the Pacific	195	4	70	2	12	0	277	6	24%	12%
Arab States	80	21	5	0	3	0	88	21	8%	40%
Africa	54	4	39	11	5	0	98	15	8%	29%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>897</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1154</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: World Heritage List Statistics (available at: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/stat>)

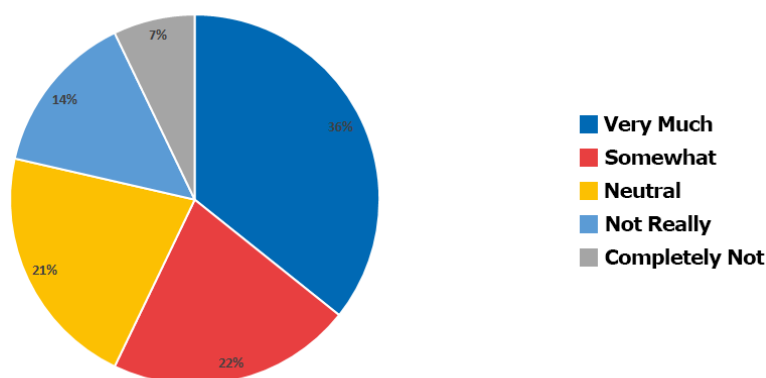
It was noted that the predominance of European/North American views goes back to the origins of the Convention. Although intended as a truly global endeavour, from the outset it was heavily influenced by European legal and technical expertise. Half of the interviewees expressed that even if an obvious effort has been made to include professional representatives from around the world and to decentralize heritage discussions, there is still a strong perception in many parts of the world that scientific and technical reports and their underlying operating principles, as well as the legal provisions needed to support national and international protection systems, are often based on concepts developed by organizations in European countries or by professionals affiliated with European universities. This perception of 'centralization' at the heart of World Heritage processes is one aspect identified by a number of contributors as undermining the legitimacy of the LWHD mechanism. It is seen as impacting decision-making processes, which are in turn affected by other perceived gaps in procedure and clarity. This is further outlined in the next section.

## 4.2. Decision-making processes of the LWHD

In both the online survey and interviews, stakeholders provided insights into the practical application of WH decision-making, how this impacts the actors involved and where they see problematic areas or gaps. Overall, from 220 comments, a number of strong recurring themes were identified. The most prominent themes

were 1) the lack of clear and concrete actions for the removal of a property from the LWHD, 2) the complexity and length of the process for the removal of a property from the LWHD, 3) the need for a contextualized and less rigid approach in assessing the threats and 4) the need for more dialogue with key stakeholders.

Figure 3: Degree of understanding and clarity of the process to inscribe a property on the LWHD



When respondents who had been involved in the listing a site in the LWHD were asked about their degree of clarity and understanding of the process, they had divided views on the process, with some negative responses and a number of 'neutral' replies -indicating respondents are not inclined to express an opinion-suggesting a high degree of ambivalence. The major areas identified to be lacking were in communications amongst involved parties, clarity and coherence of decisions and a perceived lack of a clear 'pathway off the LWHD' (see fig. 3).

### Dialogue and communication

The 28 respondents with direct experience in inscribing a site on the LWHD show pronounced differences in their perceptions of the level of dialogue amongst stakeholders when they have to decide inscription of sites on the LWHD (see fig. 4). A sizeable portion considers that dialogue is lacking and highlights this as a prominent area for improvement. Both interviewees and survey respondents emphasized the need to reformulate the communication channels and strategies between the WH Committee, the Advisory Bodies and the States Parties. For most interviewees, the concern about the state of conservation of a site only begins once that site is included in the LWHD, when this awareness should begin earlier. With such an earlier awareness, the SPs would have the possibility to internalize that there are issues/factors endangering the OUV of the sites and, therefore, they could intervene before the sites being included in the LWHD, especially when such inclusion of sites in the LWHD is not the result of a sudden threat (such as the triggering of an armed conflict).

*"More transparent communication with States Parties - there should be plenty of engagement before a property is proposed for in-Danger-listing" (interview, State Party representative, Africa, 2022.03.30)*

Likewise, some representatives of States Parties interviewed referred to a differentiated tone of communication from the WH Committee according to the characteristics of each country. For example, when a SP is a developing nation, the WH Committee has a much more supportive, willing and helpful tone, but when it is a developed country, the tone becomes more inquisitive and demanding. For one interviewee, this difference in tone implies two philosophies of conservation in the WH Committee that cannot co-exist under the same system.

*"In one case, the objective of the Committee is to create a degree of visibility to support SPs, in the other, it is to make SPs react and point out what they are doing wrong" (interview, State Party representative, Europe & North America, 2022.04.06)*

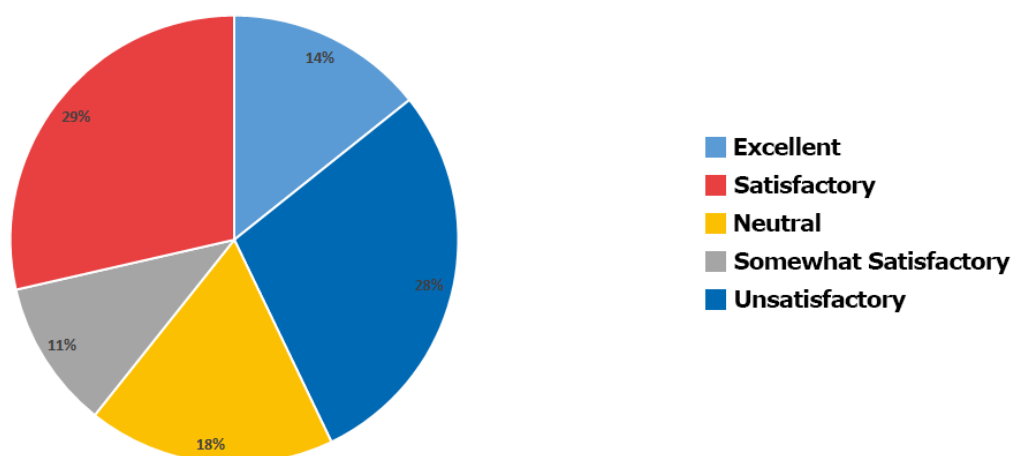


Belize Barrier Reef – Belize ©Claude Piché

States Parties' representatives also called for a better communication throughout the process, from inscription of the property to its removal from the LWHD. Comments from these individuals highlight a keen sense of disillusionment with the dialogue amongst stakeholders involved, namely the WH Centre and the Advisory Bodies. Respondents repeatedly noted the increasing influence of politics in the process of listing or delisting a property and how this prevents the heritage stakeholders from finding solutions. On the other hand, NGO representatives pointed out the insufficient involvement of stakeholders such as civil society and failure to follow expert advice by the States Parties. Therefore, the dialogue between parties involved in the LWHD and the need to counterbalance the debate was also raised by many interviewees, especially in

relation to civil society. Several called for more involvement of civil society at all levels, including giving representatives of civil society<sup>4</sup> a stronger voice in decision-making processes.

Figure 4: Perceptions towards the level of dialogue between the parties in deciding to inscribe a site in the LWHD



#### Pathway 'off the list'

Another concern shared by some interviewees and survey respondents was the lack of a clear 'pathway off' the LWHD. One survey respondent noted, "*It takes a long time for a site to get off the LWHD, so SPs are afraid to get on this List*". Although the tools in place such as Costed Action Plan, DSOCRs and corrective measures were positively viewed overall (see fig. 5 and fig. 6), a number of gaps in their use were identified.

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<sup>4</sup> According to World Heritage Watch, civil society actors, are defined as individuals or community groups, local governments and businesses, who have a common interest in World Heritage and/or the collective good. Examples include concerned citizens, volunteers and professionals, non-governmental organizations, and other groups (see: <https://world-heritage-watch.org/content/>).

Figure 5: Perceptions towards the Costed Action Plan to address the threats to the OUV of the property inscribed on the LWHD

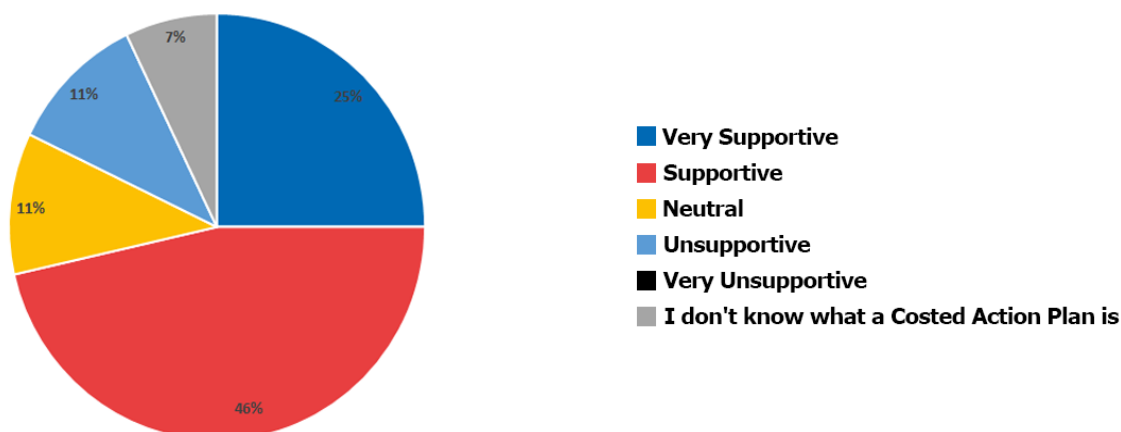
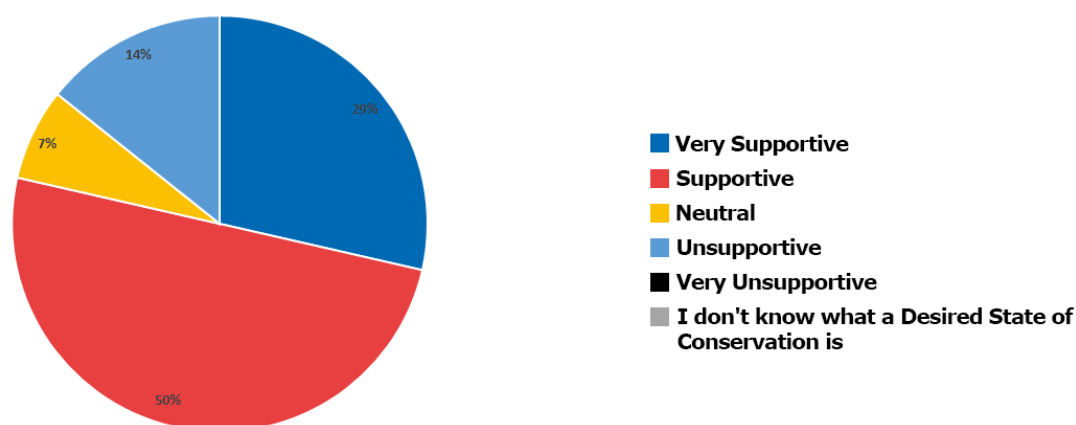


Fig 6: Perceptions towards the measures and strategies of the DSOCR of a property from the LwHD



While most survey respondents supported the establishment of Costed Action Plans, DSOCRs and corrective measures, individual comments noted that corrective measures should consider achievable management responses and realistic timeframes for measuring change. More critical attitudes of these tools were also expressed, particularly with regards to the length of time it takes to have a property removed from the LWHD and the clarity of these procedures. Some respondents highlighted the importance of taking the recommendations of Advisory Bodies and Site Managers into account. Several more referred to the absence of corrective measures in some cases or the difficulty of implementing them due to inadequate financial or other resources, or because of specific contexts, such as conflict situations.

*"The absence of costed and prioritized corrective measures and DSOCRs means many States Parties don't know what they need to do*



*to get the property off the List. As a result, they see the List as punitive rather than helpful” (interview, Conservation and Heritage Official, Asia Pacific Region, 2021.10.11)*

Given the importance of adequate funding to overcome threats to endangered sites, many interviewees emphasized that Costed Action Plans should be given higher priority once the properties are inscribed on the LWHD. In other words, a time limit should be established for the development of such plans. It was also stressed during the interviews that the concern of "not having a way out" off the LWHD disproportionately affects developing countries. Some interviewees indeed mentioned that developing countries fear that inclusion of their sites on the LWHD would place them in a "bureaucratic trap" from which endangered sites would take many years to exit. In that sense, some interviewees stated that the terminology used to define the OUV of properties (i.e., non-measurable qualitative terms such as "masterpiece", "genius", "considerable", "unique", etc.) can create uncertainty in terms of the identification and protection of OUV and consequently also in terms of the scope of DSOCR. One former SP representative from the Arab States region pointed out that monitoring missions constantly 'add elements' as a condition for removing sites from the LWHD (*interview, 2021.09.02*). Another interviewee added that even if some funds are allocated when properties are inscribed on the LWHD, sometimes the demands of the WH Committee and Advisory Bodies are beyond the capacities of the States Parties (*interview, former SP representative, Arab States, 2022.03.31*). Moreover, after the inscription of a site on the LWHD, they do not receive direct help to assist SPs for the property to 'get off' the LWHD.

An important note is that at the WH Committee session in July 2021, adopted Decision 44 COM 7.1, which encourages the SPs to ensure that, for any property newly inscribed on the LWHD, a DSOCR is prepared and submitted no later than one year after inscription. Following this decision, properties inscribed on the LWHD are expected to benefit from the establishment of a DSOCR substantially faster than has been the practice to date. Although Decision 44 COM 7.1 only addresses part of the issues expressed by the informants, it is to be expected that such decisions will be further discussed in the next WH Committee session in order to expedite the removal of the sites of the LWHD.

### Clarity and coherency of Decisions

When asked about their general views on the content and clarity of Committee decisions, 65% of the survey respondents found them either ambiguous, difficult to implement, or unrealistic. Comments provided by respondents on this matter noted that ambiguity exists in the levels of threats to properties, particularly when comparing different LWHD cases, and the recommendations were often not aligned with the level of threat identified. Others noted that the language used in WH Committee decisions could be difficult to understand, is frequently too diplomatic, and should be more straightforward and accessible to all stakeholders. Recommendations were also said to often be confusing.

One common note emphasized by respondents was that the WH Committee decisions were often based on general approaches, without considering enough specific contexts, as well as regional, financial, or other circumstances. In this regard, one interviewee noted that the decisions can seem to be 'against development'. A sense of frustration also emerges with the perceived vacuum between Danger-listing and concrete support, reflecting the lack of confidence in resources (explored further in section 4.5).

*"In many cases, the WH Committee makes recommendations but is not able to give any direct support." (interview, academic and heritage expert, 2021.09.02)*

While some respondents emphasized that decisions are based on factual and scientific-based information and advice from the Advisory Bodies reflect the situation at the site, they also noted that the advice is not always followed by SPs. Some officials from the Advisory Bodies stated that there could be cases where there was a low awareness at the government level of the importance of World Heritage sites (interviews, Advisory Bodies, 2021.05.05; 2021.05.14).

For example, an NGO member with experience in heritage research in South-East Africa stated that "there is a kind of blueprint given by the Advisory Bodies when applying recommendations following the inclusion of a site in the LWHD and that this does not necessarily translate to the on-the ground realities" (interview, 2021.11.03). This perceived inconsistency in following expert advice intersects with a number of other issues identified, one being the idea of centralization and a Western bias in world heritage approaches, perceived lack of context in decision-making, and most prominently, an increasing tendency towards 'political decision-making', which is further examined in the next section.

### 4.3. Political dynamics of the World Heritage List and the List of World Heritage in Danger

#### World Heritage Status vs World Heritage Protection

As mentioned earlier, it is generally acknowledged that WH Listing comes with high prestige and this can be a major motivation for States Parties to have their sites inscribed, along with the potential economic benefits of increased tourism and a strengthened sense of national identity. Many interviewees noted however that the international recognition WH provides does not always lead to better protection and preservation of the site, and political dynamics can obstruct the fundamental aims of the WH Convention.

*"Inscription on the World Heritage List usually generates economic benefits for the State Party. When a site is part of the WHL, it attracts*

*more visitors, generating a large tourism industry around it."*  
*(interview, former SP representative, Arab States, 2021.09.02)*

Over the course of the interviews, respondents repeatedly stated that the decision-making process of the WH Committee has been influenced to a greater extent by political mediations, both for WH inscription and Danger-listing. One reason identified for this has been the greater representation of politicians and diplomats on the WH Committee, as opposed to heritage experts. A more politicized Committee has meant that activities seem to be increasingly led by negotiation, power and interests to the detriment of independent expertise. Some interviewees applied a more nuanced perspective in this regard, noting that this aspect can be considered as a positive thing, as it makes the WH Convention an even more powerful tool to attract the interest of the international community to protect sites. However, several more noted that to a large extent, the LWHD has lost its ability to convene multi-stakeholder efforts to protect sites in danger.

The dominant perception was that discussions are increasingly subject to 'political considerations' to avoid inscription in the LWHD. In this regard, one interviewee commented that immense economic and human resources are invested to prevent such Danger-listing of the site, when these resources could be much better used for other purposes related to the preservation of the property that is considered in danger and other conservation priorities. The political nature of decision-making was also highlighted by survey respondents as a factor that can lead to the Advisory Bodies' recommendations being weakened or discarded. Decisions were perceived to be adjusted according to political needs, with one commentary noting that in certain cases, sites are not inscribed on the LWHD even when it has been shown that the SPs concerned have not addressed the issues raised.

The position of the countries that reject the inscription of their heritage sites on the LWHD has triggered long-standing divergence of views in the WH Committee sessions. Certain interviewees noted that such divergence of views sometimes stem from a lack of clarity about the conditions that the sites must meet to be considered for the LWHD. For example, some representatives of States Parties interviewed indicated that, in their view, one of the matters that remains to be clarified by the WH Committee is whether the State Party should have a say in the Committee's decisions on the inscription of the site on the LWHD. This was also highlighted in the recent study *"Strengthening the Effectiveness of the World Heritage Reactive Monitoring Process"* (2019).

Amongst the reasons for avoiding Danger-listing is the notion that it is a reversal of the benefits of being inscribed on the WH List (prestige, strengthened identity, tourism revenue), and instead leads to embarrassment, an association with mismanagement and potentially negative political implications domestically. In the next section, these perceptions of "shame" and the negative shadow over the LWHD are further explored.



#### 4.4. Perceptions of inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger

Given that the LWHD originated with the WH Convention and was conceived in a spirit of cooperation and common cause amongst countries, its goals were ultimately to achieve positive outcomes that all parties would welcome. In practice, however, the dark cloud hanging over the LWHD has increasingly become its defining identity. This study sought to determine whether positive stories of the LWHD are widely known and to understand the main causes of the negative associations and perceptions related to Danger-listing.

##### Outcomes of Danger-listing

When asked about positive outcomes of the LWHD, interviewed participants cited examples including the Cologne Cathedral in Germany, the Los Katios National Park in Colombia, the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System in Belize and the Galapagos Islands in Ecuador. In each of these cases, it was the State Party that advocated to include the sites in the LWHD because they wanted to reinforce awareness of the importance of the sites at a local and national levels, strengthen site management, and demonstrate the threats to the sites' OUV.

In the case of the Cologne Cathedral, a communication campaign was developed at a local level to involve the inhabitants of Cologne in the process of inscription

on the LWHD in 2004. The importance of the Cathedral of Cologne to the identity of the people of Cologne was highlighted and the threat posed by the construction of new mainly high-rise buildings around it was communicated. The outcome was a re-routing of the urban development in consideration of the importance of the landscape around the Cologne Cathedral. The site was removed from the LWHD in 2006.

In the case of the Los Katios National Park, the inscription on the LWHD in 2009 was supported by the Colombian government, who wanted to promote conservation of the country's natural parks. The site was affected by illegal deforestation, insecurity due to drug trafficking and illegal occupation of state land for housing and other purposes. The aim of the LWHD inscription was to gain support to strengthen the National Natural Parks teams and to develop monitoring activities with IUCN. As a result of the LWHD, the Los Katios National Park was positioned as one of the most representative places of natural biodiversity in Colombia and the need to protect the site was firmly established. The site also benefitted from a reinforced support from the local communities and was removed from the LWHD in 2015.

In the case of the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System, the government advocated listing the site on the LWHD because of the danger posed by development projects and oil exploitation activities in the vicinity. After the inscription of the site on the LWHD in 2009, a more solid normative framework was created by the government. The Danger-listing also promoted further research on the area, and a clear link was established between the activities of the oil industry and the endangerment of the barrier reef. It also led to national mobilization to demand the protection and constant monitoring of the water quality of the barrier reef; and to prevent the sale of public lands near the World Heritage site. The inscription of the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System on the LWHD was perceived very positively as a joint protection effort between members of civil society, the government of Belize and international organizations. In the end, the site was removed from the LWHD in 2018, less than a decade after its inscription thereon.

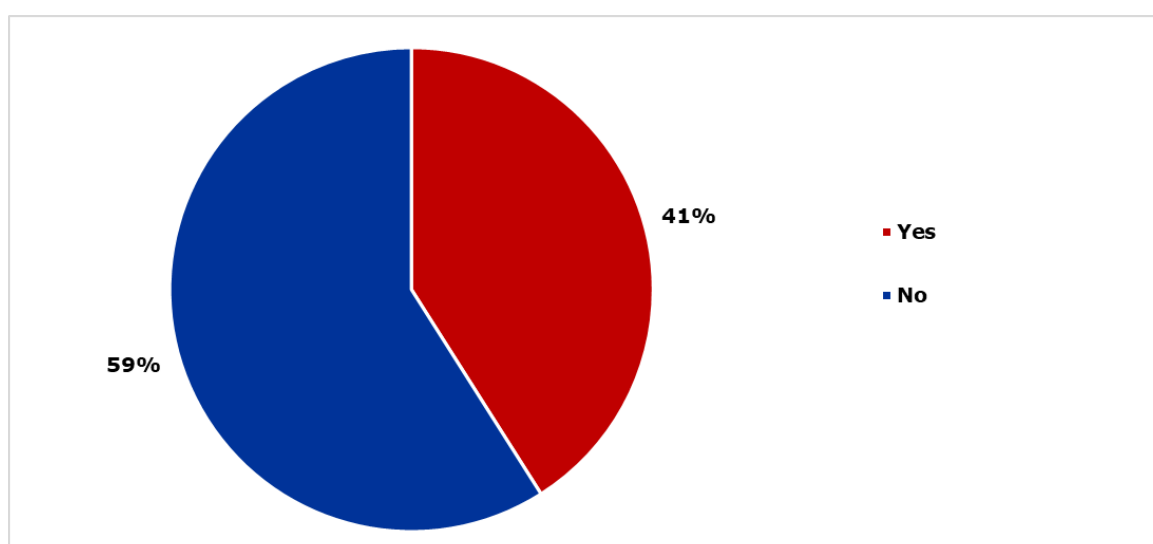
The case of the Galapagos Islands was considered another success story that mobilized heritage stakeholders (including local government and the international community) to further protect the site following the inscription of the site on the LWHD. After this inscription, the Ecuadorian government, with the assistance of UNESCO, took efficient measures to control tourism and to develop a sustainable urbanization plan in order to reduce the threat to the unique biodiversity of the islands. As a result, the site was removed from the LWHD in 2007.





Survey participants were also asked whether they knew about positive outcomes of Danger-listing. As it can be observed in fig. 7, there was considerably less knowledge of specific positive outcomes, compared to the statements provided by the interviewees. Although this can be explained by a higher concentration of long-term World Heritage experts amongst the interviewees, most of the survey respondents (over 75%) are directly involved in World Heritage matters, so the level of awareness of the positive impacts that the LWHD has on endangered sites is low overall.

Figure 7: Survey respondents' awareness of LWHD success stories



When giving further details about the 'positive' stories, a very large proportion of survey respondents also referred to the story of the Belize Barrier Reef Reserve System. Other recurring cases mentioned were Timbuktu (Mali), the Salonga National Park (Democratic Republic of Congo) and Angkor (Cambodia).

*"The most recent case I am aware of is the Belize Barrier Reef. The government responded positively to the concerns about fossil fuel development potentially harming the site and stopped the development. The site was then removed from the list. The Government and stakeholders all felt proud of what they had done"*  
(survey respondent, site manager)

It is also important to highlight that many survey respondents noted the success stories of sites that were proposed for Danger-listing but not actually listed, and the positive measures that had been activated as a result of awareness being raised, such as, in their views, the cases of the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and Venice and its Lagoon in Italy.

With regards to the survey participants, the 28 stakeholders who had previously participated in the LWHD process were asked to indicate the effects the inscription on the LWHD had had either on their own site or on another site they know of. The most common positive outcome identified was the Danger-listing leading to more support from the government and/or local authorities to address threats. This was followed by increased awareness of the threats to the site, better communication with the government, and more support from donors to address threats. Only 5 out of the 28 respondents noted that Danger-listing led to improved conservation practice, enhanced capacity of stakeholders and involvement in site management, or that inscription generated positive publicity.

*"Danger-listing brought international expertise to the site"* (survey respondent, Advisory Body)

Overall, only a handful of respondents indicated that the inscription on the LWHD brought more challenges or negative publicity. However, these negative impressions are often perceived very strongly. One comment by a respondent emphasized the emotional impact of Danger-listing.

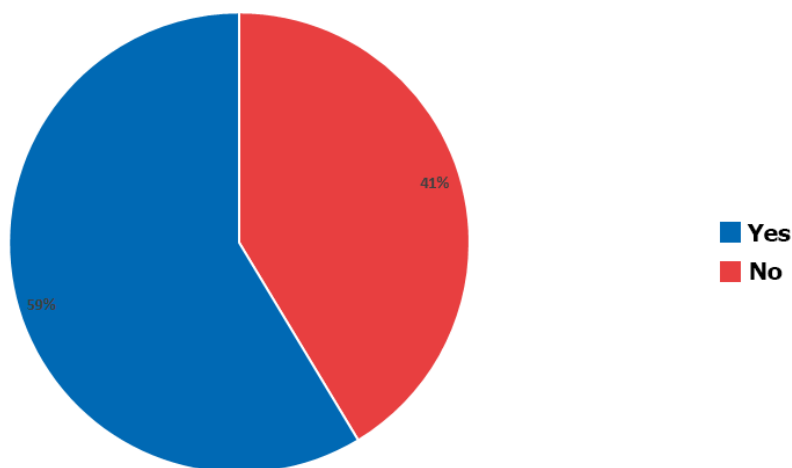
*"So much money was already spent on the inscription, to have it on the LWHD caused despair and apathy"* (survey respondent, heritage official)

While the overall results seem to emphasize more positive outcomes from the LWHD, the number of respondents who did not indicate positive outcomes (from 12 in some cases to 27 in others) should also be considered as a significant indicator. A strong consensus also emerged that political support is critical to implementing conservation measures, as is visible from the numerous positive case studies cited earlier that had governmental support. The responses demonstrate that the LWHD is seen as an effective tool in mobilizing political

support, however without political support, the LWHD is subject to interpretation as being a reprimand or punishment.

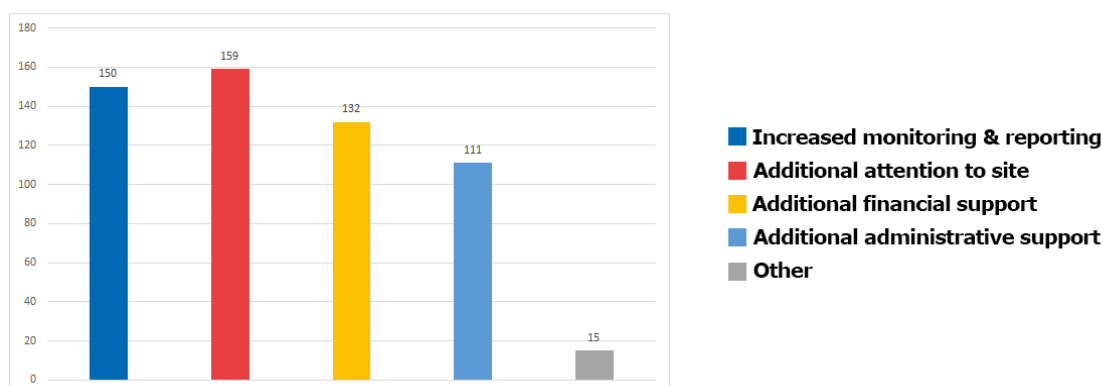
As it can be appreciated in fig. 8; a large majority of respondents answered that they would inscribe a site on the LWHD if there were threats to its OUV. The overall result points to a general agreement on the utility of the role and purpose of the LWHD, however the viewpoint completely opposed to Danger-listing is not negligible.

Figure 8: Inclination to inscribe a site on the LWHD



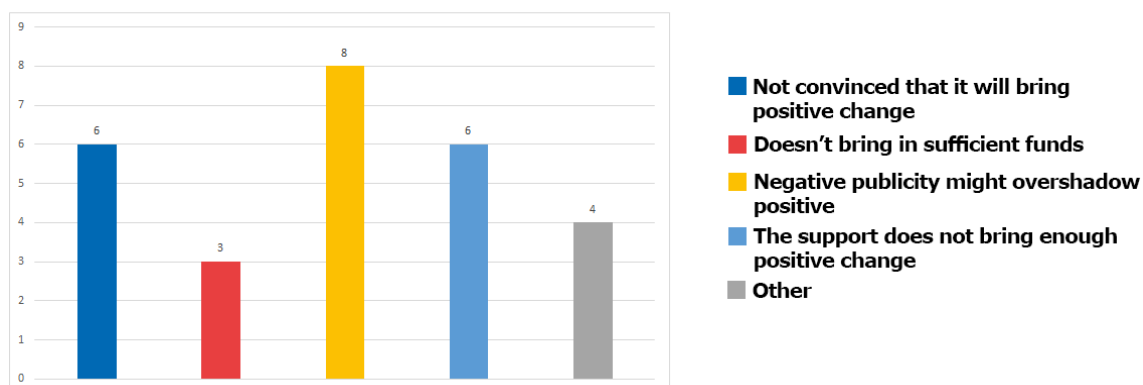
When asked for further details on why they would inscribe a property on the LWHD, the main motivation would be to attract further attention to the issue affecting the property, followed closely by the increased reporting and monitoring it would bring (see fig. 9). The additional financial support and the additional administrative support were also amongst the higher evaluated considerations. Respondents also commented that LWHD can put necessary pressure on local parties and enhance their contribution to site management and conservation. In addition to general awareness raising, the LWHD is seen as a means to gain additional political support and give a voice to local communities in protecting OUV. Further positive outcomes are seen in the potential for increased training, enhanced management resources and legal frameworks, and the international expertise that can be provided to sites on the LWHD.

Fig. 9: Reasons reported by survey respondents for why they would inscribe a site on the LWHD in the face of threats to its OUV



Amongst the 9% who answered that they would not inscribe a property on the LWHD, the most common reason was the idea that negative publicity might overshadow the positive aspects, followed by the perception that such listing does not bring about enough positive outcomes (see fig. 10).

Fig. 10: Reasons reported by Survey respondents for why they would not inscribe a site on the LWHD in the face of threats to its OUV



### “Danger shaming”

The perception of Danger-listing as a shameful or embarrassing public reprimand echoes across the interviews and survey responses. Survey respondents described the LWHD using terms such as “purgatory”, “punishment”, “insult”, “stigma”, “red list”, “finger pointing” and “condemnation” of “failure”. Many comments noted that the LWHD has negative connotations and a negatively charged name and generates negative press. One interviewee mentioned that for many governments, it is not “culturally acceptable” to be on a list with such name.

*“Inscription on the LWHD today is considered as a punishment and this shouldn't be the case. It should be a wake-up call to States and property managers” (interview, former SP representative, Africa, 2021.09.03)*

Many interviewees consider that the principal reason why most SPs are reluctant to inscribe their properties on the LWHD - in spite of the concrete threats they might be facing- is because it is perceived as a tool to point out States Parties' failure to adequately manage their WH properties. Some opinions actively expressed this perception, while others acknowledged it as a common misconception. Danger-listing is understood by some "as a kind of humiliation", which damages their reputation.

*"The Danger List is interpreted by States Parties as a red list or punishment" (interview, NGO representative, Latin America, 2021.11.03)*

Some interviewees stated that most SPs interpret the word "*danger*" as something negative. Therefore, for some interviewees, changing the name of the mechanism and replacing it with one that mobilizes less rejection would be crucial to improve the perception of the LWHD. For example, one interviewee mentioned that: "*if the word "danger" could be removed, many more countries would be willing to list their sites in as sites that need extra attention from the international community*". (interview, former SP representative, Europe & North America, 2022.04.06). In general, one suggestion that interviewees mentioned to change the name of the LWHD" was the "Priority List of Support for Heritage Sites".

For many respondents, changing the name of the LWHD would not only remove the negative connotation that often falls on the States Parties, but would also put the focus on the international community and the need to raise funding to save endangered sites. However, this point generates controversy among interviewees: many interviewees highlight that the name of the LWHD cannot be under discussion because it is enshrined in the text of the WH Convention itself (which would then need to be amended). Another common perception expressed by the respondents and interviewees was the existence of a certain bias leading to developed countries frequently avoiding inscription on the LWHD; they also pointed out at the various interpretations of Article 11.4 of the WH Convention and its reference to the a list of properties "*for which assistance has been requested under this Convention*". Several interviewees referred to the cases of Venice and its Lagoon (Italy), Kakadu National Park (Australia) and Great Barrier Reef (Australia) in these contexts. It should also be noted that two (Liverpool – Maritime Mercantile City, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Dresden Elbe Valley, Germany) of the three properties, which have been entirely deleted from the WH List are in developed countries, where large-scale development projects went ahead despite the evidence presented that it would impact the conditions of OUV that determined their WH status. These perceptions of Danger-listing demonstrate relatively low levels of confidence in positive outcomes, emotionally charged attitudes to the idea of being on the LWHD, and a weak belief in the concrete advantages. In particular, the LWHD is not seen as a generator of adequate resources.



## 4.5. Distribution of funding and resources

### “All stick and no carrot”

Attitudes expressed in the survey and interviews show a widely shared perception that the LWHD is not able to mobilize enough technical and economic resources to solve the problems of endangered properties. While on the positive side, respondents view the LWHD as mostly contributing to conservation/preservation of sites (see fig. 11), a core objective of the Convention, there is a low general perception of the LWHD leading to more funding or management resources. High numbers of respondents consider that the LWHD doesn't contribute to increased funding for sites or increased management resources (see fig. 12).

Figure 11: Areas where the LWHD is perceived as contributing to conservation and management goals

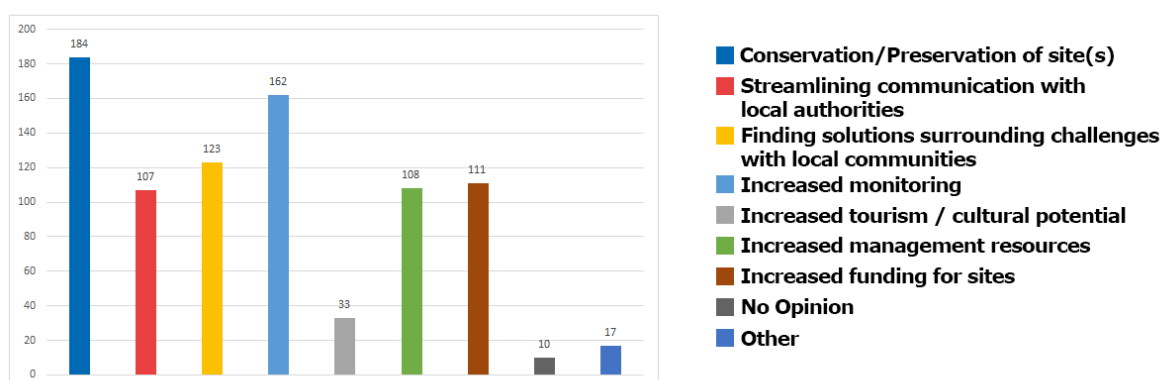
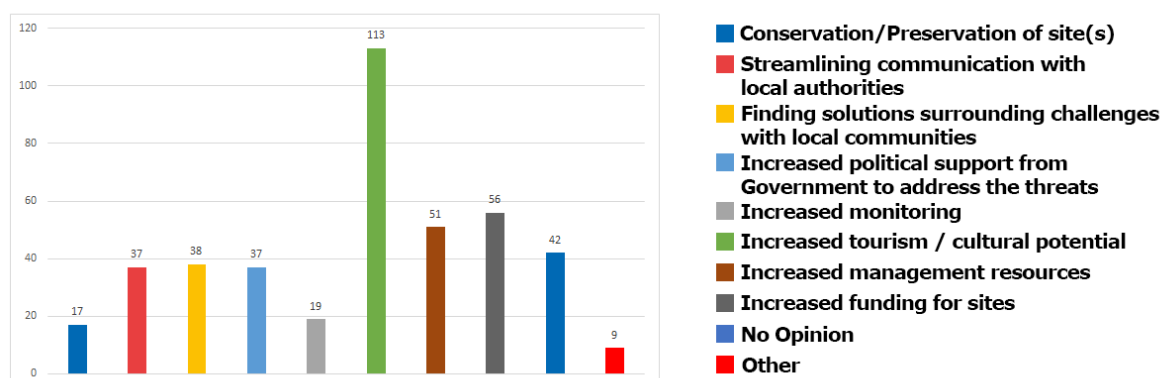


Figure 12: Areas where the LWHD is perceived as not contributing to conservation and management goals



Several interviewees noted that, UNESCO, with its broad mandate in multiple fields, has never had sufficient resources to meet its objectives. On occasion, political disputes have paralysed the organization's funding. At the same time, in recent years, the number of sites on the WH List and the LWHD have greatly increased, but the resources available in the World Heritage Fund have not grown

apace. As a result, many SPs do not see any economic/ financial benefits of Danger-listing.

*"Sometimes it can generate investment from governments. But in most instances, it delivers little. The LWHD does not attract funding, and failure to provide Costed Action Plans and DSCOR make the process of Danger-listing ineffective." (interview, NGO representative, 2021.11.03)*

This leaves the main consequences as the perception of public punishment in front of the international community and in many cases, a negative impact on tourism, and therefore on revenue. The focus thus on the harm or threats to sites and the negative impacts of publicity, rather than the potential improvements that Danger-listing can bring.

## 4.6. New approaches to heritage

When discussing the roadblocks to a successful functioning of the LWHD, interviewees repeatedly raised the issue of the need to evolve approaches to heritage and conservation. Several noted that the Convention was established 50 years ago yet the ways of understanding and protecting heritage have not changed much since then. This included comments that different interpretations of 'authenticity' and 'integrity' exist and the need to balance development and conservation.

*"For the LWHD to improve as a mechanism to protect World Heritage, the objectives of the WH Convention and the understanding of heritage as part of future development need to be thoroughly reviewed." (interview, NGO representative, 2021.11.03)*

Most interviewees recognized UNESCO as the most important international driver of ideas for World Heritage and its protection, and acknowledged the efforts being made since the last twenty years to develop inclusive perspectives on heritage and conservation. However, many also referred to a dominant European understanding of heritage and the need for a less 'monolithic' perspective; that is to say, "the idea of safeguarding historical elements to preserve the heritage of humanity". Interviewees and survey respondents repeatedly emphasized that more consideration should be given to the distinct contexts, as an imperative to the LWHD implementation. This includes the diversity of cultural, environmental, and socio-political contexts, and different concepts and perceptions of heritage.

*"The ideas that were discussed in the WH Committee were fine for that time, but the concept of heritage, as well as any social concept, always changes and updates according to the time. Therefore, we cannot continue to manage our heritage as we understood it at that time." (interview, academic and heritage expert, 2021.07.21)*

The need for a more grassroots-oriented and bottom-up approach to conservation was also emphasized. This is especially important in relation to the Reactive Monitoring process and the LWHD, where more attention should be given to deeper structural issues and local involvement should be systematically ensured. Informants claim that the decentralization of debates is key to the survival of the WH Convention and to the legitimacy of the LWHD. Some interviewees mentioned that one critical aspect to be re-evaluated in World Heritage debates is the "monumentalist approach" in UNESCO's conservation programmes. According to them, this approach only prioritizes landscape restoration or the recovery of the physical conditions of endangered properties.

*"The problem with this is that heritage is not considered as something that is always in transformation. Thus, the relationship of the site with the community is practically non-existent in conservation efforts."  
(interview, Heritage official, Latin American and the Caribbean, 2021.11.02)*

Views expressed also tend to indicate that there is an excessive focus on the number of properties inscribed on the LWHD. i.e., how many sites are inscribed on the LWHD versus how many properties have been removed. However, less focus is placed on building integrated processes that include heritage as part of governance, a better institutional framework, and the provision of greater spaces for dialogue and community integration. Furthermore, there is mention of the need to change the understanding of World Heritage as something from the past towards the adoption of a more comprehensible approach, which considers heritage as a key to sustainable development.



## 4.7 Improving the perceptions of the LWHD

In general, most individuals who participated in the survey or in an interview agreed that the LWHD serves an important purpose and has a legitimate role in World Heritage processes. In the early years of the WH Convention, the request to inscribe sites on the LWHD came from SPs themselves (for example, the Djoudj National Bird Sanctuary in Senegal in 1984, the Royal Palaces of Abomey in Benin in 1985, or the Bahla Fort in Oman in 1988). Nowadays, several SPs still chose to have recourse to the LWHD in order to raise awareness about specific threats to their properties. Some SPs also recognized the process of being listed on the LWHD, and to be removed from it, as a positive experience that has improved site conservation. However, once stakeholders were asked to take a closer look at the LWHD and its actual functioning, a proliferation of negative aspects, but also suggestions for improvement, were manifested.

When asked which aspects of the decision-making process they thought could be improved, respondents prioritized increased monitoring and reporting and additional financial support from wealthier SPs to enhance the functioning of the LWHD. Regarding communication, respondents called for better consultation with SPs before Danger-listing recommendations come to the WH Committee, while other comments emphasized the need for additional communication on the intended purpose, value and meaning of the LWHD for SPs and site managers. The organization of a workshop for WH Committee members on the LWHD was also suggested (see fig. 13 and fig. 14).

Figure 13: Aspects of the decision-making process to inscribe sites on the LWHD

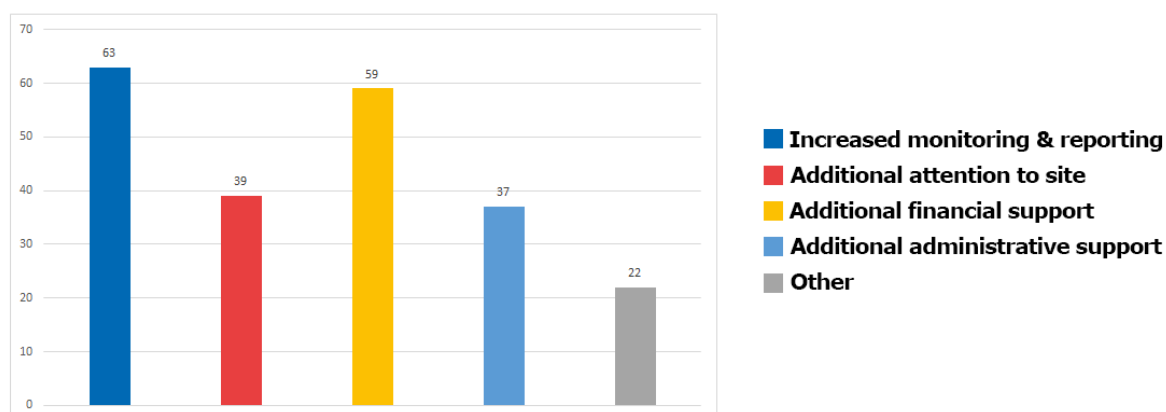
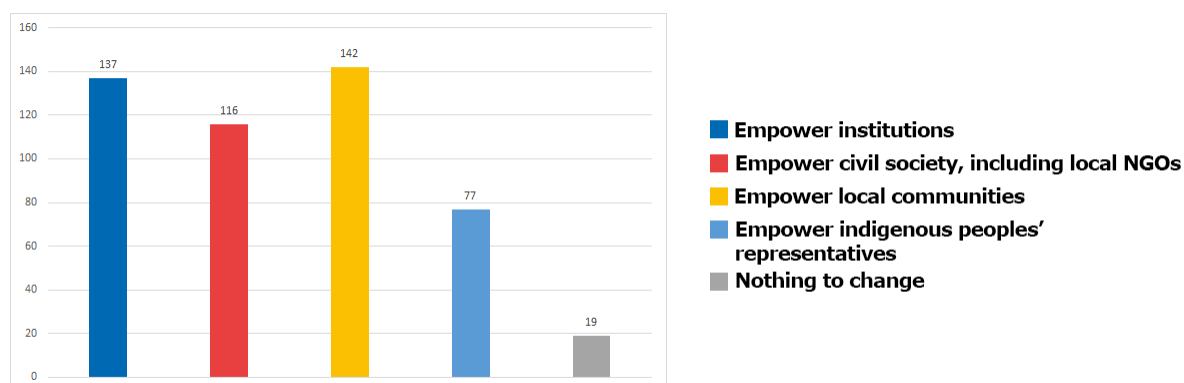


Figure 14: Aspects to improve in order to help SPs support the inclusion of their sites on the LWHD, and their removal from the LWHD



When survey participants were asked to indicate which areas could be improved to gain the support of SPs in the LWHD process, the highest degree of importance was given to empowering local communities, with 65% of respondents highlighting this as a priority. This was followed by the importance of empowering institutions (62%), empowering civil society including local NGOs (53%) and empowering Indigenous Peoples' representatives (35%). A further 9% of respondents indicated that nothing needed to be changed.

Over the course of interviews, a wide range of proposals for improving the LWHD process were put forward by the interviewees, while the survey returned 120 proposals on how the LWHD could become a more useful tool. The proposals echo the major themes that have been highlighted throughout this report. Respondents highlighted the need to "depoliticize" the LWHD process and prioritize a technical approach to decision-making, while many suggested defusing the negatively charged process of Danger-listing by changing the name of the LWHD.

*"The whole idea of LWHD should be reconsidered - it shouldn't be seen as a threat of being excluded from the WH List, but rather as an additional tool to ensure better conservation measures." (interview, State Party official, Europe & North America, 2021.07.16)*

More involvement of civil society, including giving them a greater platform at meetings and events, and a local focus was called for, including through the empowerment of local communities through consultation and education and enhancing involvement of UNESCO field offices. Further mobilization of financial resources as well as human and technical resources was emphasized by many respondents as crucial for concrete action, while categorizing threats to World Heritage properties, emergency levels and contextualizing monitoring and recommendations to specific situations were also underlined. Respondents also called for more proactive approaches by UNESCO and enhanced dialogue with States Parties. A predominant theme was the need to increase and improve media engagement and strategies, and to highlight success stories related to the LWHD and disseminate these widely.



## 5. Conclusions

The statistics generated by the survey of the stakeholders of the WH Convention and the extensive insights and opinions provided in the comments and in the course of in-depth interviews have clearly shown that while many stakeholders positively evaluate the purpose and functioning of the LWHD, there are specific dynamics at play, which are fuelling a negative overall perception of the tool.

### Shame and anxiety

Respondents frequently indicated that a strong sense of shame was associated with the listing of a property on the LWHD. Another dominant theme was anxiety, stemming from potential negative publicity, tourism impacts, embarrassment on the world stage and the ability to see only negative outcomes of Danger-listing with no positive or concrete path out of the situation. Interestingly, respondents also addressed that a negative perception of the LWHD can have a positive conservation outcome: the desire to avoid Danger-listing has the benefit of putting pressure on SPs that might otherwise be reluctant to react quickly and adopt policies beneficial to the protection and safeguarding of the WH site.

The accumulation of decisions related to a property over many years without any clear action plan towards the removal of the property from the LWHD was also referred to as a factor that can be overwhelming for a State Party. Respondents noted that some negative perceptions and opposition that exist are based on misunderstanding about the LWHD amongst SPs. Negative perceptions were also highlighted as a potential obstacle to cooperation between stakeholders. In this regard, the need for better resources, support and more funding; and a simpler and clearer process was repeatedly expressed. Making the LWHD a more effective tool could lead to SPs to be more in favour of inscribing a site in the LWHD and going through a revaluation of conservation policies, as a better outcome is projected on the horizon.

### Influence of political ties on the decision-making process to inscribe properties on the LWHD

Respondents to both the survey and direct interviews repeatedly referred to the decision-making process being inconsistent or highly influenced by diplomatic relationships and hence, hindering the effectiveness of the LWHD. They highlighted that, while political relations are at the forefront of the SPs, and public lobbying and advocacy strategies can lead to greater action to protect sites in danger, they can overshadow technical decisions taken by the WH Committee. In other words, the influence of politics on the decisions aiming at weakening or discarding the Advisory Bodies recommendations, different approaches taken to Danger-listing in different cases and different readings of threat levels at different properties were all identified as destabilizing forces. One observation noted that properties that stay off the LWHD will not benefit from the positive potential outcomes. Another comment noted that the political agenda will need to



support the Danger-listing process as the latter is linked to political mandates, which are not on the same timeline as the World Heritage processes.

### Lack of contextualized approaches

Feedback gathered frequently indicated that inadequate consideration was given to contexts. This applies to the type of sites, the nature of threats as well as the regional and national cultural, political, and economic contexts. Respondents noted that the LWHD does not, or cannot, always result in improved conservation outcomes, attract funding or address threats. This was repeatedly emphasized in relation to sites impacted by conflict or climate change, or where measures are beyond the control of governments and Danger-listing is unlikely or unable to bring about positive change. In such cases, the negative perceptions surrounding the Danger-listing may be the only outcome. However, the LWHD could still be beneficial for the protection of World Heritage sites as a whole, as it draws attention to these problems. That is why the LWHD is less of a call for attention to a specific State Party and more of a strategy to raise awareness of global issues.

The Study notes that there is also a strong perception that a generalized approach is used to dealing with World Heritage sites in danger. Examples of lack of nuance in approaching different contexts included in the application of a global monumental standard of heritage conservation, which is not always feasible in different contexts, the lack of consideration of development priorities of different regions and the capacities and finances available to different SPs.

A further issue identified is the predominance of European and Western viewpoints, and Eurocentric approaches in the LWHD process, whereas cultural awareness is a vital element of international heritage work. Furthermore, there is a generalized perception that policies and strategies are still designed from a top-down approach after a site is inscribed on the LWHD. It was repeatedly noted that local experts should be consulted and engaged in conservation policies, prior to such Danger-listing. Direct links with local and grassroots stakeholders should be established, and their inputs used to develop recommendations as sites are part of their daily lives. The results of this Study have clearly highlighted that many stakeholders see the empowerment of local people as a priority for the LWHD process. In the broader sense, a decentralization of World Heritage discussions is key to the utility and the legitimacy of the LWHD.

### Communication and Concrete Action

Many of the proposals to improve the LWHD process centre around communication and concrete action. Suggestions included making the content of decisions more accessible to all stakeholders and adding further explanations of the threats in the draft decisions. In general, engaging civil society and local media in conservation debates could be employed to transmit the issues of Danger-listing.

Proactive and transparent communication and engagement with SPs and local stakeholders was cited by many respondents as an urgent need; thus, should be prioritized before properties are proposed for inscription on the LWHD. Such inscriptions should be based on dialogue, consultation with an emphasis on the contribution to site protection that such listing would bring.

Finally, a general perception that emerged from the survey results was that clearer, more concrete measures need to be developed and communicated to stakeholders to show the “pathway off the LWHD”. For example, showcasing LWHD success stories; changing the general view on the LWHD to “LWHD makes that improve the state of conservation of the property, through carefully navigating a property out of danger”. This showcases a countries competence of solving a “challenge”. Taking all these priority considerations into account, a series of 5 recommendations has been developed. These recommendations are specifically aimed at enhancing communication and concrete action to optimize the efficacy of the List of World Heritage in Danger.



## 6. Recommendations

### Recommendations for a Communication approach to improve the perceptions and use of the LWHD

Below is a set of preliminary recommendations with some illustrative examples as a guide framework for a future Communication Strategy. A clear vision and defined goals should be further developed to create the best strategy for achieving the communication goals for the LWHD. Communication approaches should aim to change the narrative surrounding the LWHD, increasing participation on youth in World Heritage conservation efforts, adopting a clear and transparent approach when discussing issues surrounding LWHD, further refining LWHD discussions with increasing contextualization and local specifics. Efforts and approaches to address the main issues should focus minds on the heart of the WH Convention, on the fundamental principles and visions of the WH Convention, combined with innovative reflections on evolving perspectives in order to move forward.

**Recommendation 1:** Change the narrative through positive storytelling and proactive, strategic communications

*Context:* The LWHD is currently operating under a cloud of negative perceptions. The Study has shown that over the last two decades, the Danger-listing process has become increasingly “politicized”. It is no longer seen as a positive conservation tool, but more as a ‘red list’, one interviewee even referred to being put on the LWHD as “like being grounded”. Apart from a range of political, geopolitical, economic and environmental considerations, one reason for this may be that it has been viewed more as a ‘zero-sum’ game since the first actual deletion of a property from the World Heritage List altogether in 2007. In recent years, there is more intense political pressure on officials responsible for World Heritage to keep their properties off the LWHD. It is widely acknowledged that there is often massive momentum and huge efforts rallied by countries in avoiding the dreaded Danger-listing - efforts and energy that could be better channelled into conservation efforts and fundraising. Media portrayal is also an important factor in the negative perception of the LWHD, as resistance to Danger-listing is far more widely reported than the beneficial outcomes that can result from such listing. Political interests can also use the media to portray the Danger-listing discussions as a battle between a ‘meddling’ International Organization and a sovereign state, and that keeping a property off the LWHD is a cause for celebration. The fact that the decisions are being made by an intergovernmental Committee and that World Heritage is a system of international cooperation can get lost in this type of narrative.

**Recommendation 1: Change the narrative - positive storytelling and proactive, strategic communications**

**Objectives:**

- Refocus the LWHD as a unified global approach to tackling urgent conservation needs at natural and cultural sites valued by all humanity
- Incentivize the LWHD
- Defuse the ‘danger’ while retaining the urgency

Aims	Communication Channels	Target Audiences	Approaches
<p>Celebrate LWHD successes on a public stage</p> <p>Take stock of current media strategy and footprint specifically related to the LWHD</p> <p>Involve all stakeholders in communications</p>	<p>Accessible, modern stories in video, photographic, text stories for magazines or newspapers, VR/360-degree experiences, (virtual) exhibitions, animations, video testimonials of local people, youth, civil society, graphic flyers, short brochures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States Parties to the WH Convention</li> <li>• WH Committee members</li> <li>• Advisory Bodies</li> <li>• UNESCO</li> <li>• WH Site Managers</li> <li>• Civil Society</li> <li>• Other World Heritage stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly promote conservation-focussed positive stories (balance the narrative in the media), especially during WH Committee sessions</li> <li>• Present LWHD positive case studies, in particular through human interest stories (stories that discuss people in an emotional way, presenting their problems, concerns, or achievements in a way that brings about interest, sympathy or motivation in the reader or viewer)</li> </ul>

Aims	Communication Channels	Target Audiences	Approaches
<p>Emphasize that WH processes are participatory and based on international cooperation</p>	<p>The media should be produced in a style that is fresh and invigorating. Language, audio and visual language should avoid typical iconography, jargon or overly diplomatic language, but rather aim for visual appeal, clarity, urgency, surprise.</p> <p><b>Communications via:</b> UNESCO Social Media Accounts, UNESCO website, WHC website, mainstream media, meetings and events, WH documentation. Advisory Body websites and Social Media also can be used for this. And the messages can be put into capacity building activities both in and outside the WH context.</p>	<p>(local communities, academia, other specific groups)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General Public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlight the achievements of States Parties that are using the LWHD to protect their national heritage. e.g., through film: <i>If a site has been removed from LWHD at the last session, an inspirational short film can be shown in the opening days of the following session, reinforcing the idea that above all, conservation is at the heart of the Convention and considerable achievements are being made. The film should show concrete actions and the positive outcomes, it should focus on local people, local government and youth. The film should be made in a short-form style that is accessible to the public and can be shared on Social Media and should also have either subtitles or a voice-over in the local language of the country</i></li> <li>Focus on how using this tool helps countries to work towards the Sustainable Development Goals</li> <li>Focus on the fundraising and resource mobilization goals and achievements of LWHD</li> <li>Encourage States Parties to get involved in communication campaigns of conservation successes, even if the process has been fraught, the outcome is still a victory of conservation and can be shown in this way. <i>Can be a particularly powerful message if used during Committee sessions, and it is from a country currently member of the Committee.</i></li> <li>Emphasize international community's duty and the wealthiest States Parties of mobilizing resources and supporting heritage the most at risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide concrete examples of funding and what it achieves/can achieve on the ground (human interest stories)</li> <li>Emphasize the actions that Danger-listing has initiated and present these according</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Aims	Communication Channels	Target Audiences	Approaches
			<p>to SDGs, Climate Change goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Steer social media to specifically the LWHD 'endangered heritage' / 'action for endangered heritage' topic [<i>linked with Recommendation 2 on developing youth and other social media 'ambassadors'/World Heritage activists</i>], including regular 'stories' and interactive content.</li> <li>Review media communications / conduct a study of presentation in mainstream media and social media, carry out UNESCO/World Heritage staff press trainings as necessary, develop/update press packs, ensure that positive stories find their way to the press and highlight cooperation with national governments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Press releases etc. should emphasize the use of the 'Intergovernmental World Heritage Committee' to counter perceptions that UNESCO is a monolithic entity making rules for heritage.</li> <li>Spotlight on cases where countries have driven the process (celebrate State Party level conservation action)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Spotlight on civil society raising the alarm (emphasize in the media the home-grown and grassroots activism for heritage conservation)</li> <li>Review internal and external communications to clarify LWHD procedure and disarm the concept of 'Danger': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communications should focus on retaining the urgency of conservation actions needed, while adding necessary nuances; incorporating clarifications on types of heritage in danger, types of threats etc. into procedural documents.</li> <li>Limit the use of the negatively-charged name of LWHD in communications. If possible, use the acronym with the official name in</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



Aims	Communication Channels	Target Audiences	Approaches
			<p>brackets and afterwards refer to 'endangered heritage'. Avoid use of 'Danger List', official documents could use LWHD, use language such as 'urgent conservation', 'priority', 'action'. Public facing communications could use 'endangered World Heritage'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Avoid focus on the delisting/deletion of WH properties in communications. Focus instead on cooperation, conservation.</li> <li>○ Use of a spectrum/categorization or traffic light system e.g.: 'amber list' or other categorization of endangered heritage, which is under consideration for the Danger List (we are conditioned to these categories by other emergencies, e.g., pandemic). The categories of 'conflict', 'climate change' and 'development' could be further defined in relation to LWHD processes.</li> <li>○ Develop template checklist, road map, indicators to further emphasize the 'pathway off the LWHD'. Could be considered as revisions to Operational Guidelines</li> <li>○ Decisions could include acknowledgements to specific cases (e.g., if it is a city where people live, tourism destination) and the impact of LWHD and importance of corrective measures.</li> <li>• Communicate directly with general public: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Launch large-scale communications campaign for general public (advertising)</li> <li>○ Brief relevant journalist and implement journalism trainings on how to report on endangered sites</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Aims	Communication Channels	Target Audiences	Approaches
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Social media campaigns aimed at the general public, including UNESCO's own storytelling, e.g., short 'TV-style' commercial or short written story accompanied by illustrative photography. Commissioning a feature-length human interest documentary film on the impact of conservation issues on the day-to-day basis of local people/ecosystem and on World Heritage conservation efforts, designed for a very broad audience. It would need to be an external product supported by UNESCO</li> <li>○ Use innovative approaches to encourage participation, e.g., programmes where people are able to engage with specific World Heritage sites in innovative and meaningful ways, virtually or <i>in-situ</i></li> <li>○ Develop endangered heritage' interactive crowdfunding platform where donations can be directed towards specific goals. Use regular updates and direct communication from site-level to the general public (updates by site managers etc.)</li> </ul>

## Recommendation 2: Turn up the volume on youth voices

*Context:* Communications should focus more on reaching youth and empowering youth to drive the messages for the WH Convention's mission. At a time in history when the youth of the world fear for their future and are calling their governments to account for jeopardizing the natural world, their role in driving action and advocating change is crucial. More explicit communications efforts would bring more youth voices into World Heritage conversation, harnessing their power as drivers of change. Article 4 of the WH Convention is built around the concept of stewardship for the future, with SPs recognizing *"the duty of ensuring the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and transmission to future generations of the cultural and natural heritage"*. As stated in the WH Convention, Communications strategies should aim at communicating the LWHD as a significant conservation tool for the future generations.

## Recommendation 2: Turn up the volume on youth voices

### Objectives:

- Place youth at the centre of communications strategies as audience and conveyors of messages about the efficacy and importance of LWHD

Aims	Communication Channels	Target Audiences	Approaches
<p>Raise awareness of the conservation aims of the LWHD</p> <p>Increase youth involvement in WH conservation</p>	<p>UNESCO Social Media Accounts, partners and network social media accounts, UNESCO website, WHC website, mainstream media, meetings and events, ICOMOS "Emerging Professional Group", ICCROM "Youth Heritage Africa".</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth</li> <li>• States Parties to the WH Convention</li> <li>• WH Committee members</li> <li>• Advisory Bodies</li> <li>• UNESCO</li> <li>• WH Site Managers</li> <li>• Civil Society</li> <li>• Other WH stakeholders (local communities, academia, other specific groups)</li> <li>• General Public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify online social media youth and other social media "ambassadors" /World Heritage activists (people in the public eye with a large following) who can be directly linked with World Heritage conservation causes and will drive engagement and diversify audiences.</li> <li>• Emphasize the youth focus of the WH Convention. Leverage existing World Heritage youth programmes to focus on the LWHD issue, integrate with future focus and youth in World Heritage conservation.</li> <li>• Encourage youth online activism on WH issues, including fundraising initiative</li> <li>• Leverage 50th anniversary "the next 50" campaign, use "pledge", and "promise", and accompanying slogan, e.g., "50 Years Young".</li> <li>• Bring youth into the room - have youth speakers/observers within intergovernmental meetings (not on side-lines).</li> <li>• Increase the number of WH-related Youth fora</li> <li>• Discuss climate change, conflict and development and the 2030 Agenda</li> </ul>

Aims	Communication Channels	Target Audiences	Approaches
			<p>and position within the broader youth context, and in particular further communicate the relevance of World Heritage conservation within the wider fight against climate change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and disseminate online educational programmes/content for youth with a specific focus on heritage and development.</li> </ul>

### **Recommendation 3: Clear, meaningful, and transparent messages**

*Context:* While the World Heritage Convention remains a political arena and is driven by diplomats and discussed in diplomatic languages, there are problematic issues at the centre of the LWHD which could benefit from direct communications approaches. Although there is a great deal of consensus amongst stakeholders about the issues at play, many of these topics can only be expressed in clear terms in the context of anonymous surveys or interviews. In order to achieve positive change, there is a need to collectively 'face' some of these issues, to point out the elephant in the room and open more of a debate. Whilst this is a very delicate process, there are some aspects where this can be initiated in terms of communications.

### **Recommendation 3: Clear, meaningful, and transparent messages**

#### **Objectives:**

- Adopt a 'direct' approach to issues surrounding the LWHD in certain areas
- Open a transparent debate amongst key stakeholders

<b>Aims</b>	<b>Communication Channels</b>	<b>Target Audiences</b>	<b>Approaches</b>
<p>Address difficult topics transparently</p> <p>Clear, accessible and meaningful information for WH decision makers</p>	<p>Communications via: UNESCO website, WHC website, meetings and events, WH documentation.</p> <p>ABs communication networks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States Parties to the WH Convention</li> <li>• WH Committee members</li> <li>• Advisory Bodies</li> <li>• UNESCO</li> <li>• WH Site Managers</li> <li>• Civil Society</li> <li>• Other WH stakeholders (local communities, academia, other specific groups)</li> <li>• General Public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on what the WH List is (conservation), vs what it is not (international league table, popularity contest, drawing more tourism)</li> <li>• The need to focus resources on WH conservation rather than WH nomination</li> <li>• The energy spent convincing others to remain off the LWHD should be concentrated on addressing the conservation issues</li> <li>• Use of language of defence, competition, injustice in LWHD discussions</li> <li>• The question of Western/Eurocentric approaches in LWHD processes</li> <li>• Issue of different LWHD cases being treated differently</li> <li>• Launch a reflection and develop communications tools specifically focussed on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⇒ What has changed in concepts over 50 years, new approaches, combining Sustainable Development approaches and different cultural perspectives</li> <li>⇒ LWHD and Sustainable Development – address perceptions that WH conservation is 'anti-development'</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use different and more digestible media formats in communicating conservation issues at meetings, give participants insights into real issues and stories on</li> </ul>

Aims	Communication Channels	Target Audiences	Approaches
			<p>the ground in addition to the technical information they have been given.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For all WH stakeholders, use more 'plain language' in communicating technical and scientific evaluations of decision-making processes on WHC website.</li> <li>• Partnerships with local community representatives/civil society to present local-level conservation issues in creative ways (art, photography, music) that could be accessibly adjacent to official meetings/events.</li> </ul>



**Recommendation 4:** Promote contextualized, localized and participatory communication on LWHD

*Context:* The report has shown that there is often a sense of alienation amongst people involved in World Heritage and affected by LWHD and “the bigger picture”. This sense of not being involved or heard enough by decision-makers exists at all levels. In order to “decentralize” the discussions and create meaningful change, a more “webbed” approach to communication should be taken. Stakeholders at all levels can co-create, convey and shape World Heritage and endangered heritage messaging. Telling stories that reflect a wide diversity of themes, issues, views and are told from different perspectives and in different languages will invigorate discussions on World Heritage, give stakeholders a sense of agency and remind decision makers of the grassroots impacts of their work.

**Recommendation 4: Promote contextualized, localized and participatory communication on LWHD**

**Objectives:**

- Look at the impacts of LWHD through a local lens
- Clarify how different contexts play a role in LWHD decision-making
- Promote a multi-perspective view of LWHD

Aims	Communication Channels	Target Audiences	Approaches
Decentralize WH discourses	UNESCO Social Media Accounts, UNESCO website, WHC website, meetings and events, WH documentation, partner institutions etc. Advisory Bodies communication networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States Parties to the WH Convention</li> <li>• Local Communities</li> <li>• WH Site Managers</li> <li>• Civil Society</li> <li>• Public</li> <li>• Youth</li> <li>• WH Committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop accessible communications material (explainer videos, manuals) that focus on different threats to World Heritage [Development pressure, climate change, conflict] and how these different situations are approached in the LWHD context. Information material on LWHD could be in the form of thematic case studies, thematic human-interest stories, publications or videos on LWHD in the context of a specific region or theme. [See also <b>Recommendation 1</b>]</li> <li>• Encourage States Parties to support translation into national/local languages of key communications material related to LWHD.</li> <li>• Reflection and workshops on topics adjacent to LWHD, <i>e.g., sustainable development, heritage values in different cultural contexts</i> [See also <b>Recommendation 3</b>]</li> <li>• Connect WH endeavours with ‘bigger picture’ goals, <i>for example linking intangible values/storytelling at World Heritage sites in connection to the 2021-2032 UN Decade on Indigenous languages</i></li> </ul>
Drive local and grassroots discussions on WH			
Localize expertise			

Aims	Communication Channels	Target Audiences	Approaches
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use expertise from different regions to communicate on LWHD topics</li> <li>• Develop local expertise <i>for example through e-learning programme on Reactive Monitoring, Costed Action Plans and DSOCR in local languages, with a local focus and in plain language</i></li> <li>• Promote civil society voices in LWHD debate</li> <li>• Involve youth in driving LWHD messages [See also <b>Recommendation 2</b>]</li> <li>• Involve States Parties in communication (e.g., of positive case stories) [See also <b>Recommendation 1</b>]</li> </ul>

## Recommendation 5: 'Back to basics' messaging

*Context:* The idea of 'threats' is woven into the fabric of the World Heritage Convention, as expressed in its very first words: *"Noting that the cultural heritage and the natural heritage are increasingly threatened with destruction"*. According to the findings of this report, the essential purpose of the World Heritage Convention, of protecting the OUV, is being somewhat eclipsed by other interests. Furthermore, there is no single position on some aspects of Danger-listing. Some claim that the States Parties have to request it, others claim that the opinion of the Advisory bodies is sufficient for Danger-listing. Other findings address the need to 'refocus' the conversation, strong communications strategies are needed which can emphasize the need to 'look back to move forward'.

### Recommendation 5: 'Back to the basics' of the World Heritage Convention

#### Objectives:

- Focus attention on conservation as the heart of the World Heritage Convention

Aims	Communication Channels	Target Audiences	Approaches
<p>Refocus WH discussions on conservation as opposed to nomination</p> <p>Provide further debates to address some unclear aspects of the listing process in the LWHD.</p> <p>Raise the profile of LWHD as an essential and positive mechanism</p> <p>Promote resource mobilization</p>	<p>UNESCO Social Media Accounts, UNESCO website, WHC website, meetings and events, WH documentation, partner institutions etc.</p> <p>Advisory Bodies communication networks</p>	<p>Members of the WH Committee, State Parties officials, Advisory Bodies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate the need to return to the fundamental principles of the WH Convention, which are ever more relevant. Campaign appealing to conscience e.g., 'What will you leave behind?' and the idea of historical and political legacy.</li> <li>• Leverage events and communications associated with the 50th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention to launch a 'reset'/give the LWHD a 'makeover', where open discussions can be held and agreements can be reached on ambiguous interpretations of the WH Convention regarding Danger-listing [See also <b>Recommendation 2</b>]</li> <li>• Include new visual identity and language of communication, anchored in positive approaches and combining 'the bigger picture' with contextualized and human-interest stories.</li> <li>• In cases where the priority is funding and resources - immediately and explicitly connect listing (or consideration of listing) with fundraising and call for expertise/resources. Focus on specific goals of funding and link with what is special about the heritage. Link fundraising with emotional communications, connect with the heart or central vision of the World Heritage Convention, and position within the 2030 Agenda.</li> </ul>

## 7. Advocacy sheet

The World Heritage Convention is the most successful global conservation instruments in history. 50 years since it was established, its fundamental mission is ever more relevant. At its very heart is a vision of national commitment coupled with international cooperation to protect and conserve the most incredible places on earth. To achieve this mission, the 'List of World Heritage in Danger' (LWHD) was embedded in the World Heritage Convention when it was adopted in 1972. It was intended as the Convention's core conservation tool, an international alert system and way to rally support for urgent conservation needs at specific World Heritage properties. However, despite the sincerity of its aims and its many successes, in recent years the LWHD has been overshadowed by negative perceptions, and it is undergoing an 'image crisis'.

The report *'New Visions for the List of World Heritage in Danger'* presents insights into the role and reputation of the LWHD. It is based on an extensive research study, including the results of a global survey and 30 in-depth interviews with reputable international World Heritage stakeholders. The study seeks to understand the dynamics of this tool through the eyes of its fans and detractors alike and provide a snapshot of how it is being understood, misunderstood, used, underused, appreciated, or criticized. The overall goal is to use this knowledge to launch a new beginning for this essential element of the World Heritage Convention.

The report first looks at current discussions on the LWHD, including general attitudes to its role and efficacy. It is evident that as a concept, the LWHD is perceived as an excellent tool for conservation and awareness-raising, however it is clearly facing a range of challenges. The key results of the study are presented in Chapter 4, which takes a deeper look at the interplay of forces that are seen to be destabilizing the LWHD and creating negative perceptions. These include inconsistent or unclear decision-making, excessive politicization, associations of embarrassment or punishment with Danger-listing, and a lack of resources, or the visibility of resources, to incentivize the use of the LWHD. Added to this are the impacts of a world in flux, where climate change and conflict are increasingly threatening heritage, and where cultural, economic, political contexts and development priorities shape each country's ability to maintain its heritage. A further factor is the difficulty of reconciling today's need for flexible and contextualized approaches to heritage with long-standing procedures and centralized frameworks.

The results presented echo the many voices and multiple perspectives that have been considered throughout the research process, and reflect their impressions, frustrations, and hopes for the future of the LWHD. The report concludes with a series of Recommendations on communications approaches

to raise the profile of the LWHD as a positive tool, crucial for the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage properties. It calls for fresh perspectives on dealing with endangered heritage and emphasizes that the LWHD can be a powerful lever of change, spurring action, starting a conversation, inspiring cooperation and opening up channels of resources and mutual support.

*"New Visions"* for the LWHD is a call to all those who are invested in World Heritage, personally, professionally, politically, or simply as a human who values the incredible beauty and diversity our world has to offer. The time has come to change the conversation, to highlight the achievements and benefits of the LWHD, invigorating its use and restoring it as an active and effective mechanism. Above all, the LWHD needs to mobilize funds and resources, but also political will and a positive spirit of cooperation. An effective conservation mechanism ultimately impacts how well we can protect our cultural and natural heritage and leave it for our children, and their children in turn.

Heritage conservation is not about the past, it is about people, places, and posterity. It is a vision of the future.



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## Annex A: Online Survey about the Perception of the LWHD

- a. Please mention your Country / State Party
- b. Please choose 'your' World Heritage property if you do not represent a specific WH property, please leave blank.

### **SURVEY QUESTIONS**

Q 1. In what type of function are you participating in this survey? What is your relationship to the World Heritage Committee?

Q 2. Do you know what the LWHD is, according to the World Heritage Convention?

Q 2.a Could you explain in a few words what the purpose of the LWHD is, according to the World Heritage Convention?

Q 3. What is your general observation about the LWHD?

Q 3.a Why did you tick the option above? (describe)

Q 4. According to you, to which of these options does the LWHD contribute?

- Conservation/Preservation of site(s)
- Streamlining communication with local authorities
- Finding solutions surrounding challenges with local communities
- Increased political support from Government to address the threats
- Increased monitoring
- Increased tourism / cultural potential
- Increased management resources
- Increased funding for sites
- Other

Q 5. According to you, to which of these options the LWHD doesn't contribute?

Same options as previously mentioned

Q 6. Are you aware of any success stories surrounding the LWHD?

Q 7. If you could take the decision, would you inscribe a site in the LWHD if there were conservation challenges/threats to its Outstanding Universal Value?

Q 7. a If yes, why?

- Increased monitoring & reporting
- Additional attention to site
- Additional financial support
- Additional administrative support
- Other

Q 7. b If no, why?

Q 8. Which aspects of the decision-making process could improve the LWHD and its current functioning?

Q 9. Have you ever been part of the inscription (process) of a site on the LWHD?

Y/N

Q 9.a In which capacity?

Q 9.b Did you feel the process was well established?

Q 9.c A Costed Action Plan showcases threats and an estimate of the budget required to address these threats. A costed action plan is intended to help mobilize the necessary resources and ensure that they are directed in the most effective way to address the issues that threaten the Outstanding Universal Value of the property inscribed on the LWHD. What is your general observation regarding the establishment of a Costed Action Plan?

Q 9.d A Desired state of conservation for the removal of the property from the LWHD (DSOCR) is a defined state of conservation that a property must reach in order to demonstrate that it is no longer threatened by serious and specific danger, and to enable its removal from the LWHD. It is achieved through the successful implementation of the corrective measures. What is your general observation regarding the DSOCR and corrective measures?

Q 9.e What is your general observation about the Costed Action Plan?

Q 9.f How do you rate the dialogue among parties into deciding to inscribe a site in the LWHD?

Q 9.h After inscription, what did the LWHD do for your site, or for a site you are particularly aware?

Q 9.g Why?

Q 10. What do you think is the most important aspect to take into consideration after a site is inscribed on the LWHD?

Q 10.1 Why?

Q 11. What should be improved (if relevant) to help States Parties support the inclusion of their sites on the LWHD, and their removal from this list?

- Empower institutions
- Empower civil society, including local NGOs
- Empower local communities
- Empower indigenous people's representatives
- Nothing to change

Q 12. How do you perceive the contents and clarity of the Committee decisions in general regarding the LWHD?

- Difficult to implement
- Easy to read
- Difficult to read
- Ambiguous
- Clear
- Unrealistic
- Reflects ground realities

Q 13. Additionally, if you have ideas of how to make the LWHD a more useful tool for the conservation of sites, please share.

## Annex B: Guide of interview questions

1. Do you have a relationship with the World Heritage Committee?
2. What is your professional background?
3. Do you know what the List of World Heritage in Danger (LWHD) is, according to the World Heritage Convention?
4. Could you explain in a few words what the purpose of the LWHD is?
5. Have you been involved in the process of inscribing a site on the LWHD?
  - 5.1 In what position (as State Party representative? Site manager? Advisory Body Committee member? etc.) what were your experiences?
  - 5.2 In the case of site managers: How have you "lived" after the inscription (feeling a sense of shame that the local government cannot manage the endangered site well, or on the contrary, driven even more to act on conservation, etc.)?
6. What do you consider to be the positive aspects of listing, and do you know of any "success stories" in the implementation of the WHDL? If yes, which ones? If no, why not? (lack of promotion, etc.)
7. What do you consider to be the negative aspects of the inclusion of sites in the LWHD (for the site, for the people living in and around the site, for the community, the management staff, the country, etc.)?
8. Do you think the WHDL is an effective or ineffective tool for World Heritage preservation? What aspects of the operation/functioning of the LPMP do you think could be improved?
9. What general conditions or aspects do you think are not taken into account in the process of inscription of sites on the LWHD?
10. Are you aware of the report that was done on the evaluation of the Reactive Monitoring Process in 2018/ 2019?
11. In that report, the team that worked on the evaluation of the Reactive Monitoring Process considered that the DSOCR process (Desired State of Conservation to remove the property from the WHDL) is relevant to the protection work carried out by the World Heritage Convention. What are your observations on the functioning

of this process in the listing of sites in danger? How has this process helped to establish a costed action plan and corrective measures?

12. What do you consider to be the main "roadblocks" to inscribing a site on the WHDL?
13. Since 1978, of the 161 applications/proposals for the inscription of a property in the WHDL, 94 inscriptions (58%) have been accepted by the Committee. How would you explain that only slightly more than half of the endangered sites have been successful, and do you consider this to be a problem?
14. What is your perception of the decision-making process for inscribing a site on the WHDL? What do you think are the positive aspects that the World Heritage Committee takes into account? Do you think there are some aspects that the Committee overlooks?
15. What are the most typical debates and differences of opinion surrounding the inscription of a site on the WHDL?
16. Do you think that the criteria for listing a site in the WHDL should be more or less strict? Should there be a stricter application of the criteria defined in the Operational Guidelines?
17. Do you think that there is a positive or negative perception of the inscription of a site in the WHDL? If negative, what would be your recommendations to change this perception?
18. Is there in some cases a "perception of shame" in registering a site in the WHDL, and what do you think these perceptions are based on? What would be your recommendations to change this perception?
19. Often, the "shame" also comes from the way the media paints the inscription of a site on the WHDL as a shameful situation, blaming the responsible authorities and pointing the finger at their management and policies. Do you think the media "play" a role in building this "negative perception" of the WHDL? Is it a lack of understanding of the original intention of this List? How would you explain that, in general, the removal of a site from the LWHDL (success story) attracts less attention than the inscription of a site on this List? How could this problem be solved?

## Annex C: Key of recurring themes evoked during the interviews

Type of informant:

- State representative
- Site Manager
- Member of the WH Committee
- UNESCO Secretariat
- Advisory body (ICCRUM, ICOMOS, IUCN)
- Representative of Civil Society (Local or International NGO)
- Representative of indigenous people and local communities

Key aspects to be found in the interview:

1. History
2. Decision-making
3. Shame
4. Funding/ resources
5. Communication/Civil society
6. Other topics

Description of the key aspects:

1. History of the LWHD and the WHC (HISTORY)
  - a. Why was it created?
  - b. Has it maintained its core over time?, has it changed?
  - c. Has it evolved according to our times?
  - d. Monumental view vs more integrative view (inclusion of new debates)
2. Decision-making process of Danger-listing (political vs technical decisions) (DECISION-MAKING)
  - a. Decision-making process is politicized
  - b. Over representation of diplomats/ ambassadors
  - c. Politicians should put more effort to work together in the preservation of heritage, rather than trying to take their sites out of the list
  - d. Representation of regional experts and balance of professionals around the world
3. Perception of shame (SHAME)
  - a. Cultural issues: changing the name as a solution to reduce negative cultural impact
  - b. States Parties feel accused of mismanagement
  - c. WHC after Danger-listing gives a list or recommendations (to-do list) instead of real help
  - d. Proudness to be on the WHL in contradiction to being on the danger list
4. Funding and resources (FUNDING/RESOURCES):
  - a. Problems with the preservation of heritage sites are experienced by countries from different situations (capacities and resources are very unequal), therefore this is something to take into account when inscribing a site in the list



- b. A key issue: How to get more money for heritage?
  - c. Balance and distribution of resources (through all regions)
5. Communication and participation of civil society (COMMUNICATION/CS):
- a. Communication between WHC and stakeholders very hierarchical:  
Need to include the voice and participation of civil society in their different forms of representation
  - b. How to put heritage in the public agenda? (Lobbying, media presence)
  - c. How to make it more accessible for the public? (Story telling, other communication strategies)
6. Functioning of the mechanism:
- a. How to establish what danger is?  
Zero-sum game (Is it in danger vs is it not in danger?)
7. Others: Other relevant topics that come out of the interviews.