

Remarks by the CEO of the National Heritage Council at the Final Meeting of the 2nd Cycle of the World Heritage Periodic Reporting for Africa

held at Khaya Ibhusesi, Vredefort Dome, South Africa on 14 February 2011

Programme Director

Distinguished representatives of the Republic of South Africa here present; DEAT, DAC and the Mayor

Delegation from UNESCO, and in particular, the Chief of the Africa Unit; Mr Lazare Eloundou-Assomo; Representatives of the Advisory Bodies: IUCN, ICOMOS and ICCROM here present;

The Executive Director of the African World Heritage Fund; Dr. Ndoro

The Coordinator of the 2nd Cycle Periodic Reporting; Dr. Abungu

Representative of the Nordic World Heritage Fund; Mr Ole Erikson

Representatives of Technical Partners;

Esteemed delegates from all the Africa Region;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Let me start off by extending a warm and proudly South African welcome to all of you on behalf of the Government and the people of South Africa. As the State Party to the World Heritage Convention, we are indeed privileged with the honour of a rare opportunity to host the Final Meeting of the 2nd Cycle of the Periodic Reporting for Africa. Ladies and Gentlemen, prior to this meeting, South Africa also hosted the Southern African Sub Region meeting in March 2010 at the Kopanong Hotel and Conference Centre in Benoni, South Africa. Today, South Africa and on behalf of all State Parties, welcomes all of you to this meeting which is finalising the 2nd Cycle of the Periodic Reporting for the Africa Region. This exercise was endorsed during the 33rd session of the World Heritage Committee in July 2009. As you may recall, the actual launch of the exercise was in January 2010 [Dakar, Senegal]. During the launch, State Parties acknowledged that the Periodic Reporting is a necessary requirement within the framework of the World Heritage Convention, and therefore all State Parties with listed sites committed to comply with this exercise. Ladies and Gentlemen, this exercise has been an opportunity for the Africa Region to assess the implementation of the Convention and state of conservation of the World Heritage Properties. The results have thus far reaching implications as they offer a platform to create a new road map for the management of World Heritage properties. This exercise would not have been successful without the commitment of the coordinators, national focal points, site managers, regional coordinators and mentors who worked tirelessly with UNESCO, the Advisory Bodies (IUCN, ICOMOS, ICCROM) and the African World Heritage Fund! And of course, the national governments that supported the process. This unity of purpose on the continent must go beyond this exercise to ensure that Africa attains a pole position in the management of World Heritage Properties.

Distinguished Guests, it is worth noting that 44 out of 45 State Parties on the region were qualified for the Periodic Reporting Exercise. Such a response by the African State Parties illustrates the growing commitment and realisation that heritage management is a priority. Therefore, the results of this exercise must be the basis of creating a road map for Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen allow me to briefly delve into some of the highlights of the 2nd Cycle of Periodic Reporting for the Africa Region that warrants the development of a road map;

1. The Periodic Reporting raises interesting issues relating to the factors affecting World Heritage Properties. Management and Institutional related factors, social uses of heritage (including impacts of visitors/tourism), biological resource use/modification, buildings and development have emerged as issues affecting both cultural and natural World Heritage Properties on the continent. Given that most of these factors are both current and some are potential, State Parties have to address these issues in a holistic manner as these affect the conservation status of the sites. These issues must be considered pivotal and central to ensuring Africa creates a new home grown management regime that has the support of government, the public and the corporate world. This is the only way we can transform the current trends in our implementation of the World Heritage Convention as a continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen, a fly past through recent media reports around the current conservation state of some of the listed World Heritage Sites in Southern Africa, especially South Africa and Zambia/Zimbabwe, give us reason to worry. The flouting of the UNESCO protocols where some unapproved developments like the building of a restaurant near the protected area within Mosi Wa Tunya (Victoria) Waterfalls in Zambia/Zimbabwe threatens the status thereof as a listed World Heritage Property; the building of unregulated guesthouses and lodges around the Cradle of Humankind in Maropeng in South Africa, in particular and the pollution of the surrounding biodiversity, for example, the natural water systems getting contaminated with acid water coming from mining activities immensely threaten its listing and the Vele mining developmental activities around the Mapungubwe Cultural Landscape and World Heritage Site in Limpopo Province which has attracted reactive monitoring mission are just a few examples of how these factors can reverse the gains of listing sites. I am quite sure and positive that most African countries represented here today can identify with these problems in their own countries. It is time we become open and confront these challenges. This will allow us to create new management paths that sustain the OUV of listed sites.

2. The Periodic Reporting results show that there is a deficiency in implementing the legal frameworks protecting cultural and natural heritage on the continent. In other instances there is no legal framework or it's outdated. This is an issue that requires introspection by State Parties. Without responsive national legal frameworks for the protection of heritage, we are not doing ourselves a favour! Such a scenario may create room for the destruction of heritage as people and entities continue to exploit existing legal loop-holes. Therefore, legal reforms, devising effective enforcement strategies and domesticating the World Heritage Convention should be one of our priorities.

3. In respect to Management Systems/Management Plans in place for World Heritage Properties on the continent it is important to note that Africa needs to improve on the partial implementation recorded in most State Parties during this exercise. However, cognisance should be taken of the training provided by the AFRICA 2009 programme and many other initiatives to build capacity for developing management systems. This is one of the issues that attract reactive monitoring missions to the Region. Ladies and Gentlemen, the onus is upon us to ensure that management systems/plans are institutionalised and implemented. Maybe this calls for us to be innovative and expand our horizons for partners to raise the required financial and human resources. It is my hope that this meeting will critical look at how we can reduce the number of reactive monitoring missions, the possibility of being placed on the list of endangered sites and ultimately being de-listed. Management should remain at the core of sustaining the OUV of World Heritage Properties.

One interesting issue relating to management of World Heritage properties is the number of sites in private hands. This inevitably presents a lot of problems in relation to conservation and management of sites in line with applicable national and international instruments and/or protocols. Unless a new paradigm shift is fostered, especially through legislative and participatory interventions, this may delay new nominations or attract reactive monitoring from the World Heritage Centre. These are some of the issues that require home grown solutions, and let me reiterate that UNESCO will not come and solve these problems on our behalf. These are challenges within our spaces and therefore we must confront them with urgency they deserve.

4. Another interesting result from the Periodic Report, and warranting serious consideration in this meeting, is the role of communities in this whole matrix of heritage management. Ladies and Gentlemen, we must not lose focus of the fact that heritage is created and owned by communities. Therefore, it is time that we come up with strategies that allow a meaningful role for the communities, but at the sometime ensuring that “GOOSE THAT LAYS THE EGG” is not destroyed. Communities must become integral in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and we must not be seen perpetuating colonial legacies. The question that I am posing to you today is that; how do we formalise community participation at world heritage sites in a manner that collapses current ‘alienation’ walls? Let me reiterate that the more we try to isolate communities from their own heritage, the more we become irrelevant to them and the sites that we manage on their behalf.

5. Also another interesting issue coming out of this Periodic Report is human resources required to effectively manage listed properties. The results show that the staffing levels at most sites are below optimum. How then do we expect to achieve results with skeletal resources all the time? Ladies and Gentlemen, consideration must be given to building skilled and trained capacities at World Heritage Properties as an institutionalised process. Trained personnel will provide the much need professionals to implement the World Heritage Convention and undertake the conservation work. Let me hasten to say that institutional framework is critical to capacity building as opposed to individualised initiatives. The question is how do we take the African continent to the next generation of training that is responsive to the needs of listed properties?

6. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Periodic Reporting also poses a very interesting challenge in knowledge generation or production (either scientific or traditional). The results show that we have sufficient knowledge about the listed properties but there are GAPS that require to be researched on. That way we will bring the much need data to support high level planning, management and decision making in heritage management.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I could go on and on about the immense results of this 2nd Cycle Periodic Reporting, BUT let me leave this discussion to you as the experts. It is your responsibility in this meeting that you think about a road map, which must be pro-active in addressing these and many other issues being identified by the Periodic Reporting. This is the only way Africa can be a model for the rest of the World in heritage management. Without acknowledging these issues, and addressing them, I am afraid; we will see Africa topping the list of regions with multiple and unresolved management issues.

At another positive level of the Periodic Reporting, it is worth noting that State Parties have reported on 123 potential future nominations. Even though this number does not necessarily correspond to the official lists on the WHC webpage, this demonstrates the desire by Africa to implement the Global Strategy in order to bring balance and

equity to the World Heritage List. One such potential future nomination that the State Party of South Africa is working on; is the Liberation Heritage; already placed on the tentative list of UNESCO. The Resolution by the African Union (during its 16th Ordinary Session in Ethiopia in January 2011) attests to the commitment of African Governments in supporting the identification, documentation and management of the Liberation Heritage of Africa. The AU recognises the importance of Liberation Heritage as illustrating the decolonisation process and the unique history of the continent. In addition, the AU has committed itself to the establishment of the African Liberation Heritage Programme (to be spearheaded by the Republic of Tanzania), and is thus calling all State Parties to extend maximum support for this initiative.

Therefore, the onus is upon us to take the challenge and ensure that Liberation Heritage is recognised as a shared and common transboundary value for the Region warranting nomination. Given the nature and uniqueness of this heritage, we need to strengthen the professional networks and strategic partnerships required to profile and cement the Trans-national character of the Liberation Heritage, and in general terms world heritage management issues.

In South Africa, Liberation Heritage has been endorsed by the President, Mr Jacob Zuma, and is now part of the national Agenda of the South African government. The pronouncement by the President could not have come at a better time as we are developing a nomination file. But as I said before, a regional initiative for this potential nomination is required and must be developed as soon as possible. As the Africa region we would naturally appreciate support from UNESCO and the Advisory Bodies, the African World Heritage Fund in creating a harmonised tentative list for the region and harnessing resources to develop quality and presentable nominations for both natural and cultural sites. In regards to the Liberation heritage, the National Heritage Council of South Africa has already engaged the African World Heritage Fund on the need to have a regional workshop focussing on the Liberation Heritage this year in order to produce a road map for its consideration as a World Heritage Property.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it will be unjust if I fail to recognise the role which UNESCO, the Advisory Bodies (IUCN, ICOMOS, ICCROM), the African World Heritage Fund and their PARTNERS continue to play in supporting the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in Africa. We can only thank them and desire to become a model for “best practices” in managing listed properties. We even hope that their support will continue in the post-periodic reporting phase and we guarantee them our willingness to partner them in order to save our heritage.

As we prepare for the next World Heritage Committee meeting in Bahran (this year), the results of the 2nd Cycle Periodic Reporting should assist with consolidating the Africa position for the next five years or so in implementing the World Heritage Convention and for consideration by the World Heritage Committee. While it may have been tedious in completing the questionnaires, it is my hope you realise that the benefits are immense. As you deliberate on this critical issue, I encourage you to be open and constructive with each other, [you have already demonstrated this ability during the periodic reporting exercise]. This is beginning of a new chapter, and renewed desire for implementing the World Heritage Convention. I wish you a wonderful stay in South Africa and after this meeting PLEASE take time and visit some of our premier heritage sites.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I declare the Final Meeting of the 2nd Cycle Periodic Reporting officially opened.

I thank you.

