

News from Phnom Penh

Tomorrow the 37th session of the World Heritage Committee will conclude its work, hosted by the Kingdom of Cambodia. All the delegates will travel from Phnom Penh where we have met for the past 10 days to Siem Reap, to participate in what promises to be a remarkable closing ceremony at Angkor.

There is a lot of information about the session on the website of the World Heritage Centre (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/>), but here are a few quick points that might be of interest to ICOMOS members in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

World Heritage List: The List now has 981 properties, and could reach the important symbolic threshold of 1000 next year if current trends continue. Of the 19 new properties added, one is from the Pacific – **Levuka Port Town** - the first World Heritage property for Fiji. Many colleagues in Fiji, the Pacific, New Zealand and Australia worked on this nomination in different ways over the years, and like me, will welcome this news. Warmest congratulations to **Fiji** and to State Parties in other regions celebrating their first World Heritage inscriptions: **Lesotho** and **Qatar**. To read further, look at the information available on the World Heritage Centre website.

List of World Heritage in Danger: One cultural property was removed from the List of World Heritage in Danger: Bam and its Cultural Landscape (Iran). All six of **Syria's** World Heritage properties were added to the List of World Heritage in Danger as well as East Rennell in the **Solomon Islands**.

For **Australia**, the minor boundary modification for the **Tasmanian Wilderness** World Heritage Area arising from the recently achieved Tasmanian Forestry Agreement was approved, and the progress made on the State of Conservation report for the **Great Barrier Reef** was discussed. The project funded by Australia to develop a heritage management framework for **Angkor** was the focus of a well-attended side event presented by Australian and Cambodian partners.

The **Periodic Report for Latin America and the Caribbean** was presented to the World Heritage Committee. This was also the subject of a robust discussion at a lunchtime side event – one of dozens of such events held during the period of the Committee session.

Again, there was a considerable focus and discussion of the **roles of the Advisory Bodies** – especially about how we can work 'upstream' and with stronger cooperation with States Parties in the context of severely reduced financial resources. In addition, some changes made to the **Rules of Procedure** for the World Heritage Committee, and the **Operational Guidelines**.

This is only a small taste of the outcomes of the annual session of the World Heritage Committee. Other outcomes and details of Committee decisions are available on the website of the World Heritage Centre.

I am grateful for the support of the Australian Government and Deakin University that made it possible for me to join the ICOMOS delegation. Warmest thanks also to my ICOMOS colleagues for their hard work and professionalism, to close friends and colleagues in the other Advisory Bodies – IUCN and ICCROM – the World Heritage Centre, and many delegates attending the session. It is always an extremely rich exchange.

Next year the 38th session of the World Heritage Committee will take place in Qatar. ICOMOS members are welcome contact me if you have any comments or questions about the World Heritage Committee session this year.

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