

Inauguration speech by Marielle Richon (Programme Specialist, Focal Point for Universities UNESCO World Heritage Centre (WHC) UNESCO)

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Mr. Vice-Chancellor,
Madam President of the World Archaeological Congress,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ten years ago, UNESCO decided to create an international network of universities called Forum UNESCO – University and Heritage. The idea was that after 28 International Safeguarding Campaigns and 3 International Conventions in 1995, the international community and the States Parties to these Conventions could no longer be the sole defenders of heritage worldwide.

UNESCO had to lean upon civil society as a whole. This includes elected Representatives, schools, universities, museums, heritage practitioners, the media, the tourism industry and many other stakeholders.

Thus, universities were chosen as a priority in the creation of this network, since they are a perennial element of society contributing to the advancement of knowledge and to the education of future heritage professionals.

Ten years later, we celebrate today not only ten challenging years of effort, but in a way, a dream that has come true: 51 nationalities are represented here in this room today, over 330 academics and heritage professionals have come together from all over the world to share, exchange their views, their experiences and bring back home a patchwork of their colleagues' experiences from the other side of the world.

I am sure that many of you will have the strong feeling of having discovered that others may experience very similar problems or issues in their reflection and in their work, despite the distance and the differences in climate, geography or history.

Many of you, I hope, will continue to communicate with each other after this seminar and hopefully have other occasions to meet again and thus appreciate the way they have progressed together.

I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, its International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies celebrating its 10th Anniversary this year, the City Council of Newcastle, the World Archaeological Congress, the United Kingdom Permanent Delegation to UNESCO, ONE NorthEast, the North West Development Agency and the Tyne Wear Partnership. Each of these organisations has contributed in this endeavour and we can pay tribute to all their efforts and dedication that have allowed us to meet during this week in the beautiful historical city of Newcastle upon Tyne.

This tenth anniversary of Forum UNESCO – University and Heritage coincides with the 60th anniversary of UNESCO this year and with the launching of the International Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. This is no random event as you will realize as I recall here the origins of the World Heritage Convention. All this information is to be found in my Colleague Mechtild Rössler's Paper entitled "*World Heritage Cultural Landscapes, a flagship programme 1992-2005*". Copies are available for every participant here on this podium.

The World Heritage Convention was adopted in 1972, upon the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Yellowstone National Park in the USA (1872). It is no coincidence, since the idea of a Foundation for world heritage was in discussion for some time already.

As you will remember, the World Heritage Convention aims at protecting cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value based on the idea that this heritage belongs to humankind. Linking culture and nature is a simple but revolutionary concept as the history of this Convention shows us:

In the 1980s the implementation of the Convention in *the field of cultural heritage* gave priority to monumental Christian, elite and European heritage. *In the field of natural heritage*, the WH Convention implementation gave priority to the great natural sites, national parks and endangered species habitat.

After ten years of implementation, the discussion amongst the international community stressed the fact that a better balance between culture and nature should be given in the WH List. This intensive debate on how to protect sites where you find interactions between people and the natural environment triggered the formulation of the first Operational Guidelines and of natural as well as cultural criteria.

For the first time, one spoke of Cultural Landscapes, wondering if the synthesis of both culture and nature was possible. As the very essence of the WH Convention, the notion of Cultural Landscapes was born.

But it is only in 1992, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the WH Convention, coinciding with the Rio Earth Summit that a strategic reflection took place. A group of Experts on Cultural Landscapes met in La Petite Pierre, France. Their reflection led to the adoption of Cultural Landscapes as a new category of World Heritage by the World Heritage Committee in Santa Fe, United States on the same year.

Cultural Landscapes were defined as the combined works of nature and man as expressed in Article 1 of the Convention.

There are three categories of Cultural Landscapes: First, they can be intentionally created by man, like Kew Gardens in the United Kingdom or the Parc of Versailles in France.

They can also be organically evolved living landscapes which keep an active social role in the community like the Tobacco Landscape of Vinales in Cuba or the Rice Terraces of the Philippines Cordillera.

Finally, they can be associative Cultural Landscapes consisting in the association of artistic, religious or cultural traditions to natural elements rather than culturally tangible evidence, such as Tongariro National Park in New Zealand, Uluru Kata Tjuta in Australia or the more recently inscribed site of Koutammakou, the Land of the Batammariba in Togo.

This new interpretation of the WH Convention has definitely opened the WH List to other parts of the world, to other ways of thinking of nature and culture. It had a crucial impact on the recognition of intangible, sacred or spiritual values linked to nature, in particular for the heritage of indigenous people and the local communities. It has also acknowledged the role of local communities in the traditional management of Cultural Landscapes, as, for example, the site of Mont Perdu between France and Spain where no border exists in the pastoral activities of the local communities.

At a time when biodiversity is at risk globally, World Heritage Cultural Landscapes also represent a protection for some key world crops as corn and potatoes in the High Andes for example, or dates in the Sahara.

The Cultural Landscape category also helped to provide attention to vernacular architecture, to ingenious immemorial agricultural and irrigation systems, often intertwined with belief systems, rituals and ceremonials.

All this has showed the intimate interdependence of people on the Cultural Landscapes. If the physical or social structure collapses, it is the whole landscape and its ecological system that are at threat.

Since 1992, 50 Cultural Landscapes were inscribed on the WH List. But a lot still needs to be addressed as some categories of Cultural Landscapes are still under represented on the WH List. These include modern architecture or 20th century heritage. They also comprise rivers, canals and linear structures illustrating population movements and economic or cultural exchanges. Finally, there is still to give recognition to nomadic lifestyle, as an interaction between man and nature.

New paths are still to be explored.

These include the relationship between natural sites and the history of mankind through the recent scientific discoveries; it could also question whether natural beauty is a cultural concept in itself. It could comprise more in depth study of the close links between man, nature and spirituality.

The interpretation of the *World Heritage Convention* has led to revisit the notions of site management which are now clearly understood as integrated management.

Future reflections will also lead to an anthropological interpretation of the WH Convention.

With 180 States Parties and 788 properties located in 134 countries on the World Heritage List, the *World Heritage Convention* is today a key legal instrument in heritage conservation and plays an important role in promoting the recognition and management of heritage in many regions of the world.

The introduction of Cultural Landscapes into the World Heritage field made many people aware that sites have to be seen in the ecological system and with the cultural linkages in time and space beyond single monuments or strict nature reserves. The Cultural Landscapes concept has considerably impacted protected area thinking and heritage conservation as a whole. It has also changed the perception and the practice of the *Convention*.

This reflects the extraordinary diversity of approaches and experiences in preservation, a true premonition of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity adopted in 2003. In its Article 7 one reads that "Cultural Heritage is a source of creativity". As stated also in the Natchitoches (NAK A TISH) Declaration on Heritage Landscapes in 2004, "*Heritage Landscapes are the prime expression of the richness of the world and the diversity of its culture*".

The knowledge of different cultures stimulates us and allows further creative development of our own culture to occur. This is why heritage in all its forms must be maintained, enhanced and passed on to future generations, regardless of their origins.

Just as in Forum UNESCO – University and Heritage, this is a way to promote creativity in all forms and to encourage the exchange of ideas among all different cultures of the world.

I hope you will enjoy every minute of this Seminar and wish you every success in our work together.