Forum: General Assembly 3

Issue: The question of protecting World Heritage Sites against new and emerging threats

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Introduction

The global need that seeks an understanding of protection and safeguarding of its heritage has come with conventions, recommendations and declarations all in the name of conservation of the world's diversity. Amidst all the efforts in place for heritage conservation, the baseline still remains the threats: both new and emerging.

The threats therefore require that a body should streamline all these efforts to safeguard the world heritage. The UN, therefore, is a body and an institution meant to safeguard international security and peace (Centre, 2016). From the context, it means that World heritage's security duly becomes a duty of the UN. Under the UN, we find the UNESCO, a body developed to set standards for protecting the world's heritage. The question of protecting the world's existing heritage seeks to firstly recognize that the existing world heritage faces constant threat from both cultural and natural sites. The research, therefore, seeks to focus entirely on the various degrees of challenges and the state of conservation of these sites.

Definition of key terms

World Heritage Centers

Centers considered as custodians of historical and even information on culture of a place and its people.

World Heritage Convention

The convention forms a globally acclaimed legal instrument for conservation of the world heritage sites.

World Heritage Committee

This is a committee that deliberates on issues to do with conservation of the world heritage sites.

The 4 C's

They refer to a summary of four key questions adopted in Bucharest Conference to address the new and emerging threats to world heritage sites.

Conservation

Use of techniques, instruments that preserve or protect resources, places where in such a case become the heritage sites.

Capacity-Building

This is the preparation for nominating of properties to the heritage list. It involves understanding and complete implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

Credibility

The ability to become a trusted body through acknowledgment of diversity of heritage

Communication
Ability to effectively disseminate information, through creation of awareness on matters pertaining to new and emerging threats in heritage conservation

UNESCO

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization

Cultural Heritage

A way of life that describes the various diverse achievements of a place or a group of people

New threats

Refer to various risks and dangers that appear for the first time and can affect the existence of a heritage site.

Emerging threats

Refer to the various risks and dangers that come up unknowingly and can affect the existence of a heritage site.

World heritage legal instruments

They refer to the laws and policies that govern the operation of the world heritage centers.

Background Information

The protection of world heritage sites against new and emerging threats comes against a backdrop of negligence and poor policy-making resulting from the various conventions in place. The 30th anniversary celebrated by World Heritage Committee in 2002, hall marked the start of major challenges that were to rock the committee in fulfilling its mandate of conserving the heritage. With the declaration made at Budapest convention concerning World Heritage, four goals that got coined namely *Credibility, Conservation, Capacity-Building and Communication* necessitated the establishment of a frame work on which conservation matters could be adequately addressed (Heritage Foundation, 2011). The four major challenges that presented themselves after the convention included: ensuring an adequate representation precisely for all manner of natural and cultural sites, promoting an overall effective conservation, an appraisal of human management skills that aim at conservation and lastly furnishing the public with relevant information on achievements and various challenges likely to be faced. A guiding light to the background information therefore the anticipated challenges outlined important strategic directions that got their foundation from the previous relationships that indeed

constituted UNESCO as an organization that forms the backbone of World Heritage Convention.

Key issues

Key issues surrounding the new and emerging threats to the world heritage, include Impact of the World Heritage Convention. It becomes impossible to actually evaluate the effectiveness and even the intensity of the risks that are potentially life-threatening to the heritage sites. The apparent truth becomes evident that WHC, achieved a great deal of landmarks all through the years of affirmative action taken for conservation of heritage. Impact of the world heritage convention ideally forms a key issue herein as it is demonstrated by 183 members states out of the total 191 current member states (Meskell, 2014). From the convention, do wed find a very important message relayed and shared across all the member states that indeed there is dire need to take control of the new and emerging threats to the natural heritage. The impact of the WHC therefore postulates the relevant policies and institutions in place to ensure that both natural and cultural heritage are conserved for the current and even the future generation.

The critical role that WHC plays in keeping the heritage of globe intact can never be underestimated. It is the only legal and an international tool that the UNESCO as an organization has instituted to ensure that efforts to conserve the natural heritage do not go in vain. It has continued to play a 'keystone' role that encompasses both the natural and cultural heritage. With the assistance of UNESCO, it is therefore to acknowledge WHC as a body that ensures that co-ordination of activities between environmental agreements and multi-cultural entities to actualize or foster a good long-lasting relationship between the UN specialized agencies such as UNEP, UNESCO, UNDP and UNFA, that all collaborate to implement a heritage conservation measures around the globe.

Another key issue is the critical role that WHC has in mobilization of efforts to ensure that Millennium Development Goals (MDG) equally play a critical role in ensuring that

environmental stability and sustainability become promoted to consequently ensure that the emerging threats to world heritage, hit a snarl.

It seeks to give more information, mostly report-based that gives an account of the predictions, and the various ways of managing the serious impacts or effects of climate change. In most cases it also seeks to outline the various strategies that aid the State Parties to make sure implementation of appropriate responses found in management. World heritage become vulnerable to destruction mostly due to the effect of the rise of ocean temperatures and acidification effect that tends to kill marine life (Nmun.org, 2016). Another measure of these threats results from an increase in the atmospheric temperatures that subsequently lead to the global melting of glaciers. When World Heritage Convention, have acknowledged the fact that climate change indeed poses a great threat to the OUV that is the Outstanding Universal Values of a majority of world heritage sites. It becomes prudent that the WHC addresses issues such as periodic reporting, nominations and reactive monitoring

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

World Heritage Committee took charge of the conservation efforts for the heritage sites in the entire globe. Their views became actively expressed in a draft plan, where they advocated:

    i.   Exploration of possibilities to pilot projects that relate between sustainable development and

    ii.   Conservation of the heritage sites

This includes the reporting after investigations, roles that convention has in promoting a sustainable development. They also held the view that the inventory of actions under the convention could only relate sustainable development that became up to date and such could be passed on to the next students.

The major parties that have greatly contributed to the protection of these world heritage sites include Spain, France, China, India and Italy. These are the member states in the protection of World heritage sites have been identified o be the major in safeguarding many of their sites. Although some of the countries such as Egypt had shown some interest in protecting their heritage sites, there are barriers that have resulted in their failure to maintain the sites. The above named states are well recognized for the large number of sites that they have constantly protected successfully.

The views of China highlighted that different species of both animals and trees are becoming extinct, and that is why governments have to put some stringent measures to curtail such kind of activities that are taking place for selfish gain without considering factors to deal with ecology. India's suggestion was based on the sole role of the governments to form the SERVER to help in monitoring the operations in the heritage sites. Nonetheless, clear modus operandi has been set to ensure that illegal poaching does not take place in wildlife sector; cultural sites and historical sites are not demolished. On the ecological point of view, all animals, plants and other species of organisms are very important in balancing the ecology of the earth. If one species becomes totally extinct, there will be far much reaching negative implications, which are going to emerge. The SERVER has also improved on their surveillance in the heritage sites. They have deployed a good number of security personnel to keep off the intruders who might wish to go and interfere with the heritage. Nonetheless, most of the heritage sites are under the protection of the Government. They are manned by the Government to ensure that no third party will come about to interfere with their sites and their territorial influence. Spain offered to commission its environmental organizations to sensitize the citizens on the importance of protecting their environment and the need to conserve it for posterity to come and see some rare species that are almost becoming extinct. Studies are carried out periodically to take the statistics of animals and species around so that their populations are established avoid its extinction.

Timelines, Treaties and Events

Consequently, there are some conferences that were formed to engineer the signing of treaties that have so far been seen to have played a major role in the protection of the places of cultural and physical importance to the nation. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization have seen the heritage sites being protected. Its structure is composed of twenty-one member states elected to the General Assembly. It has enacted some treaties, which are very protective towards the heritage, and cultural artifacts that can be used for fields of scientific studies. The protection of heritage sites was an ideology that was adopted on November 16th nineteen seventy-two. The world heritage convention was formed in 1972 with the aim of protecting world heritage sites. Right from the Venice chapter in 1964, we found desperate efforts put in place to ensure conservation of Heritage centers becoming a key element of consideration. In the year, a document that spelt the fundamental principles of conservation and restoration of architectural heritage came in (Nmun.org, 2016). It is through the International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites, that the World Heritage Convention spelt its ethical guidelines. From the document, the member state agreed to conform to the provisions of the document that advocated for the conservation of the existing monuments and other cultural heritage sites as a means to appreciate olden day architecture. The convention later paved way for a key proposal that later resolved to levying a tourist tax of (US $3 per tourist). Regardless of the resistance it met, it helped in giving the existing monuments and heritage centers some facelift.

The 1972 Stockholm conference only became a proposal to discuss the sudden wake of emerging threats to conservation of world heritage sites. The emerging threats became a subject of lengthy discussions and from the conference, various actions formed part of the resolutions for the conference. One of the key adoptions or resolutions became adoption of legal instruments that could chart a way forward on the limits to which the convention became empowered to operate. Through the UNESCO conference, they

resolved to work in groups that discussed a range of issues from universal values of the heritage sites, and defining the categories of heritage that need to be conserved (Nmun.org, 2016). The time lines for the establishment of an equitable equilibrium that operate between culture and nature formed a part of discussion that indeed triggered the next conference in 1992. At the conference, deliberations and consequent resolutions became established to the effect that a convention on world heritage should be an initiative of the General Conference of the UNESCO. All the 75 delegates affirmed to support the move that indeed defined the levels of conservations as far as the World Heritage Sites became concerned. The 1972 conference also saw the signing of treaties that merely stressed on the need to conserve not only works of greater values but also more modest and has acquired natural or cultural value. The document that binds the treaty to the member states puts it that conservation and protection of world heritage should have consideration as one of the vital aspects in plans that concern regional development. In the treaty, we also find that the conventions should ensure that the general public should be associated with measures that promote protection and conservation of their heritage.

The convention recognizes how people interact with nature and the need to balance the two. The major significant feature of this convention is that it links together in one document the concepts of nature conservation and the preservation of cultural properties. The convention outlines the duties of state parties in identifying a potential site and their responsibilities in preserving them. Once a country signs it, it agrees not only to preserve the world heritage sites located within its boundaries but also its national heritage. The convention further defines how the world heritage funds are to be managed and under what circumstances the international financial assistance may be provided.

In addition, the convention stipulates the responsibilities of States parties to report on a regular basis to the world heritage committee on the conditions of conservation of their

world heritage properties. The reports are important to the work of the committee as they enable it to evaluate on the conditions of their sites, decide on specific needs and resolve the recurrent problems. The convention encourages the state parties to enlighten the public on the world heritage properties and enhance their protection through educating them and giving more information on heritage.

The idea of creating an international movement to protect heritage emerged after World War II. The convention developed from the merging of two separate movements: the first one was focused on preserving of cultural sites while the second one was dealing with the conservation of nature. Preserving cultural heritage: the event that initiated the international concern was the construction of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt in 1964. This dam would have flooded the valley that contained the Abu Simbel temples. On the other hand, the idea of linking the protection of cultural and natural heritage was initially started in the USA.

A conference in the white house called for a world heritage trust. This trust was to be responsible for the international cooperation to protect the natural heritage. By understanding heritage to be both natural and cultural, the convention tells us how we interact with nature and why we should preserve the two.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts

Previous attempts to protect the heritage sites was not realizable as all the major member states were not involved in the idea and the initial organization presumably comprised of only a few countries a factor that hindered its longevity and perpetual activities. These shortcomings were an eye opener to the organization that had to come with long term solutions that are applicable and fundamental in the safety of heritage

sites. IUCN senior management should evaluate how best the world heritage convention can determine on the conservation of nature and in the communication aspect of the civil society. The World Heritage Programme should stimulate dialogue with State Parties concerning approach to economic development in the natural World Heritage sites with the aim of increasing or maintaining the relevance of both the Programme and the Convention. The parties involved in the convention should agree on how funds should be distributed in regards to world heritage sites

If the convention has still to remain effective, the parties should be united, and disagreements should be solved with immediate effect. The threats that face these sites should be dealt with as a whole. To add on that, Parties should be willing to put more effort in the preservation of heritage. Strict rules have been put in place to ensure that the culprits pay the price. For example, poaching is a serious crime and those that will be involved will face the law.

All, this time, there has been a critical challenge to protect these heritage sites which now appear to portray the past life to compare it with the current one. In addition, the heritage sites face the problem of concentration since many people ignore the direct contribution they may have to them. Therefore, regarding all these challenges there should be unison in trying to identify what measures have to be taken in safeguarding these world sites. It would also be necessary to note how we add value by protecting these sites. In doing so, we will be respecting our past people and what they did by practice. Evaluation of the previous attempts restricts us to the study of the various efforts put in place previously to actualize the need for heritage conservation. One of the key aspects for the evaluation includes the inclusion of a legal instrument. The instrument comes in handy due to the fact that some heritage sites existing have exceptional and universal importance to humanity. In some cases, it has involved actual chasing away of people who try to build homes or sacred areas in the heritage sites (Rhoades, 2012). The evaluation that is based on the legal instruments ascertains the previous laws that existed in the convention and how they affected the whole operations

of the conventions. The various attempts through the convention find their backing in the Operational Guidelines for Implementation of Global Heritage Convention.

Similarly in trying to note the value of such sites, I wish to notify some bodies that are entrusted in fighting for these heritage sites. The bodies are two: the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The other one is the International Council on Monuments and Sites. To begin with, the former works in various parts of the world. These areas are inclusive of regions where these world sites are located. In perfecting its work, UNESCO creates forums for dialogue among citizens of various countries, cultures, and its people. Consequently, the body prevents damages to cultural sites. ICOMOS, on the other hand, is one body that involves individual experts. These experts include architects, archeologists, and historians. It is these experts that meet to restore effectively heritage sites and prevent any damage.

In most recent times the relevant authorities have struggled in making sure that world heritages are protected. In this view, therefore, there has been an evaluation of previous attempts to provide solutions. For instance in the year 1964, UNESCO created a worldwide campaign to begin to preserve the world heritage sites. UNESCO also fought to draft a treaty with the International Council on Monuments and Sites (Timothy et al., pg 250).

The world heritage sites are the solutions that the relevant bodies have tried to push for. These solutions are making it easier to safeguard these sites. It is also important to note the causes of these threats to heritage sites are natural and human. In other words, natural causes such as those of earthquakes cannot be avoided, but at least, they can find solutions. Other human causes, however, can be catered for and thus appropriately safeguard these sites.

Notably, man has destroyed world heritage sites. This usually happens during wars. One similar example on this is the Preah Vehear temple, which was destroyed during the Cambodian border fight. This was in the year 2011. The main target was the soldier to defeat enemies. Pertaining this cause, therefore, UNESCO and ICOMOS have sent troops to stop these damages. On the same note, peace keeping forces have been sent

to prevent wars, which result in damaging these heritage sites. The second human cause of chemicals resulting from fumes from industries is another challenge to be considered (Huggins et al., pg 121). About this, it has been advised to the people to use environmentally friendly chemicals, which will not make heritage sites which have stood for long to collide. As of 2014, many members have joined the campaign and the number has risen to 191 member states.

Solutions to the new and emerging threats to our world heritage can be looked into as a way to balance benefits and duties. By the solution we mean that inscription of world heritage list can enable securing of both technical and financial assistance that would go a long way to improve the conservation measures put in place through the World Heritage Convention.

In another instance, increased research on the various threats posed through globalization issues would offer better solutions to the emerging threats. Broad research on the new and emerging threats would increase knowledge on how to adapt new measures including technology to conserve the heritage sites.

Conclusion

One evident aspect of the various implementations through the different conventions over the years becomes the World Heritage Convention, whose interpretation changed through a large extent over time (Patterson, 2012). The convention in its worth, provides a frame work and international standards that seek to preserve and develop approaches, methodologies and relevant tools for use in world heritage conservation.

The research should therefore be an eye opener to various institutions of higher learning, research institutes that mainly deal with social entities. They need to wholly participate in the global quest for promoting best practices in protecting resources found in our heritage. Regardless of the persistent threats that our global heritage face, our institutions should remain vigilant in promoting best practices over the areas and also

offering solutions to the threats encountered(worldarch.org, 2016). Publications should also focus much on additive value to the existing knowledge on the need to conserve our heritage that constantly faces both internal and external threats.

Over the same, there is also a proposal to come up with ways to repair world heritage sites. In conclusion, we can say that general information should be relayed to the public concerning our cultural and natural heritage. If we create awareness, then the people will understand the importance of nature and how we interact with it. In this way, threats like poaching will be eliminated completely as the public will be informed on the heritage sites.

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