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### REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

#### JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

#### Contribution of the United Nations system to conservation and management of cultural and natural heritage in Asia and the Pacific

##### Addendum

##### Comments of the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the Economic and Social Council his comments on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Contribution of the United Nations system to conservation and management of cultural and natural heritage in Asia and the Pacific" (JIU/REP/83/10).

\* E/1984/100.

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled "Contribution of the United Nations system to conservation and management of cultural and natural heritage in Asia and the Pacific" follows upon previous reports by the JIU on the same subject in Africa and Latin America and completes their review of the conservation and management of cultural and natural heritage in developing countries.

2. These reports were prepared following the many conferences, conventions, resolutions and declarations which have conferred on the United Nations system a mandate to be actively involved in promoting improved conservation and management of the natural and cultural heritage of mankind and, more specifically, to support the efforts of developing countries in this field.

3. This mandate, in turn, reflects the international recognition of the need for more effective conservation and management measures and for the promotion of environmentally sound and ecologically sustainable processes of development.

4. The promotional efforts in which the United Nations system has played a leading role include: the UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB), launched in 1970; the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, which led to the establishment of UNEP; the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (1971); the World Heritage Convention (1972); the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (1973); the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) launched in 1980; and the World Charter for Nature, adopted in 1982 by the General Assembly in resolution 37/7 of 28 October 1982.

5. Other world conferences sponsored by the United Nations system over the past several years directly or indirectly related to this subject include: the United Nations World Population Conference, 1974 (Bucharest); the World Conference on Human Settlements (Vancouver, 1976); the United Nations Conference on Desertification (Nairobi, 1977); the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (Rome, FAO, 1979); the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy (Nairobi, 1981); the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mexico, 1982); as well as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, signed at Montego Bay, Jamaica, on 10 December 1982.

6. In addition, the General Assembly has adopted a series of resolutions focusing international attention on environmental protection and conservation issues. General Assembly resolution 3345 (XXIX) of 17 December 1974 called for co-ordinated and multi-disciplinary research work aimed at synthesizing, integrating and advancing existing knowledge on the relationships between population, resources, environment and development in order to assist Member States, particularly the developing countries, to seek solutions to the complex and multi-dimensional problems in this field. In General Assembly resolution 35/74 of 5 December 1980 on international co-operation in the field of environment, the Assembly welcomed the launching, in March 1980, of the World Conservation Strategy and urged all

Governments and international organizations to take it into account in developing their policies and programmes. Those concerns were also reaffirmed in the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 35/56).

7. Furthermore, a joint "Declaration of Environmental Policies and Procedures Relating to Economic Development" was signed in New York in February 1980 by the World Bank and the Regional Development Banks, the Commission of the European Communities, the Organization of American States, UNDP and UNEP, which reaffirms, *inter alia*, their support for the principles and recommendations of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment.
8. The Secretary-General welcomes the JIU report, which is a comprehensive and useful survey of actions by the United Nations system, as well as of bilateral and non-governmental activities to support efforts of countries in the Asia and Pacific region to protect and manage human environment, including cultural and natural heritage. He has particularly noted the Inspectors' positive assessment and commendation of ESCAP, UNEP and other organizations of the United Nations system for the role and contributions in this area. He believes that the report will be very useful for follow-up activities to the above-mentioned conferences, conventions, resolutions and programmes, and that its various observations will assist in further improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the contributions of the United Nations system in the Asia and Pacific region in the specific areas reviewed.

## II. GENERAL COMMENTS

9. It is clear from the report that the Governments of the region are committed to the proper husbandry of cultural and natural heritage resources and the Secretary-General finds their efforts in this endeavour highly commendable. He remains concerned, however, that, owing to the multifaceted magnitude of national development challenges, together with the relative shortage of financial resources, many of those countries will continue to face obstacles to an effective and efficient management of their heritage resources unless sufficient international support can be sustained.
10. In this connection, the Secretary-General is pleased to note that United Nations system co-operation has played a role in attracting support from bilateral sources and international non-governmental organizations. In its wide-ranging activities, dating back to 1978, ESCAP has placed special emphasis on attracting extrabudgetary funding to implement its environment programmes which have, as a result, achieved a high implementation ratio. The recently established UNEP clearing-house facility will likewise assist in the preparation of specific programmes for the development and implementation of national conservation strategies and facilitate the flow of additional resources needed to meet the most serious environmental problems of developing countries in an integrated and comprehensive manner.

11. The Secretary-General agrees with the Inspectors that it would be desirable for Governments of the region to embody various policy and legal provisions in a comprehensive long-term national conservation strategy, particularly since heritage conservation problems are cross-sectoral and can only be effectively tackled through a comprehensive integrated approach (paras. 34-37).

12. The Secretary-General is pleased to report that, since the World Conservation Strategy was launched in 1980, more than 30 countries, including those in the Asia and Pacific region, have begun work on a national conservation strategy and that, under the auspices of UNEP and within the framework of co-operation among the members of the Ecosystem Conservation Group (ECG), expert missions have been sent to a number of countries, at their request, which have resulted in a series of recommendations and plans of action for implementing the World Conservation Strategy.

13. The Secretary-General shares the concern of the Inspectors regarding the need for policy co-ordination and consistency among Member States (para. 38) and, while recognizing the marked diversity of country and subregional situations, wishes to emphasize the advantage for Governments of the region to harmonize national conservation policy objectives with subregional and regional programmes, as well as with provisions of relevant multilateral conventions, which represent an internationally accepted framework for designing and implementing national and subregional conservation measures and for fostering co-operation among Member States in areas relevant to their conservation objectives.

14. In this connection, the Secretary-General wishes to emphasize the progress being made by FAO, UNEP and UNESCO, in co-operation with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), in assisting Governments in the implementation of effective international and regional measures for the conservation of wild animals and plants and their habitats through international and national legislation and administration. International conservation conventions are instruments of great potential and importance for wildlife and their habitats and the failure of law enforcement poses a serious hazard for them. The future implementation of global and regional conservation conventions will greatly contribute towards maintaining a balance between the interests of conservation and the long-term requirements of national wildlife utilization and development.

15. The Secretary-General joins the Inspectors in commending the catalytic and co-ordinating activities undertaken by UNEP (paras. 82 and 88). He has also been informed that, guided by the framework for national and subnational conservation strategies outlined in the World Conservation Strategy, UNEP has convened meetings of the ECG members to adopt a common approach and methodology and to co-ordinate efforts for the implementation of the Strategy at the national level. The ECG, which provides a forum for an exchange of information on the status of preparation of national conservation strategies, has recommended that national strategies should be comprehensive and should integrate conservation with development taking into consideration cultural dimensions.

16. The Secretary-General fully agrees with the importance placed on the training of personnel for the management of the natural and cultural heritage (para. 51), especially in developing countries where conservation has often been constrained by the paucity of adequately trained personnel. He is confident that the United Nations agencies concerned are giving due attention to providing needed assistance in that area. This is, for example, reflected in objectives of UNEP in the system-wide medium-term environment programme for 1984-1989. Furthermore, as has been noted, in general, environmental and other conservation activities supported by United Nations agencies have, inter alia, been directed to the strengthening of Governments' institutional machinery for heritage conservation and management (para. 44).

17. The Secretary-General has examined with particular interest chapter IV of the report, which assesses the contribution and performance of the United Nations system, particularly that of UNDP, UNEP, ESCAP, FAO and UNESCO, and annex II, which provides a comprehensive list of activities undertaken by the United Nations system. He is pleased to note that, although the financial inputs of the United Nations agencies may seem relatively small compared to overall needs, their advisory, catalytic and promotional role has had significant results.

18. The Secretary-General has similarly taken note of the substantial role of other organizations of the United Nations system, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, bilateral donors and non-governmental organizations (paras. 123-127). In this connection, the Secretary-General wishes to record in particular the contributions of UNCHS and UNIDO, the former with regard to promotion of activities aimed at the preservation, improvement, renewal, rehabilitation and restoration of existing settlements and areas of social and cultural fabric, and the latter with respect to the solution of environmental problems, particularly the control of water and air pollution resulting from industrial activity.

19. Concerning the United Nations system co-operation, JIU correctly points out that effective co-ordination and integration of United Nations system activities in the region would reduce inter-agency co-ordination demands on Governments and promote an intersectoral and cohesive approach in the planning and execution of cultural and natural heritage projects (para. 45). This is to an extent already being achieved within the framework of the UNDP country programming process and the Secretary-General is confident that this will be supported on a continuing basis by the United Nations resident co-ordinators, whose responsibilities include co-ordination of operational activities for development by the United Nations system at the country level.

### III. COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Recommendation 1

20. The Secretary-General fully concurs with the recommendation regarding the need to encourage and support Governments of the region to formulate national long-term conservation strategies. The ministerial-level conference on environment in Asia, to be convened by ESCAP in February 1985, will, no doubt, contribute to that

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effort. While the World Conservation Strategy cited here only relates to the conservation of natural resources, such long-term strategies should also address cultural heritage concerns so as to ensure the sustained management and utilization of both types of heritage resources.

Recommendation 2

21. The Secretary-General supports this recommendation, which could also include UNEP in view of the agency's involvement in the protection of wildlife and national parks through its support to the various national and subregional environment programmes.

Recommendation 3

22. The Secretary-General believes that UNESCO could also be included in this recommendation, since it is involved in training and inputs can be made to wildlife training from the regular programme of UNESCO and the World Heritage Fund.

23. While supporting the recommendation to assist existing wildlife training centres to develop regional and subregional training programmes and capabilities, the Secretary-General would also urge that consideration be given to the development of networks linking those centres which could serve the region as a whole.

24. The Secretary-General fully concurs with the need for more inter-country co-operation in the framework of TCDC both within the region and with developing countries in other regions.

Recommendation 4

25. The Secretary-General supports this recommendation, which he has been informed is fully in line with the programme of UNESCO.

Recommendation 5

26. The Secretary-General fully supports the recommendation that the concerned United Nations agencies should encourage countries of the region to increase their participation in collective international actions aimed at the conservation and management of heritage, especially through adherence to relevant multilateral conventions.