Armed conflict and war, earthquakes and other natural disasters, pollution, poaching, uncontrolled urbanization and unchecked tourist development pose major problems to World Heritage sites. These can threaten the very characteristics for which a site was originally inscribed on the World Heritage List. Dangers can be ‘ascertained’, referring to specific and proven imminent threats, or ‘potential’, when a property is faced with threats which could have negative effects on its World Heritage values.

Under the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the World Heritage Committee can inscribe on the List of World Heritage in Danger properties whose protection requires ‘major operations (…) and for which assistance has been requested’.

As of 2007, thirty among the 851 World Heritage properties were inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

Inscribing a site on the List of World Heritage in Danger allows the World Heritage Committee to allocate immediate assistance from the World Heritage Fund to the endangered property. It also alerts the international community to these situations in the hope that it can join efforts to save these endangered sites. The listing of a site as World Heritage in Danger allows the conservation community to respond to specific preservation needs in an efficient manner. Indeed, the mere prospect of inscribing a site on this List often proves to be effective, and can incite rapid conservation action.

Inscription of a site on the List of World Heritage in Danger requires the World Heritage Committee to develop and adopt, in consultation with the State Party concerned, a programme for corrective measures, and subsequently to monitor the situation of the site. All efforts must be made to restore the site’s values in order to enable its removal from the List of World Heritage in Danger as soon as possible.

Inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger is not perceived in the same way by all parties concerned. Some countries apply for the inscription of a site to focus international attention on its problems and to obtain expert assistance in solving them. Others however, wish to avoid an inscription, which they perceive as a dishonour. The listing of a site as World Heritage in Danger should in any case not be considered as a sanction, but as a system established to respond to specific conservation needs in an efficient manner.

If a site loses the characteristics which determined its inscription on the World Heritage List, the World Heritage Committee may decide to delete the property from both the List of World Heritage in Danger and the World Heritage List.

Some illustrative cases of sites inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger

City of Bam in the Islamic Republic of Iran  The ancient Citadel and surrounding cultural landscape of the Iranian city of Bam, where 26,000 people lost their lives in the earthquake of December 2003, was simultaneously inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2004. Important international efforts are mobilized to salvage the cultural heritage of this devastated city.

Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan  This cultural landscape was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2003 simultaneously with its inscription on the World Heritage List. The property is in a fragile state of conservation considering that it has suffered from abandonment, military action and dynamite explosions. Parts of the site are inaccessible due to the presence of antipersonnel mines. UNESCO, at the request of the Afghan Government, coordinates all international efforts to safeguard and enhance Afghanistan’s cultural heritage, notably in Bamiyan.
**List of World Heritage in Danger**

**Walled City of Baku in Azerbaijan** Representing an outstanding and rare example of medieval architecture at the crossroad of the many different cultures in the region, the Walled City of Baku sustained significant damage during the earthquake of November 2000 and has been increasingly affected by the pressure of urban development, the absence of conservation policies and by questionable restoration efforts. For these reasons it was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2003. Since then, UNESCO has been working with the State Party and the Advisory Bodies to set up a plan of action to address the conservation issues as well as with stakeholders to coordinate the implementation of safeguarding measures.

**The Galápagos Islands in Ecuador** The over 100 islands and surrounding marine reserve of this archipelago in the Pacific Ocean have been called a unique living showcase of biological evolution. But threats posed by invasive species, growing tourism and immigration led to the site's inscription on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2007. A surge in tourism in the past decade has fuelled a growth in continental and inter-island traffic which has led to the introduction and dispersal of more invasive species. Other dangers are represented by excessive fishing, water pollution and inadequate waste management. While the State Party has vigorously supported the establishment of inspection and quarantine systems in an effort to minimize the introduction of alien species, the structures in place are not yet robust enough to deal with the challenges.

**Historic Town of Zabid in Yemen** The outstanding archaeological and historical heritage of Zabid has seriously deteriorated in recent years. Indeed, 40% of its original houses have been replaced by concrete buildings. In 2000, at the request of the State Party, the Historic Town of Zabid was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger. UNESCO is helping the local authorities to develop an urban conservation plan and to adopt a strategic approach for the preservation of this World Heritage site.

**Rice Terraces of the Cordilleras in the Philippines** This site was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2001 because parts of the irrigation system were being neglected due to an exodus of local inhabitants. The heritage landscape was also threatened by irrigation development. Even though awareness of the importance of cultural practices for Ifugao identity is high, the transfer of knowledge and skills for traditional rice farming and maintenance of rice terraces is gradually being lost.

**National Parks of Garamba, Kahuzi-Biega, Salonga, Virunga and the Okapi Wildlife Reserve in the Democratic Republic of the Congo** Since 1994, all five World Heritage sites of the DRC have been inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger following the start, in the mid-1990s, of war and conflict in the Great Lakes region. The conflict led to a massive exodus of Rwandan refugees, a withdrawal of military and rebel positions to the parks and an increase in poaching. In 1999 the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation launched an appeal to the international community for conservation in the DRC. Shortly afterward, UNESCO initiated, along with several international conservation NGOs, an international campaign to protect the habitat of endangered species such as the mountain gorilla and the northern white rhino. In 2000 a partnership programme for World Heritage conservation in the DRC was launched with support from the UN Foundation and Belgium. The consolidation phase of the programme began in 2004 with support from the UN Foundation, Italy, Belgium and the European Union.

**How to help**

The States Parties to the *Convention* should inform the Committee as soon as possible about threats to their sites. On the other hand, private individuals, non-governmental organizations, or other groups may also draw the Committee’s attention to existing threats. If the alert is justified and the problem serious enough, the Committee may consider including the site on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

To inform the World Heritage Committee about threats to sites, you may contact the Committee’s Secretariat at:

**UNESCO World Heritage Centre**
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75352 Paris 07 SP, France
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Fax: 33 (0) 1 45 68 55 70
E-mail: wh-info@unesco.org