

## World Heritage Convention

The World Heritage Convention is an important global conservation instrument. Such international treaties and conventions are very important for the [UPSC exam](#). In this article, you can read all about the World Heritage Convention 1972.

### What is the World Heritage Convention?

The World Heritage Convention, more accurately the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, was adopted in 1972 at the [UNESCO](#) General Conference in Paris, France.

- It came into force in 1975. **India ratified the convention in 1977.**
- The convention aims to promote cooperation among countries to protect heritage all over the world that is of such outstanding universal value that its conservation is important for current and future generations.
- Currently, there are **194 State Parties** to the convention.
  - State Parties identify and nominate properties located in their countries to be considered for inscription on the **World Heritage List**.
  - They agree to protect, preserve and conserve the heritage properties in their national territories.
  - They also have to present how they preserve the properties, provide a management plan for the upkeep of the inscribed properties and ensure to report periodically on their conditions.
  - State Parties agree to:
    - Adopt a general policy that aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programs.
    - Undertake appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary for the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and rehabilitation of this heritage.
    - Refrain from 'any deliberate measures which might damage, directly or indirectly, the cultural and natural heritage' of other Parties to the Convention, and to help other Parties in the identification and protection of their properties.
- The World Heritage Convention links together in a single document the concepts of **nature conservation and the preservation of cultural properties**.
- The convention acknowledges the manner in which people interact with nature and the basic need to maintain the balance between nature and humanity.

## World Heritage Committee

The World Heritage Committee administers the World Heritage Convention. It is supported by UNESCO World Heritage Centre, the secretariat for the Convention, and three technical advisory bodies to the Committee: [IUCN](#), ICOMOS, ICCROM.

The committee meets annually. It comprises 21 members who are elected from among the State Parties. They are generally elected for a period of six years (State Parties voluntarily choose to reduce their terms to four years). The functions of the World Heritage Committee are as follows:

1. Take decisions on adding new properties to the World Heritage List.
2. Discuss all matters relating to the Convention's implementation.
3. Consider the various requests received for international assistance.
4. Advise State Parties on how they can satisfy their obligations under the Convention to protect the properties on the list.
5. Administer the World Heritage Fund.

The Committee is the final authority on whether sites/properties nominated by the national governments would be inscribed on the World Heritage List or not. On matters of nature, the IUCN is its advisory body.

### World Heritage Fund

Countries that have ratified the World Heritage Convention can get access to the World Heritage Fund to help them in identifying, preserving and protecting heritage sites. The Fund was established in 1977. The World Heritage Fund amounts to 5.6 million dollars for the biennium 2020-2021, plus 0.4 million dollars for emergency assistance. The Fund is composed of assessed contributions of State Parties and voluntary contributions from governments, foundations, the public, etc.

## World Heritage Sites

World Heritage Sites are places of distinctive cultural or physical importance which are considered of outstanding value to humanity. It may be a building, a city, a complex, a desert, a forest, an island, a lake, a monument, or a mountain.

Read about the Indian sites on the [UNESCO World Heritage Sites](#) in the link.

### How does the convention define 'cultural heritage'?

The following are considered cultural heritage:

- Monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- Groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

- Sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

#### **How does the convention define 'natural heritage'?**

The following are considered natural heritage:

- Natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;
- Geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;
- Natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.

Currently, there are 1121 properties on the List.