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UNESCO to consider 27 new sites for World Heritage List



Pitons Management Area in St. Lucia which was included on the World Heritage List in 2004

23 June 2009 – The annual gathering of the committee that examines requests for inclusion on the World Heritage List is underway in Spain, with 27 new sites up for consideration, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced today.

World Heritage Committee members will evaluate the condition of scores of locations already on UNESCO's List, as well as the nominations for new additions of cultural and natural sites during its annual session, which opened in Seville yesterday.

“The 177 reports on the state of conservation of sites that will be submitted to your review over the week illustrate the extent of the challenges facing the Committee,” UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura said in his opening address to the nine-day meeting.

Among the challenges facing the Committee highlighted by Mr. Matsuura was ensuring that all States Parties – soon to number 187 – were represented on the World Heritage List, to improve geographical balance and correct the imbalance between the number of cultural and natural sites. Currently there are 878 sites of “outstanding universal value” in 145 countries inscribed on the World Heritage List, including 679 cultural, 174 natural and 25 mixed properties.

Mr. Matsuura also took stock of developments in his agency's work in protecting World Heritage sites, since he chaired the Committee in 1998 in Kyoto, Japan, and as head of UNESCO, a post he will leave at the end of his term in November.

“Over the last ten years, I have had great satisfaction from observing the achievements of the Committee, as well as the growing challenges for the States Parties in protecting World Heritage,” said Mr. Matsuura.

He also paid tribute to “the achievements of UNESCO in responding to the growing concerns of national and local authorities, site managers, research institutes, development agencies, the media and the general public.”

The World Heritage Committee, chaired by María Jesús San Segundo, Spain's Ambassador to UNESCO, is slated to close next Tuesday, 30 June.

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