



News Release Communiqué

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CANADA REPORTS ON ITS IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

OTTAWA, ONTARIO, July 5, 2005 – The Honourable Stéphane Dion, Minister of the Environment and Minister responsible for Parks Canada, announced today that Canada will report on how it is implementing the World Heritage Convention and present its first periodic report to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Durban, South Africa, July 10-17, 2005.

In addition to describing the implementation of the Convention in Canada, the periodic report includes a joint report, developed cooperatively with the United States, on the application of the World Heritage Convention in North America. It also includes an overview of the state of conservation of Canada's 13 World Heritage Sites.

"World Heritage Sites are national and international treasures cherished by Canadians and visitors from around the world," said Minister Dion. "From the Historic District of Quebec to the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks, they help Canadians to connect with parts of their heritage that have global importance and must be protected. This reporting exercise has brought positive results, and will support Canada's efforts to further protect and present these sites of outstanding universal value."

The periodic report highlights Canada's strong professional and technical capacity to manage World Heritage Sites, along with its high standards for management plans, legislation, administration, and its high-quality visitor services. It acknowledges that local challenges, associated with residents living in the site or with development projects in the vicinity, as well as global challenges related to climate change or the long-range transport of pollutants, need to be address and that a range of solutions will be required. The report also indicates that local solutions can be found working through a cooperative process involving various government agencies, the private sector and civil society, while globally, international cooperation over the long-term has the highest potential to achieve results.

"Managing our World Heritage Sites in the context of shared responsibilities for natural and cultural heritage is an ongoing challenge," added Minister Dion. "Parks Canada was responsible for leading the development of Canada's periodic report. The process it used to prepare the report has allowed Canada to strengthen the existing network among World Heritage Site managers. My government is committed to making further efforts to reinforce this network and to work with the different levels of government and stakeholders to increase public awareness of Canada's World Heritage Sites."

Put in place in 1998 by the World Heritage Committee, the periodic reporting process provides guidelines to participating countries to help them assess the application of the World Heritage Convention, to evaluate if the world heritage values of the sites inscribed on the World Heritage List are being maintained over time, and to provide a mechanism for regional co-operation and the exchange of information between participating nations.

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The World Heritage Committee will review the Canadian periodic report during its meeting in South Africa and may develop recommendations for Canada in response to the report's conclusions.

The World Heritage Convention was adopted in 1972 by UNESCO. By joining the Convention, 180 countries have pledged to care for the cultural and natural heritage in their territory.

Through the World Heritage Convention, the legal authority and responsibilities for the individual World Heritage Sites remain with the site managers. The periodic reporting process established through the World Heritage Convention does not change this.

For full copies of the report and more information about World Heritage Sites in Canada, visit http://www.pc.gc.ca/progs/spm-whs/itm2-/index_e.asp.

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