



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

"International Workshop on Preliminary Assessment for World Heritage Nominations "

Format: Online Workshop: In-person Workshop: and Technical Follow-up Support

Online Workshop: 6-9 July 2026

In-person Workshop: 24-28 August 2026

Working languages: English, Portuguese and French

Organised by: African World Heritage Fund

In partnership with: Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and IUCN

Application deadline: 26 June 2026

1. Background

The African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) is an intergovernmental organisation established in 2006 by the African Union and UNESCO to support African States Parties in the effective implementation of the 1972 World Heritage Convention. In 2026, AWHF marks its 20th anniversary under the theme "Celebrating Two Decades of Sustainable Investment in Africa's Heritage", reaffirming its commitment to strengthening the identification, nomination, conservation, management and promotion of Africa's cultural and natural heritage of Outstanding Universal Value.

Since becoming a UNESCO Category 2 Centre in 2010, AWHF has provided technical assistance, capacity-building and upstream support to African States Parties in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention. As part of the World Heritage Nomination Capacity-Building Programme 2026–2027, AWHF is inviting African States Parties wishing to prepare and submit Preliminary Assessment requests to apply for technical support through an online workshop, an in-person workshop for selected participants, and technical follow-up support.

The Preliminary Assessment for World Heritage Listing is one of the components of the World Heritage Nomination Capacity-Building Programme. This component supports States Parties in assessing properties with potential Outstanding Universal Value and in developing Preliminary Assessment requests to determine their suitability for future nomination. In 2021, the World Heritage Committee approved the principle of a two-phase nomination process to improve the quality of nominations and strengthen dialogue between States Parties and the Advisory Bodies. Under this process, Preliminary Assessment constitutes the first phase and is defined in Paragraph 122 of the Operational Guidelines as a mandatory desk-based process for all sites that may be nominated to the World Heritage List, undertaken following a request by the relevant State Party or States Parties.

This process provides an opportunity for early dialogue with the Advisory Bodies before the preparation of a full nomination dossier. It allows States Parties to examine whether a site demonstrates realistic potential for Outstanding Universal Value, identify key issues at an early stage,

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improve the quality and credibility of future nominations, and avoid investing significant time and resources in nominations that may not be ready or feasible. As a process that builds on the Tentative List and upstream support, Preliminary Assessment requires States Parties to ensure that the concerned sites are already included on their national Tentative Lists before being advanced. Its outcome must be provided at least one year before a complete nomination file can be submitted and remains valid for a maximum period of five years.

The transition period for Preliminary Assessment began in 2023 and will end in 2027. Thereafter, it will become mandatory, meaning that from 2028 onwards only nominations with a Preliminary Assessment will be considered by the World Heritage Committee. The assessment is carried out jointly by ICOMOS and IUCN, as appropriate, as an independent desk review, including consultation with experts and without a mission to the site.

Through its previous capacity-building support on Preliminary Assessment, AWHF, in partnership with ICOMOS and IUCN, supported the development of 11 Preliminary Assessment requests in 2024 and 13 in 2025 across the Africa and Arab States regions. Building on this experience, the present support seeks to further strengthen the capacity of African States Parties to prepare Preliminary Assessment requests in an effective, technically sound and timely manner.

2. Objectives of the Preliminary Assessment Support

The overall objective of this support is to strengthen the capacity of African States Parties to prepare technically sound Preliminary Assessment requests in line with the World Heritage Convention and its Operational Guidelines.

The specific objectives are to:

- Familiarise heritage professionals from African States Parties with the Preliminary Assessment process and its role in the World Heritage nomination process;
- Strengthen participants' capacity to complete the Preliminary Assessment request template to the required technical standard;
- Support States Parties in assessing the potential of sites included on their Tentative Lists for future World Heritage nomination;
- Identify potential properties for entry into the Preliminary Assessment process and for early submission to the Advisory Bodies;
- Provide practical guidance on the identification and articulation of potential Outstanding Universal Value;
- Support the preparation and refinement of draft Preliminary Assessment requests;

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- Provide continued technical mentoring to participating professionals as they develop and refine their Preliminary Assessment requests;
- Strengthen dialogue between States Parties, AWHF, the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and IUCN at an early stage of the nomination process.

3. Format of the Support (Online Workshop, In-person Workshop and Technical Follow-up)

The Preliminary Assessment support will be delivered through three interrelated stages: an online workshop, an in-person workshop for selected participants, and technical follow-up support. The online workshop will take place from 6-9 July 2026 and will be delivered in English and French. It will bring together up to 50 heritage professionals from 30 African States Parties, with each State Party represented, where possible, by one expert in cultural heritage and one expert in natural heritage. The online workshop will introduce participating States Parties to the principles, structure and technical requirements of the Preliminary Assessment process. Following an overview of the World Heritage Convention and the main stages of the nomination process, the training will focus on the Preliminary Assessment Request Format, which will serve as the main reference framework throughout the workshop.

Participants will be expected to prepare and share relevant information or draft Preliminary Assessment documentation in advance, where available, and to present it during the workshop for discussion and technical guidance by the resource persons.

The online workshop will include:

- Background learning sessions and technical lectures on the World Heritage Convention, the Operational Guidelines, and the Preliminary Assessment process;
- Practical sessions on the structure and completion of the Preliminary Assessment Request Format;
- Technical guidance on the identification and presentation of potential Outstanding Universal Value;
- One-to-one technical and expert guidance on key issues related to the preparation of Preliminary Assessment requests, based on the specific needs of participating States Parties;
- Peer learning and exchange among participating States Parties;
- Guidance on the next steps towards the refinement and possible submission of Preliminary Assessment requests.

The in-person workshop will take place from 24 – 28 August 2026. Participation in the in-person workshop will be conditional upon successful completion of the online phase and the submission of

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draft Preliminary Assessment documentation or available supporting information. The in-person workshop will bring together up to 20 selected participants and will focus on the practical refinement of draft Preliminary Assessment requests. Each participating State Party will present its draft documentation for technical review by AWHF, the Advisory Bodies and resource persons, with the aim of strengthening the quality of submissions prior to their transmission to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Particular attention will be given to the articulation of potential Outstanding Universal Value, the justification of criteria, boundary considerations, and the overall coherence of the request.

Following the online and in-person workshops, selected States Parties will benefit from technical follow-up support to continue the refinement of their Preliminary Assessment requests. This support may include remote technical guidance, review of draft documentation, bilateral exchanges with the coordination team and resource persons, and advice towards the possible submission of Preliminary Assessment requests to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

Further details regarding the venue, logistical arrangements, participation in the in-person workshop, and technical follow-up support will be communicated directly to selected participants and concerned States Parties prior to the relevant activities.

4. Expected Outcomes

The support is expected to contribute to the following outcomes:

- A minimum of 50 heritage professionals from African States Parties demonstrating enhanced understanding of the World Heritage Convention and the technical requirements for substantiating potential Outstanding Universal Value;
- A minimum of 15 selected participants acquiring practical capacity to prepare and finalise Preliminary Assessment requests for sites intended for future nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List;
- The preparation and further refinement of draft Preliminary Assessment requests for selected sites included on national Tentative Lists;
- Strengthened capacity to identify and clearly articulate potential Outstanding Universal Value at an early stage of the nomination process;
- Enhanced dialogue and sustained collaboration between African States Parties, the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF), the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICOMOS and IUCN;
- The submission of a minimum of 10 Preliminary Assessment requests to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre by 15 September 2026, for review and technical guidance by the Advisory Bodies, with the potential for additional submissions where capacity allows;

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- The establishment and consolidation of a network of African heritage professionals to facilitate continued peer learning and support the effective implementation of the World Heritage Convention across the region.

5. Eligibility

Applications are open to African States Parties to the World Heritage Convention wishing to prepare Preliminary Assessment requests for sites included on their national Tentative Lists. Priority will be given to States Parties that:

- Have identified one or more sites on their Tentative Lists for possible future nomination to the World Heritage List;
 - Are preparing to submit a Preliminary Assessment request to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre;
 - Either have already started developing a draft Preliminary Assessment request or can provide sufficient information on the site being considered;
 - Demonstrate institutional commitment to completing and submitting the Preliminary Assessment request.
6. Each applying State Party is invited to nominate up to five national heritage professionals. Nominations should, where possible, reflect expertise aligned with the type of site proposed, whether cultural, natural or mixed. All nominated participants are expected to be affiliated with, or formally designated by, the competent national authority responsible for World Heritage matters within the State Party.

7. Selection Criteria

Applications will be assessed primarily based on:

- The relevance and potential of the site proposed for Preliminary Assessment;
- Confirmation that the proposed site is included on the State Party's Tentative List;
- The institutional commitment of the State Party to prepare, complete and submit the Preliminary Assessment request to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

The following elements may also be taken into consideration, depending on the case:

- The availability and quality of information and supporting documentation provided on the proposed site;
- The potential contribution of the site to a more representative and balanced World Heritage List for Africa;

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- Sites proposed by States Parties with no properties currently inscribed on the World Heritage List.

8. Participants

Each selected State Party will be represented by up to **Five national heritage professionals**. Participants should be directly involved in the identification, documentation, protection, conservation, management or nomination of the site proposed for Preliminary Assessment.

Participants are expected to:

- Attend the full online workshop from **6 to 9 July 2026**;
- Prepare and share relevant information on the site proposed for Preliminary Assessment;
- Participate actively in technical discussions, practical exercises and peer-learning sessions;
- Work with the relevant national institution to prepare or refine the Preliminary Assessment request;
- Submit available documentation or draft Preliminary Assessment material for review, where required;
- Based on the progress in developing Preliminary Assessment request, only selected participants will attend the in-person workshop from 24 to 28 **August 2026**;
- Contribute to technical follow-up exchanges towards the possible submission of the Preliminary Assessment request.

Selection for the in-person workshop will be based on participation in the online workshop, the availability and quality of the documentation provided, and the potential of the request to be further developed for submission.

9. Application Requirements

Interested States Parties should submit the following application package:

1. An official endorsement letter from the national focal point for the World Heritage Convention;
2. Names and CVs of the Five nominated national heritage professionals (in the field of nature and culture).

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10. Application Process

Applications should be submitted by the relevant national institution responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the State Party.

The complete application should be submitted to the following link [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdTD4_8qOPqh3VUqUBWAN3KNBkJokBdoz65y8zhEwg4ioK21w/viewform?usp=header]

The application should include all required documents listed under Section 8. Incomplete applications, or applications not endorsed by the national focal point for the World Heritage Convention, may not be considered. The deadline for submission is: **26 June 2026**.

Selected States Parties and nominated participants will be informed directly by the African World Heritage Fund. Further details regarding participation in the online workshop, selection for the in-person workshop, and technical follow-up support will be communicated to selected participants and concerned States Parties in due course.

For enquiries, please contact:

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