31 January 2014

By email: secretariat@icomos.org

ICOMOS Statutes - Contributions to the 3rd consultation to the working group via the International Secretariat (secretariat@icomos.org)

Australia ICOMOS (Ai) outlines the following comments re the proposed Revised Statutes

Background

ICOMOS has launched a process to amend its Statutes and two consultations have already taken place. Out of the 6 objectives for amending the Statutes, 5 have been achieved already: ensuring conformity with laws and regulations, clarification of governance, a better structured text, correction of contradictions, and elimination of disparities between the English and French version.

The evolution of the National Committees now requires assessment of their operations with the following issues requiring consideration:

- Maintaining a good functioning National Committee has become too heavy a burden in some regions: the association should not depend on National Committees only;
- There are great disparities in the numbers of members in the National Committees – even between countries that are otherwise comparable – and the total number of members in all countries is far lower than ICOMOS could reasonably expect;
- As a result of the uneven distribution of membership numbers in the National Committees, the current system for the allocation of the votes does not represent an equitable balance any more between the principles of ‘1 member - 1 vote’ and ‘1 Committee - 1 vote’ but creates problems of representation and quorum;
- The membership dues collected by the National Committees are transferred to the International Secretariat with so much delay that the financial stability of the association is at risk.
- There are also several provisions in the Statutes that do not work well any more, that complicate the functioning of the statutory bodies, or that might put the good reputation of ICOMOS at risk. For example, there is overlapping in the description of the responsibilities of the statutory bodies and office bearers. In addition the Statutes contain some contradictions and there are disparities between the English and French versions.

Specific Comments on draft proposals

Membership categories:
Young members are proposed as a special category. This is supported as there is a need to encourage the younger generation of ICOMOS members.

The Affiliate member category is proposed to cover those who are interested in conservation but not professionally active in conservation. This is appropriate.

The Honorary membership category is now proposed for non-ICOMOS members only. AI considers that another new category (eg Life Member) should be added so that there is a statutory provision for honouring outstanding ICOMOS members.
Statutory bodies
The Scientific Council resolved at the recent AdCom that it should be recognised as a statutory body in the Statutes. While AI supports this proposal in principle, the statutory role of the Scientific Council needs to be defined, presumably in line with the Eger-Xian Principles.

General Assemblies
AI supports the proposal for an annual General Assembly to approve the annual accounts. The most practical way for this to occur will be to hold the GA in conjunction with AdCom.

Electoral systems proposed for Executive Committee
The issue of long term survival and dynamism of ICOMOS was frequently discussed at the October AdCOM held in Costa Rica. It is acknowledged that many EXCOM, ADCOM and Scientific Council members are older, and there is a challenge to attract younger and mid career members to become involved internationally and take on leadership roles.

Current ICOMOS statutes allow for 3 x 3 year terms for Executive members, then admission to the EXCOM via other roles, so that there is potential for people to remain on the ExCom for more than the maximum 9 years envisaged by the Statutes. Certainly the wisdom and confidence of older members is extremely useful. It is also acknowledged that many mid career professionals do not have the time or resources to contribute internationally, and that early career professionals might not have the experience. AI acknowledges with gratitude the long service and dedication of past and present Executive Committee members, but respectfully suggests that shorter maximum terms of office may result in facilitating wider membership leadership development and participation.

In Australia, the 3x2 year terms for EC members and maximum term of 3 years for the president has resulted in a dynamic and ever changing ICOMOS family and committee structure.

AI therefore recommends a combination of the electoral systems proposed ie two 3-year terms, with half the members retiring at each election. This would mean that the some of the first Executive members elected under the new system would only serve for three years – however this could apply to those have already served on the previous Executive. The issue would be removed thereafter.

Another way of increasing opportunities for leadership would be to include a provision that ex officio members of the ExCom by virtue of their positions on other statutory bodies, eg AdCom and SC, should have their ex officio terms included in the maximum term of office on the ExCom.

AI also understands that there is a proposal to hold General Assemblies every four years instead of every three as now, so as it has become increasingly difficult for National Committees to undertake to host them. If the election of the Executive remains tied to the General Assembly, this would extend terms of office from three to four years. For the reasons given above, AI is reluctant to support such a proposal; although if the four year term is adopted, AI would again recommend a maximum of two consecutive terms. An alternative that could be considered is to separate elections from the GA and have electronic voting as many organisations (eg RIBA) now do. The advantages of electronic voting are that more of the general membership (those who cannot attend the GA) can find out about the candidates – but only through written manifestos rather than personal contact. Electronic voting would likely be cheaper than the present system, and would free up about half a day of the GA program.

Election of Board and President -- Currently ICOMOS International elects the office bearers as well as the Executive members. The ICOMOS system makes the elections longer and more complicated because those who do not get elected to the Bureau can stand again for ExCom. A possible alternative might be the general election of the Board and the President, then election of other Bureau members by the Board. This would also make it easier for office bearers to be replaced if they become unable to continue to serve. Note that AI elects all its office bearers from within the Executive Committee and this is considered to work well – however, election of the President internationally by all members is supported.

Voting rights
Should affiliate members (ie interested but not professionally active in cultural heritage) have a vote? The previous category of sustaining members did not. This needs to be further debated, and determined if it is absolutely necessary under French law. Allowing voting rights to affiliates may discourage younger member involvement. For the same reason, the question of affiliate members being eligible for election to the Board also needs further discussion.

AI supports the sliding scale system of votes (System 2).
Regional Committees – AI welcomes the recognition of regional committees (ie. Pasifika) as outlined in Recommendation Nr 16 – Regional Groups – which states that “Based on ICOMOS’ longstanding tradition, the working group recommends to use the existing regional groups (or continents) to check that there is minimal representation of all regions in the activities”. For the same reason, AI also welcomes the statutory recognition of trans-National groups. After more than more than ten years of active involvement from Australia ICOMOS the Pacific Islanders can now take an equal role in the future of ICOMOS (as well as other regions with sparse levels of professional positions).

Comment on Suggestions for Running of ADCOM meetings – Appointment of the minute secretary before the meeting is suggested. This would greatly assist the minute Secretary – who could set up the minutes in advance. The provision of written summaries of items to be presented should be provided a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the meeting and presentation of items at ADCOM meetings without written pre circulated documentation should not be allowed except in genuine emergency/late business situations. This is so that item reports can be effectively shared amongst the broader ICOMOS international community. These suggested changes could be incorporated into the Rules of Procedure.

Yours faithfully

[Signature]

MS ELIZABETH VINES OAM, FRAIA, MICOMOS
President, Australia ICOMOS