We, the Ministers in charge of natural and cultural heritage, meeting in Yaoundé, Republic of Cameroon, on 19 October 2022 for the regional celebration of the 50th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention in Central Africa under the theme "Actions and Innovations for a sustainable World Heritage at the service of Central African communities #Next 50", with the objectives of taking stock of the conservation, protection and management of World Heritage sites and to reflect on the place of cultural and natural heritage for the next 50 years for the sustainable development of communities in Africa, and in Central Africa in particular, adopt this Call to Action.

I - PREAMBLE

- **Commending** the Cameroon authorities and international partners for the organisation of a reflection’s forum on the place that should be given to cultural and natural heritage for the next 50 years in view of the sustainable development of communities in Africa;

- **Recalling** that fifty years ago the UNESCO Member States adopted the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, which to this day remains the cornerstone of international cooperation for the conservation of properties of "Outstanding Universal Value";

- **Acknowledging** the instruments of the African Union that have enhanced the extent of cultural and natural heritage, including the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (2006) and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want (2015), as well as the Sub-Regional Strategy on the Development and Promotion of Culture in Central Africa (2015);

- **Considering** the declaration of the year 2021 as the "Year of Arts, Culture and Heritage" by the African Union and its project to create the "Great Museum" for the valorisation of African cultural heritage;
- **Recalling** Decision 772.11 of the 33rd Ordinary Assembly of the African Union in Ethiopia in February 2020 which "calls on African Union Member States and the private sector to support the work of the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) in profiling, protecting and promoting Africa's natural and cultural heritage";

- **Considering** the 2016 Ngorongoro Declaration on "Safeguarding African World Heritage as a Driver for Sustainable Development" which states that African heritage is essential for the preservation and promotion of our cultural identity, dignity in a globalised world while providing socio-economic benefits, environmental protection, social cohesion and peace;

- **Welcoming** the recent World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development - MONDIACULT 2022, which highlighted the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention as one of the international standard-setting instruments that provide a global framework for the protection, safeguarding and promotion of culture in all its dimensions;

- **Recalling** the efforts of Member States and UNESCO partners to highlight the role of culture in sustainable development, which resulted in the inclusion of culture in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015 and explicitly referenced in target 4 of SDG 11, "Strengthen efforts to protect and preserve the world's cultural and natural heritage";

- **Recalling** the resolution of the 38th session of the UNESCO General Conference (2015) declaring May 5th as African World Heritage Day to reflect on the conservation and promotion of World Heritage in Africa by state entities, civil societies, women and youth among others and the resolution of the 41st session of the UNESCO General Conference (2021) which adopted the Operational Strategy for Priority Africa (2022-2029), including its five Flagship Programmes, in particular Flagship Programme 3: Fostering Cultural Heritage and Capacity Building;
- **Recalling** the Central African Heads of State Summits and the Yaoundé Declaration on the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Tropical Forests (1999), the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) and its Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use, which emphasizes the critical and interdependent roles of forests of all types, biodiversity and sustainable land use in enabling the world to achieve its sustainable development goals and adapt to climate change (2021);

- **Noting** with concern the under-representation of African properties on the World Heritage List and the high number of sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger;

- **Affirming** the need to develop and mentor the leadership skills of young Africans to support the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and sustainable development efforts in the region;

- **Recalling** the key contributions made by World Heritage to the economic growth of Central African countries, the socio-economic resilience of local communities, and the preservation of their cultural values and practices. We also recall the role of the UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators (CDIS) as an advocacy and policy tool to assess the multidimensional role of culture in development processes through facts and figures.

### II – CALL TO ACTION

1. **We are determined** to strengthen our commitment to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention, guided by our common pledge to protect cultural and natural heritage through local, national, regional and international actions and to promote a balanced approach while addressing the needs of young people, indigenous peoples and local communities;

2. **We commit ourselves** to invest and mobilise resources to improve the Tentative Lists with a view to developing successful nomination files in
accordance with the Operational Guidelines to improve the representativity and credibility of the World Heritage List in the sub-region;

3. **We call** upon UNESCO, in close collaboration with the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) and other partners to consider concrete measures to build the capacity of States Parties, support their efforts to identify and prepare nominations to the World Heritage List, and implement corrective measures for the removal of their properties from the List of World Heritage in Danger;

4. **We emphasise** the need to build on the contribution of World Heritage to conservation, socio-economic development and community well-being;

5. **We emphasise** the need to harness digital transformation, the opportunities offered by new and emerging technologies, artificial intelligence and the need to promote innovative management systems to ensure the conservation and promotion of African World Heritage;

6. **We also highlight** the role of World Heritage in biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of Central African forest ecosystems for carbon sequestration to mitigate the effects of climate change;

7. **We advocate** the integration of young people's concerns into national policies, programmes and activities to implement the World Heritage Convention and their involvement in the identification, documentation, conservation and promotion of heritage, as well as entrepreneurship opportunities;

8. **We call** on UNESCO, the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Convention, the African World Heritage Fund, universities, institutes of higher learning, centres of expertise, UNESCO category 2 centres and
other heritage partners to continue to support online and face-to-face capacity building initiatives and activities to empower African heritage practitioners and the general public;

9. **We invite** all stakeholders, including the private sector, to strengthen the means of implementation, to revitalise the regional partnership for World Heritage and sustainable development, and to improve heritage education, communication and awareness by developing collaboration between heritage institutions, universities and national education programmes;

10. Finally, **we encourage** all the States Parties of the sub-region to improve the conservation of World Heritage properties through effective governance, appropriate documentation, appropriate management as well as innovative and sustainable funding and to integrate World Heritage and the Regional Action Plans resulting from the Periodic Reporting exercises into national and development planning to strengthen synergies between national development agencies, notably through increased and harmonised institutional coordination at the national level. **We also call** on ECCAS to support its Member States, to mobilise its partners and to put in place a strategy to make heritage a lever for development in the sub-region.

Translated by the Ministry of Arts and Culture of Cameroon