INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE ON THE WORLD HERITAGE FOUNDATION

1. The concept of a "World Heritage" is based on the idea that there are certain natural areas of outstanding interest and scientific value and certain cultural sites of unique historical, anthropological or architectural value, which can be accepted as part of the common heritage of mankind. Together, these may be regarded as a World Heritage, which should be preserved for future generations, by common consent and with the full assent of the governments of the countries in which they are situated.

2. The idea of dedication to such a global heritage is not yet completely understood and there may well be some doubts in accepting it. It is in fact to be expected that acceptance will be slow and cautious on the part of most governments, the more so since the concept is indeed a new one even in those countries or to those people who may have hitherto considered themselves the most "civilized". Thus, eighteenth-century Europe was proud of its imagined achievement of civilization, yet in that century many unique monuments of former civilizations were deliberately broken up or vandalized ... the poet Byron's incised monogram, for example, still defaces the marble temple of Athene on Cape Sunion. Nonetheless, it is in the past two hundred years, and particularly in the last fifty, that our appreciation and awe for the great works of past has largely arisen. It is still growing and to it is added a quite new understanding of the immense value of the "natural", in contrast to the man-made, heritage of mankind.

3. The cultural potential of the World Heritage concept may not easily be grasped, but the success and influence of numerous national cultural trusts and similar bodies are an encouraging portent. The notion of something similar on a world scale is therefore a logical one, and its formalization can logically come through the United
Nations system, together with international nongovernmental organizations such as the IUCN. More specifically, the idea accords well with the basic concepts of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, with the latter's interest in conservation as an aspect of environment. Creation of a World Heritage Foundation is therefore an appropriate subject for action by the Conference.

4. It was in appreciation of this last point that the Preparatory Committee at its second session recommended that "preparations should be initiated in order to enable Governments present at the Stockholm Conference, should they so decide, to agree to establish a World Heritage Foundation, under which special recognition would be accorded to certain areas of natural, cultural or historical significance". It further recommended the formation of an Intergovernmental Working Group to develop a constitution for such a World Heritage Foundation and to study other related matters (A/CONF.48/PC.9, paras. 53-55).

5. The Conference Secretariat collaborated with UNESCO, FAO, and IUCN in preparing the official documentation for this group. A "World Heritage Task Force" comprising a group of consultants and representatives of UNESCO, FAO and the Conference Secretariat was convened by IUCN at its headquarters at Morges, Switzerland, on 29 April 1971. Its special task was the preparation of a draft convention for a World Heritage Foundation, and this draft is being submitted to the Intergovernmental Working Group for consideration (A/CONF.48/IWG.1/3).

6. At the same meeting, UNESCO informed the Conference Secretariat that it had been requested by the 16th session of its own General Conference, through resolution 3.412, to prepare a draft international convention and a draft recommendation to its Member States concerning the protection of monuments and sites of universal value. The preliminary report on this subject, the draft recommendation and the resulting draft convention are being distributed to participants in the IWG as document A/CONF.48/IWG.1/8 together with a report by the Director-General of UNESCO (A/CONF.48/IWG.1/7).

7. The conventions proposed by IUCN and UNESCO are complementary, and can realistically be presented to the Stockholm Conference as two phases of one operation; in fact, whereas the IUCN convention is seen as a proposal for level III action, the UNESCO convention is effectively for consideration at level II. A more detailed examination of the two proposals makes this clear.
8. The designation "World Heritage" as understood in the convention prepared by IUCN, is expected to apply to a limited number... perhaps around one hundred... outstanding important areas and sites. They fall into three categories:

(a) Natural areas of outstanding interest and value to mankind as a result of their unique geology, physiography, vegetation or wildlife. These areas would be open to public visitation and to such outdoor recreation as would not impair the values for which they are conserved. They would include areas now designated as major national parks and other areas suitable for such designation.

(b) Natural areas of outstanding scientific interest and value to mankind that represent unique or especially significant examples of natural ecosystems. These areas would serve as centres for scientific investigation and public access would be restricted to activities that would not interfere with this function. They would include areas now designated as strict nature reserves, and other areas suitable for such designation.

(c) Sites of unique historical, anthropological, or architectural value to mankind. These sites would be open to public visitation and tourism with provision of strict care of the values to be conserved.

9. The selectivity of the convention prepared by IUCN appears to be a sound characteristic. Under it, the finest world sites could be cared for immediately, if they are not already so. Their inclusion in the very select list could be especially important when the more general convention sponsored by UNESCO, comes into operation. The figure of one hundred sites is a purely arbitrary one, for the whole idea of a World Heritage Foundation is one of global co-operation, not competition for inclusion in a hypothetical "top hundred".

10. The fact that the two proposed conventions will be discussed at different levels at Stockholm implies a certain time lag in their becoming operational, but this will be no loss. Indeed, it can provide a period for what might be termed psychological adjustment on the part of governments to the World Heritage idea, quite apart from the inevitable time taken by administrative procedures. The whole World Heritage idea could fail if the criteria for uniqueness were relaxed at the outset to include all the natural and cultural sites worthy of the concept of global conservation. The idea needs time to mature, so that each new inclusion will come to be a matter of general acceptance, giving the countries in which such sites, or potential sites, are located an added incentive to care for them and render them eligible. Again, some natural areas will possibly need time for partial rehabilitation, and some cultural monuments will need literally to be dug out of the bush.
11. Problems of sovereignty and adequacy of existing care will certainly be raised by governments when discussing the draft convention on the World Heritage. In practice, the World Heritage Foundation would not waste time making officious suggestions as to the better care of sites; on the other hand, the sense of comradeship inherent in the idea of global conservation should make for readier co-operation and exchange of ideas and experience.

12. While the basic concept of the World Heritage Foundation could be formalized at Stockholm, many of the detailed questions concerning it would remain to be completed. It could be established as a private foundation under an appropriate deed of foundation. Alternatively, it could be set up under an international convention, which appears to have advantages in the present circumstances, when nations are prepared to co-operate; or it could come into being as a result of a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly. Irrespective of the way in which it might be set up, the authority could have an independent existence, or could be attached to the United Nations system. Its secretariat could be provided by some existing international entity, or by staff seconded from such an entity, or by the authority itself acting as an employer.

13. From among the various possibilities mentioned, the most preferable may be the establishment of an authority called "World Heritage Foundation" by an international convention. The more comprehensive convention envisaged by UNESCO could be considered as a second phase. Whether the World Heritage Foundation should eventually have a formal connexion with UNESCO would become apparent at a later date. For the time being, the secretariat of any such Foundation should consist of a small administrative and professional staff provided by an existing international entity such as UNESCO or IUCN. Membership of its governing body would be limited to the contracting states, together with representatives of FAO, UNESCO and IUCN.