

## **The protection of world cultural heritage sites in Sri Lanka**

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United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage Convention (1972) for a variety of reasons such as the protection and conservation of world heritages. It also provided provision for international co- operation, assistance and establishment of an effective system for the protection of heritage. However, World Heritage Convention recognized national protection, State Sovereignty, and property rights over heritage. The Convention established the World Heritage Committee to publish a world heritage list which was drafted on the basis of outstanding interest and universal value of the world heritage. In 1980, Sri Lanka accepted the World Heritage Convention. Eight ancient sites in Sri Lanka have been included on the World Heritage List based on outstanding universal value and interest, but Sri Lanka neither ratified nor incorporated the Convention to the domestic laws by way of passing the enabling statute. Generally, Sri Lankan laws relating to the protection of cultural heritage sites are covered by the Antiquities Ordinance No. 9 of 1940 as amended by the Antiquities (Amendment) Act No. 24 of 1998, Treasure Trove Ordinance No. 18 of 1887 and National Environmental Act No. 47 of 1980 as amended by the Acts No 57 of 1988 and No. 53 of 2000, Central Cultural Fund Act, No 57 of 1980, Sigiriya Heritage Foundation Act, No. 62 of 1998, Cultural Property Act No.73 of 1988, Galle Heritage Foundation Act, No. 7 of 1994, but the above legal framework is not sufficient to protect World Cultural Heritage sites in Sri Lanka. However, Article 14 (f) of the Constitution of 1978 guaranteed 'the freedom to enjoy and promote his own culture' as one of the fundamental rights in Sri Lanka. Therefore it is necessary to ensure and take special legal measures to protect world cultural heritage sites within the jurisdiction of Sri Lanka. The researcher has identified the international legal framework with regard to protection of world cultural heritage and incorporated those legal measures to the domestic legal system.

**Key Words :** World Cultural Heritage, World Heritage Convention , antiquities