Short Title of the Best Practice: **Involving local communities with their own cultural heritage at the Nevado de Toluca**

Presented by (State Party): **México**

Location: **Nevado de Toluca, Estado de Mexico, Mexico**

Brief Description of the Underwater Cultural Heritage Site concerned:

The Nevado de Toluca is a stratovolcano located to the southwest of the Valley of Toluca in the State of Mexico. It is the fourth highest peak in Mexico with a maximum altitude of 4680 meters above sea level. Inside the crater there are two perennial bodies of water known as the Sun Lake and the Moon Lake at 4200 meters above sea level. In pre-Hispanic times, the societies that lived in the surrounding areas performed rituals and offerings in the volcano. According to some historical sources of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, after the Spanish conquest these ceremonies were carried behind the back of the Christian priests. At present there are still cultural practices that can be linked somewhat with the ancient Mesoamerican rites that focused on the fertility of the fields, abundant harvests, the right amount of rain and the mild climate. Over time, the interaction of man and the volcano has been recorded through the material culture deposited in different places of the mountain but especially underwater. Archaeological materials deposited inside the lakes are well preserved and are characterized by organic elements. Since 2007, the project “Underwater Archaeology at The Nevado de Toluca” has been studying this important site on land and especially underwater.

Brief Description of the Best Practice in responding to the criteria set by the Meeting of State Parties (see above):

In article 2 of the Convention, considered among best practices is the increasing of public awareness and appreciation and protection of heritage. The project “Underwater Archaeology at The Nevado de Toluca” has gone to great lengths and has as one of it aims, to increase public awareness as to the importance of the archaeological site specifically among the surrounding local communities. To this end, a project to share information has been implemented that comprises, exhibits, publications of different types, documentaries and conferences

A mobile temporary exhibit was constructed and presented in small villages, most of the times in the local government house. Exhibit was accompanied by the projection of a one hour documentary regarding the project and the site. People, including high school and prep students, were encouraged to participate with questions and comments about the work.
Regarding publication of the results of the archaeological research, there have been two books: “Las Aguas Celestiales”, a general information book that includes chapters on geology, ecology and many other themes to give a total overview of the site, and a scientific book for a more specialized public. A third publication was a comic directed to youth and which was distributed in local schools.

How is the site protected legally?

The site is well protected, as it is also a nearby national natural reserve; since our first campaign in 2007, vehicles are not allowed in that area.

What practical measures have been implemented to ensure the protection of the site?

Vehicles have been banned from site.

How is responsible and non-intrusive public access to the underwater cultural heritage encouraged? What special and outstanding effort has been made to make the site accessible to the public?

Responsible and non-intrusive public access to the underwater cultural heritage is not encouraged as there is nothing to see above the sediment.

How is public awareness, appreciation and protection of the heritage increased?

By talking directly to the local heirs of the heritage and showing them how important it is. They can reclaim it then, as we have been told many times: “You came and reminded us of what our grandparents talked about, thank you.”
How does the example support scientific research and appropriate conservation in accordance with the Rules of the Annex to the 2001 Convention?

Rule number 1 and 5 are particularly important to the project. Although at first materials were retrieved to be studied form an early stage, In situ Conservation was established as the way forward for the project. On the other hand rule 5 was considered because the site is a sacred space and thus special attention to this fact was taken into account. Such rules as 24 and 25 are part of the projects activities and goals. Other rules such as rule 35 and 36 were also a priority creating different kinds of materials to reach the public. In general terms all rules of the Annex of the Convention are considered and applied to a certain degree.

Please describe briefly the management plan designed for the site:

The management plan has been to collaborate with the authorities that safeguard the Park. The plan is based on the assumption that this sacred site and State Park has to be preserved. The park recognizes now the importance of the site from a cultural perspective and considers archaeology as an important component of the park management plan.

Have local, national and international stakeholders been involved in the process of identifying the Best Practices example? If so, please list them.

Local authorities have been contacted to establish the importance of the site, which has been considered in legislation protecting it.
Published research and divulgation books.
BAJO EL VOLCÁN
VIDA Y RITUALIDAD EN TORNO AL NEVADO DE TOLUCA

Silvina Vigliani - Roberto Junco
Please attach documents giving evidence for the information provided and any other documents you may consider relevant.

The forms are to be submitted in English or in French, electronically or in hard copy. They are to be signed and sent to the following address:

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