

Action Agenda from the co-sponsored ICOMOS-UNESCO-IPCC meeting to strengthen synergies between culture, heritage and climate change science

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The **Global Research and Action Agenda on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change**, a scientific outcome from a collaboration between the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has been released in both [English](#) and [French](#).

The **Global Research and Action Agenda on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change**, which was authored by the scientific steering committee synthesizing the contributions of the more than 100 participants from around the world who participated in the International Co-sponsored Meeting on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change (ICSM-CHC), which was held in December 2021, explores the synergies between culture, heritage and climate change. It contains 45 key messages to promote further engagement in climate action across these domains and represents a milestone partnership towards the full integration of culture in international climate action. The **Global Research and Action Agenda** also features 13 case studies from around the world, including a co-produced Climate Action Planning in Aotearoa/New Zealand acknowledging the importance of Indigenous knowledge; Disaster management in Nepal with the case of the reconstruction of the Kasthamandap in Kathmandu; the National climate Adaptation Framework in Ireland which integrates Culture; and Local and Indigenous Knowledge of Coastal Systems in Ogun, Nigeria.

The International Co-sponsored Meeting on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change (ICSM-CHC) brought together a gender-balanced team of over 100 experts from 45 countries across all regions. The meeting established the scientific merit of integrating heritage dimensions in climate action through three key areas: (1) diverse knowledge systems including local and Indigenous, (2) loss, damage, vulnerability and understanding risks, and (3) role of culture and heritage in transformative change. In preparation for the event, three independent White Papers were commissioned to diverse group of scholars and heritage practitioners to explore these axes.

Assessing the links between culture, heritage and climate change responses also serves as a catalyst for new research, projects, and publications on these sectors ahead of the IPCC's upcoming 7th Assessment cycle. Dr William Megarry, ICOMOS Focal Point for Climate Change and Cultural Heritage, co-Chair of the ICSM-CHC and co-author of the Global Research and Action Agenda, states that *"Climate change is the single greatest threat to our global cultural and natural heritage, but cultural heritage is a key asset for climate action. From mitigation and adaptation strategies to building community resilience, culture should be at the heart of our response to climate change."*

Dr Hana Morel, ICSM-CHC Scientific Coordinator and co-author of the Global Research and Action Agenda, notes that *"this work is the result of a collaborative effort that prioritises the recognition of working across knowledge systems through a people-centred approach. It provides only a glimpse into the opportunities we can draw from understanding culture and heritage, and ways to approach plans and strategies for more just, inclusive and resilient futures."*

Prof Dr Teresa Patricio, ICOMOS President, adds that *"the sustainable use of heritage is central for climate change mitigation activities. It is essential that we find ways to ensure that culture and heritage are included in the fight against climate change and that they are central to all international agendas."*

Every year, ICOMOS celebrates the International Day for Monuments and Sites on 18th April. This year, the focus will be on [Traditional Knowledge, Climate Action and Innovative Transformation](#). As the scientific outcome of the International Co-Sponsored Meeting, the **Global Research and Action Agenda on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change** proposes that heritage and cultural practices act as a bridge between different ways of knowing, embody inherited knowledge accumulated over generations, and serve as entry points for climate action. Key messages from the meeting on how culture can create valuable opportunities for a climate-resilient future include, but are not limited to:

- Future collaborations between the culture and climate communities should start with the premise that all voices and knowledge systems are equally valuable in terms of the role, function, distinctiveness and contribution to addressing climate change and emerging problems;

- Acknowledging, respecting and implementing that a plurality of knowledge systems inherent in culture, heritage and creative practices can empower communities' decision-making and management;
- More knowledge is needed about cultural approaches and heritage methodologies in facilitating the use of local knowledge for adaptation planning, and the involvement of local communities and indigenous peoples in decision-making and policy development;
- Existing knowledge and methods for sustainable ecosystem management are embedded in Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' knowledge systems and practices;
- Urban transformations require methods rooted in local needs and conditions that consider the requirements of energy, sustainability and climate adaptation.

The **Global Research and Action Agenda**, and the three White Papers can be downloaded from the [meeting website](#)

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is a non-governmental, not for profit international organisation, committed to furthering the conservation, protection, use and enhancement of the world's cultural heritage. With over 11,000 members, 100+ National Committees, 30 International Scientific Committees and several Working Groups, ICOMOS has built a solid philosophical, doctrinal and managerial framework for the sustainable conservation of heritage around the world. As an official Advisory Body to the World Heritage Committee for the implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, ICOMOS evaluates nominations and advises on the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List. www.icomos.org

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is the United Nations specialized agency with a mandate in culture. As culture gains recognition as a global public good and a human-rights imperative, UNESCO programmes, mechanisms and actions in the field of heritage and creativity are essential to realizing this vision. Through its six Culture Conventions, technical assistance and policy support to Member States, partnerships and research, the Organization promotes a human-centred approach to sustainable development and peacebuilding based on respect for cultural diversity and mutual understanding.

The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** is the international body for assessing the science related to climate change. The IPCC was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.

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