

ICOMOS

international council on monuments and sites

ICOMOS Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur in the Field of Cultural Rights on Cultural Rights and Climate Change

In response to the call for inputs issued on 30 March 2020 to inform the Special Rapporteur's report to be presented at the General Assembly, October 2020.

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Annex 2

National Examples, Concrete Case Studies

I. Negative impacts of climate change on culture and cultural rights

1. What negative impacts of climate change on culture, heritage and the enjoyment of cultural rights by all have been documented in your context? Are particular groups, such as women, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, rural persons or peasants, and youth or future generations, as well as cultural practitioners being impacted in specific and disproportionate ways? What efforts are being undertaken to inventory and monitor such impacts?

Question 1 - Examples:

Changing seasonal cycles also affect harvesting patterns of rural communities dependent on agricultural produce, as premature rise in temperatures damage crops/trees (e.g. such as walnuts in Turkey's Black Sea region.) Changing rainfall patterns affect character-defining landscape features, such as severe reduction in debit and changes in flow regime of rivers running through and lending names to historic settlements (e.g. Mudurnu in northern Turkey).

Loss of sea ice threatens traditional livelihoods in polar environments as well as the structural integrity of coastal sites. Wave activity in an ice-free summer can erode the coastline by several meters in the high Arctic. Thawing permafrost endangers the structural integrity of built heritage in both Arctic and Antarctic environments, by leading to uneven sinking of the soil, faster erosion and site loss.

Wave activity in an ice-free summer can erode the coastline by several meters in the high Arctic. The 2004 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA); for example, as documented in Shishmaref and Barrow (Alaska), in Varandei in Northern Russia; or in Tuktoyaktuk and Herschel island (Canada)

Emergency excavation of an historic eroded graveyard site due to coastal erosion which exposed human remains, has seen the human remains removed and efforts by locals, who believe these to be their ancestors, to have the bones returned for re-interment, have met with a lack of response by the authorities that undertook the excavation (Ireland).

2. Are cultural sites or resources which are critical to participation in cultural life identified as being threatened due to climate change and if so, how? What processes are used to analyse the risk of harm or inaccessibility to these areas and resources? Are records being kept about these risks and impacts?

Question 2 – Examples:

For example, in Estonia, decreasing fish stocks threaten connected cultural traditions. On the other hand, most Arctic and Antarctic heritage sites are in danger of fast disappearance through the cumulative impact of increasing temperatures, thawing permafrost, receding sea ice, melting glaciers and increasing meltwater, wind and wave erosion. Yet many of them are until today very poorly documented because of sensitive geopolitical context.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the discontinuation of the 700-year-old Merchant Guild Prayer in Mudurnu, Turkey. While it is presumed that over several centuries of this practice, earlier plagues and crisis would have disrupted the prayer routine and it would have rebounded over time, the COVID-19 impact on

the Merchants Prayer tradition was debated among community members over digital media and options of response were discussed, such as adjusting the ritual to be done with physical distancing, or resuming as soon as possible after the pandemic was over.

Another intersection involves the rights of affected parties to have a voice in the decision making process of flood relief schemes that affect their own heritage. This is an ongoing and increasing issue particularly where the institutional flood relief design process predates the 2012 Dresden Charter (Ireland) and relies on EIS processes, rather than HIA.

3. Please provide examples of specific natural resources, local sites used for cultural practices or seasonal patterns that influence the ability to participate in diverse aspects of cultural life that may be subject to volatility due to climate change. Consider also diffuse geographical features or resources that may be at risk and are definitive or influential in the practice and development of culture on either a collective or individual basis.

Question 3 - Examples

- 1 Koutammakou World Heritage site (Togo) has experienced rising temperatures that affect cultural practices linked to agriculture and productivity. There is uncertainty around weather conditions, particularly annual rainfall, which is critical for agricultural production. Beyond physical impacts on the material elements of the site, these changes are also driving the migration of young people due to demographic pressure and lack of economic opportunities.
- 2 Dozens of Mediterranean World Heritage sites are at risk from climate change, including caves used by Neanderthal's in Gibraltar, the Christian monuments of Ravenna Italy, the Ancient Greek remains on the island of Delos, and Roman ruins in Arles, France.
- 3 For Kilwa Kiswani in Tanzania and Rapa Nui in Chile, much of the material heritage is located on the coast, making it particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise. Rising groundwater and soil salinity are impacting the Mosque City of Bagerhat in Bangladesh.
- 4 Subsistence living on coastal margins of Europe, where practices such as traditional fishing or seaweed foraging provide vital but unregulated support to people outside of the market economy, is threatened by changes in marine ecosystems and invasive species encroachment facilitated by Climate Change. The rights to fish and harvest seaweed have been under debate, but so far community rights to their traditional nature use have not been taken into account (Ireland, Estonia).
- 5 Cultural landscapes and communities of traditional fossil fuel industries (oil-shale, peat, coal mining), which are to be closed in recent futures. These specific sites and communities need special attention to reduce and minimize social, economic and political conflicts, keep the identities and cultures of related parties.
- 6 In Turkey's Black Sea region, changing seasonal cycles affect harvesting patterns of rural communities dependent on agricultural produce, as premature rise in temperatures damage crops/trees such as walnuts; changing rainfall patterns also affect regimes of character-defining landscape features such as rivers.
- 7 Cumulative impact of climate change is particularly threatening for the heritage of the high Arctic, both to indigenous and non-indigenous sites. Traditional livelihoods are under threat as ice fishing and large marine mammal hunting have become dangerous because of decreasing sea ice and ever increasing storms and wave activity. Increasing rainfalls in the North endanger reindeer husbandry.
- 8 The Sami people is located in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden Finland and Russia, and inhabit the largest area in the world with an ancestral way of life based on the seasonal movement of livestock. The Sami people depend on mobility of rain-deer herds from summer to winter pasture, and warmer climate contributes to a shorter winter season, threatening the livelihood of the reindeer herds. The Norwegian Government monitor the size of the rain-deer herds.

II. Positive potential of culture and cultural rights to enhance responses to climate change

4. What are ways in which culture and cultural resources, such as traditional knowledge, are being used to mitigate and/or adapt in the face of climate change? Where available, please share examples of best practices for applying traditional knowledge and cultural practices, such as those of indigenous peoples, peasants and fisher people, including traditional fire management and agricultural techniques that should be considered in developing mitigation and adaptation responses. What is being done to inventory and preserve such cultural resources that could be useful to addressing climate change?

Question 4 - Examples:

- 1 Successful practices in construction and use of sustainable natural building materials, techniques and solutions to adapt to CC in rural areas all over the world. Examples: traditional open-walled housing in Samoa that performs well in high winds or pile dwellings in Cuba that function during flooding and are relatively easy to rebuild; Wooden building traditions in Scandinavia and Finno-Ugric people.
- 2 A specific example from Morocco: Practices concern the system of “khetaras”, underground draining galleries (canals or aqueducts) in a desert environment, which are an exceptional, historical, artistic and cultural work testifying to the ingenuity of man to deal with climatic aridity while respecting resources. Their importance is still relevant today because they guarantee water supply in increasingly arid areas by ensuring the appropriate use of this precious resource. One of the largest concentrations in the world of khetaras is that of the Draa Tafilalet Region and around Marrakech, Morocco.
- 3 Ecosystem-based adaptation and resource use by locals. Local communities hold endogenous ways of low-impact resource use connected with tangible heritage and intangible practices - agriculture (semi-natural habitats, cultural landscapes), traditional fishing, forest use, traditional soil management (no-till farming, mulching, cover cropping, crop rotation), use of native plants, traditional livestock management and animal husbandry approaches that contribute to decarbonisation. Examples include traditional fire regimes that increase biodiversity (Australia) or forest management to reduce exposure to wildfires (Sweden), traditional fishing and semi-natural habitats management (Estonia, Japan)

5. What are the diverse legal frameworks, trends and practices at the national and international levels that promote intervention from across the cultural ecosystem, including by cultural rights defenders and cultural practitioners, as well as women, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, rural people and peasants, and youth, in addressing disparate impacts and influencing decisions around climate change mitigation and adaptation? What are the challenges to such inclusivity and how are they being addressed?

Question 5 - Examples:

Estonia has not yet ratified the Faro Convention however heritage and nature conservation areas, national parks are co-managed with local communities. Besides that, there are a lot of initiatives at NGO level.

The undoubtedly biggest initiative in public action is the Let's Do It campaign in Estonia. In 2008 when 50,000 people cleaned up the entire country in just five hours. In 2011, Let's Do It Foundation was established to spread this model. The organisation tackles environmental and social problems related to mismanaged solid waste by mobilizing millions of positive-minded, action-orientated people, using innovative technological solutions to map and deal with waste, and engaging communities for the Keep It Clean Plan. On 15 September 2018 they organised the biggest ever civic action against waste – World Cleanup Day – an epic 36 hour green wave of cleanups. 17 million people in 157 countries participated.

In 2001 the Information Centre for Sustainable Renovation was opened under the umbrella of the Estonian Heritage Society. The purpose of the centre and its many branches is to contribute to the preservation of valuable buildings. The centre is gathering and communicating information, organising training courses and recycles construction elements and details. Since 2015 schoolchildren act as Caretakers of Heritage - every year hundreds of school children take care of their local heritage. Estonia has hundreds of local societies who are the carriers and caretakers of local heritage.

Fragmented governance is a challenge for the management of all semi-natural heritage sites in Japan. Despite the recognition of 'cultural landscapes' in the country's legal framework from 2005, the heritage sites are still managed by either the environmental or cultural departments. Even within a cultural heritage nomination, any waterways would be managed by the municipal offices that maintain waterways, roads or parks. Forested areas are managed by the Ministry of Forestry, Agriculture or Fisheries or the National Park Service under the Ministry of Environment. This leads to a low awareness of cultural and heritage value by people who manage parts of the site in practice. The situation is aggravated by the rotation of public officials every 3-4 years.

6. *What opportunities are available for people to publicly engage in cultural life in ways that demonstrate contemporary cultural shifts in response to climate change? Are there currently visible signs of cultural change underway? What factors might impede such practice of cultural life?*

Question 6 - Examples:

In Ireland, cultural heritage is being incorporated into the Irish Government response to Climate Change.

In Estonia, oil-shale mining are to be closed soon. The identity of these sites and people can be kept as cultural heritage, re-conceptualized into new carbon-free futures. National park was founded in this territory in 2019, Geopark nomination is underway.

In Japan, both state agencies and private actors have been emphasising the role of traditional semi-natural rice agriculture complexes called satoyama in protecting country's rich biodiversity and building a society in harmony with nature.

7. *In what capacities do experts from across the field of culture and climate interact and exchange knowledge at the national or international levels? For example, are experts from various cultural fields involved in relevant climate change policy? Are climate change experts engaging with the cultural sectors, and if so how?*

Question 7 - National level examples:

At national level, the nature of cooperation varies greatly among and within countries in terms of NGO and government responses (see case studies of Estonia, Greece, Morocco and Turkey in Annex).

III. Measures taken and recommendations

10. *Has your country adopted specific regulations or measure to address the negative impacts of climate change on culture and cultural rights? If so, please specify the content of such regulation and measures. Is a human rights approach taken to these questions?*

Question 10 - Examples:

The Republic of Estonia has ratified most of the International Climate Change Policy documents and has been an active contributor to the Paris agreement and European Green Deal documents. The national strategy "Climate Change Adaptation Development Plan until 2030" was adopted in 2017. The 100 year old Estonian Constitution preamble is rooted in human rights universal principles and since 1992, cultural and environmental rights are a stated part of revisions. A Human Rights Approach is generally taken into account in spatial planning documents. Environmental Impact Assessments that are an obligation in the planning process do take account climate change risks, but do not explicitly take into account procedural and cultural rights of local communities. In planning processes the heritage communities are involved and cultural values are mentioned, however very often this is deceptive 'lip service' and the concerns are ignored. There are no specific Heritage Impact Assessment Policies. Nevertheless, there are cultural heritage areas and national parks, where heritage communities are an active participants in the management of the area via cooperation councils or active NGO participation.

Morocco seeks to develop better resilience of territories and cities in the face of effects of climate change. For this, it has integrated climate risk into legislation relating to development of territory, profiling of specific vulnerabilities of territories in land use plans and urban planning documents and in sensitive areas (including historic cities, medinas, oases and archaeological sites). However, there is no law relating to cultural issues, except the Law n ° 22-80 on the conservation of historic monuments and sites, inscriptions, works of art and antiquity.

14. What recommendations should be made to States and other stakeholders concerning these topics?

Question 14 - Examples from Ireland:

Ireland's Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht which has established a steering group to guide the preparation of the *Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Built Heritage* (CCSAPBH) should be asked to invite a representative of the *Citizens' Assembly* to join this panel. They might also widen it to include a sociological representative, from the educational sector who might drive the necessary sociological research. Finally, this steering group and planning team driving its implementation should address intangible heritage to which convention Ireland is a signatory and invite the State Party Focal Point for the *Intangible Heritage Convention* to the group.

DCHG should be asked /required to count the carbon cost of the way they (and the CCSAPBH) work and look at ways and means of addressing and neutralising this. An inventory of Built Heritage sites threatened by climate change has been undertaken as part of our National *Climate Change Adaptation Sectoral Plan for Cultural and Built Heritage*. These do not, but should address the living culture.

Recommendation: The CCSAPBH should also consider the living cultural landscape – also at risk from Climate Change.

The commodification of our cultural landscapes have been assigned to the Department of Tourism, who do not recognise, nor have they been assigned the accompanying responsibilities. Tourism is destroying the sustainability of cultural communities by competing for housing resources amongst other things, (whilst at the same time providing a future for vernacular buildings as 'second homes' -thus divorcing vernacular buildings from their cultural landscapes) and transforming this vernacular landscape.