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## **The impact of loss and damage from the adverse effects of climate change on human rights**

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. I am a museum consultant working to empower museums, similar institutions, and their partners to contribute more effectively to sustainable development challenges, using rights-based approaches and linked to environmental and social goals. This submission is in terms of 'losses and damages' due to climate change, rather than the political use of the term 'Loss and Damage'.

**1. Please describe through concrete examples and stories the impacts of loss and damage from the adverse effects of climate change on the full enjoyment of human rights in your country. Please indicate whether the impact was exceptional or whether an example of many similarly situated cases. Please estimate the number of cases that may be similar in your country.**

The UK has a relatively mild climate, but there is strong evidence of climate change over the last century. The most direct way to consider concrete examples of the impacts of loss and damage from climate impacts is in relation to extreme weather events, and the extent to which they can be attributed to climate change. For cultural institutions, these impacts include closure during periods of extreme heat (meaning people can not make use of their services), closure or inaccessibility as a consequence of heavy rainfall and river flooding, and losses and damage to cultural artefacts and collections (usually as a result of heavy rainfall and river flooding). However, attributing loss and damage to climate change, as opposed to (1) the impacts or contribution of ongoing declines in public funding, resulting in lack of suitably skilled staff, lack of maintenance and poor building condition, or (2) inadequate planning and development, is difficult.

Many UK museums have suffered from flooding, for example, in England, Derby's Museum of Making was closed for three months in late 2023 after it had only recently undergone an £18 million redevelopment, as a consequence of water ingress from the adjacent river after Storm Babet (October 2023). The Museum launched a public campaign to crowdfund to aid with recovery and reconstruction, raising £18,000. It was reported that a "six-figure sum had

been mostly paid by the building's insurance cover".<sup>1</sup> The Museum is in one of several UK World Heritage Sites that are located next to rivers and consequently at high risk from flooding. Ironbridge Gorge is another example (also next to a river): museums there experienced severe flooding in 2020, 2021 and 2022, and refurbishments carried out in the earlier of these years were then damaged by further flooding. Other museums are in flood-prone areas. In Cumbria, Abbot Hall Art Gallery (next to a flood-prone river) had a number of paintings damaged in stores during flooding in 2015<sup>2</sup>; Keswick Museum has also been affected by flooding (the latter developed an exhibition to explain flooding in the district). These examples are illustrative: in practice, many museums have suffered from flooding, and are exposed to climate impacts from nearby rivers and heavy rainfall; smaller numbers of museums are exposed to other climate hazards (e.g. landslides).

In terms of human rights, museums relate to the right to participate in cultural life, enjoy the arts, and share in scientific advancement and its benefits; the right to information; freedom of expression; right of assembly; the right to take part in public affairs, and more. Museums are also more than simply 'visitor attractions', as cultural activities and material culture are basic resources for local people and communities (also made use of by tourists). Using the formulation of human rights as requiring Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, Appropriateness, and Adaptability (or variations of these in different agreements), climate impacts that undermine these conditions are also human rights impacts.

## **2. Quantitative and qualitative data as well as mechanisms and tools to measure, monitor, report on, and evaluate the impacts of loss and damage...**

The reporting for the Sendai Monitor is good, in terms of specifying the cost of losses to museums, but the data is difficult to gather and/or non-existent, partly as a result of diverse governance of museums (some national, some university, some local-authority, some independent). Museums relate clearly to Sendai indicator C6 (Direct economic loss to cultural heritage damaged or destroyed attributed to disasters), but could also be included in monitoring for C5. UNDRR has produced an overview of data availability for Sendai Framework indicators, including C5 and C6.<sup>3</sup> Monitoring and reporting for SDG 11.4 (protect and safeguard cultural and natural heritage) is not currently sufficient, as the indicators are complicated, and few countries have the data; using overall expenditure on museums as a proxy does not necessarily relate well to the extent to which collections are looked after or resilient.

UNDRR has noted "Research conducted by UNISDR has shown that the value of cultural heritage assets cannot be assessed in simple economic terms, and even less in terms of Direct Economic Loss. Most losses associated with cultural heritage are intangible losses, i.e. associated with the historical and/or artistic value of cultural heritage assets. Also, a good part of economic losses associated with cultural assets are indirect losses, mainly connected to future income losses associated to tourism, culture, and recreation."<sup>4</sup> However, most discussion attempts to put a financial cost on losses. It is to be hoped that work for Our

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-derbyshire-68101387>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2015/12/07122015-cumbria-museums-damaged-by-floods/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.unisdr.org/files/53080\\_entrybgpaperglobalsummaryreportdisa.pdf](https://www.unisdr.org/files/53080_entrybgpaperglobalsummaryreportdisa.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.unisdr.org/files/54970\\_techguidancefdigitalhr.pdf](https://www.unisdr.org/files/54970_techguidancefdigitalhr.pdf)

Common Agenda, namely measurements of progress beyond GDP, can contribute to this work.<sup>5</sup> It is also not desirable to simply use loss of tourism revenue as a measure of the impact of loss and damage, especially as tourism is a high emission sector that will need to transform for climate action.

Different ‘significance’ schemes exist to categorise museum collections, including the Designation scheme in England.<sup>6</sup> These could be used to identify priorities for preservation, although it should be noted that emphasis on locally important heritage is desirable and can be under-rated in such schemes (which prioritise ‘national’ and ‘international’ significance). Most losses are likely to be felt in small and medium-sized museums that are less well-funded.

More broadly, there are different tools available to review collections in terms of their condition, significance, threats, and use.<sup>7</sup> The ‘ABC Method’ assesses the loss of heritage value as a result of potential disasters and other events, as a planning tool, and could be used more widely to evaluate the impact of climate events.<sup>8</sup> Historic Environment Scotland’s Climate Vulnerability Index is used to assess climate risk on World Heritage sites.<sup>9</sup>

In ‘Museums and Disaster Risk Reduction’, I aligned the Ten Essentials of Resilience (from Making Cities Resilient) with museum activities, to aim to strengthen museums’ resilience, and also to mobilise their potential to contribute to resilience more widely, by mainstreaming DRR into museums, and museums into DRR.<sup>10</sup> In 2020-23 I undertook a Churchill Fellowship, to explore how museums can contribute to sustainable development and DRR, with many valuable lessons to be learnt from Japanese use of museums for DRR. A set of ten recommendations are made in the report ‘Museums for Better Futures’, presented below.<sup>11</sup>

### **3. Specific measures to avert, minimize and address loss and damage, including equity-based approaches and solutions...**

There is no concrete plan in the UK to relocate museums or their collections farther from climate hazards (to reduce exposure and vulnerability). This is in contrast to mainland Europe, where there are several instances of collections being moved, or at least calls have been made for them to be moved away from rivers, notably by the Louvre in Paris.<sup>12</sup> However, in Europe and the UK, the majority of museums are without climate adaptation plans: a large survey of 578 museums in 38 countries by the Network of European Museum

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-beyond-gross-domestic-product-en.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/supporting-collections-and-cultural-property/designation-scheme#:~:text=Since%201997%20the%20Designation%20Scheme,and%20cohesion%20within%20an%20organisation.>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-06/collections-significance-assessment-toolkit-for-welsh-museums.pdf>, <https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/significance20.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.icrom.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/risk\\_manual\\_2016-eng.pdf](https://www.icrom.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/risk_manual_2016-eng.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [Scotland’s World Heritage and Climate Change | Hist Env Scotland \(historicenvironment.scot\)](https://www.historicenvironment.scot/Scotland's-World-Heritage-and-Climate-Change)

<sup>10</sup> [curatingtomorrow236646048.files.wordpress.com/2020/07/museums-and-disaster-risk-reduction-2020.pdf](https://curatingtomorrow236646048.files.wordpress.com/2020/07/museums-and-disaster-risk-reduction-2020.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> [curatingtomorrow236646048.files.wordpress.com/2023/11/museums-for-better-futures\\_2023.pdf](https://curatingtomorrow236646048.files.wordpress.com/2023/11/museums-for-better-futures_2023.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2003/mar/12/highereducation.artsandhumanities>

Organisations found that less than one in ten museum had an understanding of climate impacts in their location.<sup>13</sup> Developing climate adaptation plans for all museums should be a high priority.

The Glasgow Work Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment, and the Sendai Framework, both offer excellent frameworks based on good, effective, equitable governance, in terms of calling for effective policies, co-ordinated action, upskilling organisations, and effective monitoring. It is highly desirable that these are made more use of by governments, including in the UK, and that they are mainstreamed into sectors, which they are not currently.

#### **4. Examples of promising practices and critical challenges in the promotion, protection, and fulfilment of the full enjoyment of human rights in the context of loss and damage...**

The project Reimagining Museums for Climate Action was launched in 2020 as a contribution to the UK's time as host of COP26. The project aimed to promote social adaptation, where possible institutional alterations to museums were crowd-sourced through an open competition, recognising that everyone should have opportunities to share their ideas. Eighty of the ideas are available on the project website.<sup>14</sup> By asking 'what if?' questions, the project aimed to expand the sense of what institutions could do (as opposed to what professionals think they could do).

#### **5. Specific recommendations on how to address the critical challenges that have been identified, including actions to be taken at country, regional, and global levels, as well as by different groups of stakeholders, Governments, development agencies, financing institutions, and others.**

Generally: 1. Museums and their funders should be required to manage assets in light of current and future climate risk scenarios. Every museum should have a climate adaptation plan informed by current and future climate scenarios. Obvious high risks should be managed as a top priority. 2. Museums and collections should be considered more fully in adaptation, disaster management and emergency plans. 3. Much more use should be made of them for climate adaptation. 4. Funding should be directed towards adaptation, rather than visitor growth.

The ten recommendations in Museums for Better Futures<sup>15</sup> could be applied to many other sectors and levels:

1. Connect work with sustainable development agendas and approaches more concretely, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), human rights and rights-based approaches, Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE), environmental action and/or Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

2. Recognise that it is not enough to 'support' sustainability or sustainable development: there needs to be clear goals, plans, and mechanisms for reporting and communication for accountability. Communication should cover both successes and challenges.

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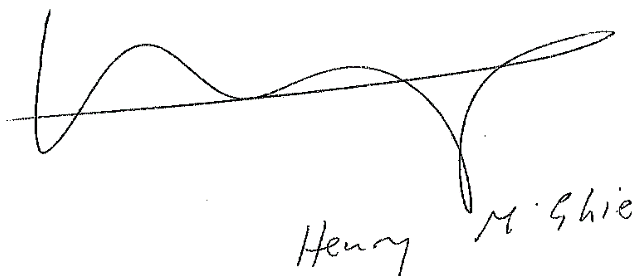
<sup>13</sup> [https://www.nemo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/Publications/NEMO\\_Report\\_Museums\\_in\\_the\\_climate\\_crisis\\_11.2022.pdf](https://www.nemo.org/fileadmin/Dateien/public/Publications/NEMO_Report_Museums_in_the_climate_crisis_11.2022.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.museumsforclimateaction.org/reimagine/concepts>

<sup>15</sup> [https://curatingtomorrow236646048.files.wordpress.com/2023/11/museums-for-better-futures\\_2023.pdf](https://curatingtomorrow236646048.files.wordpress.com/2023/11/museums-for-better-futures_2023.pdf)

3. Think global and act local. Connect with international initiatives such as the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, international days, and local initiatives.
4. Use the outcomes of Stockholm+50, the Glasgow Work Programme on Action for Climate Empowerment, and Japanese experiences with managing disaster risk as templates and practical tools for rights-based environmental action and DRR.
5. Restoring nature is good for people, communities and for nature. Involve people in environmental action that brings people together in a common endeavour.
6. Recognise the potential of culture and heritage as tools and opportunities to empower people to take environmental action and reduce disaster risk. Also recognise their potential to be barriers to action.
7. Make use of museums as information centres and platforms for sustainable development, environmental information and DRR.
8. Make sure that activity is rights-based in terms of acknowledging that people have their own ideas, aspirations and goals; avoid coercive programming, however well intended.
9. Make sure that activities are appropriate and sensitive to the needs of people and communities, especially in post-disaster or high-risk situations.
10. Recognise that while DRR is often thought of as needing to balance the needs to forget and to remember, in addition, it is important to create and to imagine, to develop alternative options. It is best to develop these in advance of high risk situation.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. I remain at your disposal should you have any questions or want clarification on any of the points raised.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke, followed by the name "Henry McGhie" written in a cursive script.

Henry McGhie, museum consultant, Curating Tomorrow