

The Beijing Appeal

Regional Capacity-Building Workshop on the Assessment of the Vulnerability of World Cultural and Natural Heritage Properties in Asia and the Pacific to Disasters and Climate Change

UNESCO, ICCROM and WHITRAP

Beijing, China, 6-12 December 2009

Whereas, the world, including the Asia Pacific region is increasingly exposed to disasters and the adverse impacts of climate change,

Whereas the peoples of this region are acutely aware of the associated risks of disasters and climate change and have experienced immeasurable suffering and loss of life, property and heritage,

Whereas the experts from the governments and peoples of this region and also from Canada, Italy and World Bank gathered here in Beijing, 6-12 December 2009, for the workshop on Vulnerability of World Cultural and Natural Heritage Properties in Asia - Pacific to Disasters and Climate Change, organized by UNESCO, ICCROM and WHITRAP to share their common need for the creation of a culture of disaster prevention, having discussed the adverse impacts of climate change on cultural and natural heritage properties and explored solutions to mitigate the threats associated with climate change,

Acknowledge that World Heritage properties are exposed to natural and human-made disasters which threaten their integrity and compromise their values, and

That the loss and deterioration of these outstanding properties would deprive the world of their cultural and socio economic value, their documentary value as a source of information and their tangible ability to support and shape human cultural identity.

That risks related to disasters within heritage properties are a function of their vulnerability to different potential hazards.

That despite this, most World Heritage properties, particularly in developing areas of the world, do not have any established policies, plans or processes for managing risk associated with potential hazards.

That existing national and local disaster preparedness mechanisms, usually do not take into account the significance of these sites and do not include heritage expertise in their operations and policy formulation;

That international institutions including the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) in its Reports do not mention the effects of climate change on the world's cultural and natural heritage properties;

That due to climate change, many cultural and natural heritage properties are already damaged with more under threat;

That there is a strong need to group and synthesize the efforts of local communities, educational institutions and professional peoples under the umbrella of international agencies such as UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, IUCN, UNEP, etc..

That there is insufficient recognition of the role played by traditional knowledge as one of the key tools for disaster preparedness

That international cooperation in the arena of vulnerability assessment of disasters and climate change for World Heritage properties requires strong future commitments at local, national and international levels in order to better protect threatened heritage.

In conclusion therefore, the participants of the Regional Capacity-Building Workshop on Assessment of Vulnerability of World Cultural and Natural Heritage Properties in Asia - Pacific to Disasters and Climate Change held at Beijing, China, 6-12 December 2009, representing 24 different countries and UNESCO, ICCROM and WHITRAP **appeal to world leaders to ensure the following:**

- Integration/inclusion of disaster and climate change considerations in legislation and international agreements related to, or having impacts on World Heritage properties
- Mobilize financial resources for the safeguard of cultural and natural heritage for sustainable development.
- Endorse the Action Plan prepared by the participants of the Beijing workshop on Assessment of Vulnerability of World Cultural and Natural Heritage Properties in Asia - Pacific to Disasters and Climate Change (Dec. 6-12, 2009).
- Give priority within international assistance to States Parties to implement emergency measures to mitigate significant risks to cultural and natural heritage from disasters.
- Endorse and give support to the creation of a culture of disaster prevention in all States Parties.
- Declare an International Disaster Prevention Day for Cultural and Natural Heritage, and
- Request UNESCO, ICCROM and WHITRAP to follow up in a timely fashion on response to this appeal by the world leaders.

Participants from: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Canada, China, Cook Islands, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kirghizstan, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, WHITRAP, ICCROM, UNESCO and the World Bank

Date: 11-12-2009

Note:

WHITRAP - World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia Pacific

ICCROM - the International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

UNESCO- UNITED Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization