



Budget Proposed

US\$ 50,000

Duration

2 years

Beneficiary

Global

Category

**Climate change •
Sustainable
development • Policy**



Strengthening World Heritage properties' resilience to climate change

Updating and promoting the World Heritage and climate change Policy Document

Climate change is becoming one of the most significant threats to World Heritage properties, jeopardizing the disappearance of their Outstanding Universal Value, their integrity and the potential for economic and social development at the local level. In addition, tropical regions are the most sensitive to climate change. As witnessed over the recent past, extreme weather events, including storms and floods, which occurred in the Central America and Caribbean regions are a dramatic reminder of this new reality the world has to face.



World Heritage properties serve as effective climate change observatories to gather and share information on applied and tested monitoring, mitigation and adaptation practices. The global network of World Heritage, one of the most widespread monitoring system, also helps raise awareness on the impacts of climate change on human societies and cultural diversity, biodiversity and ecosystem services, and the world's natural and cultural heritage.



Context

UNESCO has been **at the forefront** of exploring and managing the impacts of climate change on World Heritage. In 2006, under the guidance of the World Heritage Committee, it prepared a report on *Predicting and Managing the effects of climate change on World Heritage* (2006), followed by a compilation of Case Studies on climate change and World Heritage. This process led to the adoption in 2007 by the General Assembly of States Parties to the *World Heritage Convention* of a **Policy Document on the impacts of climate change on World Heritage properties**.

The issue of the impacts of climate change on World Heritage natural and cultural properties was indeed brought to the attention of the World Heritage Committee in 2005 by a group of concerned organizations and individuals. The Committee subsequently requested the World Heritage Centre, in collaboration with the *Convention's* Advisory Bodies, interested States Parties and the petitioners, to convene a broad working group of experts to review the nature and scale of the risks arising from climate change and prepare a strategy and report for dealing with the issue. In taking this decision the Committee noted "... **that the impacts of climate change are affecting many and are likely to affect many more World Heritage properties, both natural and cultural, in the years to come**".

As stated in the "Policy Document" (2007), the composition and distribution of natural, human and cultural ecosystems is expected to change as species and populations respond to the new conditions created by climate change. Warmer temperatures in deserts threatens species that now exist near their heat tolerance limit, and desertification increases. The projected declines in glaciers, permafrost and snow cover also affect soil stability and hydrological systems, eventually causing many river systems to dry up. In coastal and marine ecosystems, increased coral bleaching and mortality profoundly affect the productivity of reef ecosystems. Thus, **climate change adversely affects the conservation of natural World Heritage properties and the ecological systems that sustain life**.

Cultural World Heritage properties are also being variously impacted by climate change. **Archaeological remains and related evidence are affected** when the hydrological, chemical and biological processes of the soil change. Since historic buildings materials are



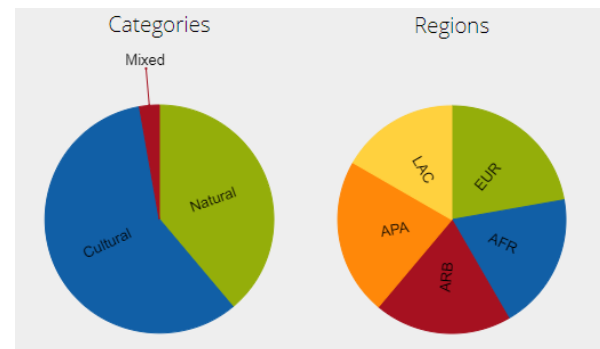
more porous than modern constructions, any increases in soil moisture can result in greater salt mobilization; consequently causing salt crystallization to **damage decorated surfaces**. Timber and other organic building materials can be subject to **increased biological infestation** in altitudes and latitudes that may not have been previously affected. **Flooding** also damages building materials. Increases in **storms** and wind gusts

lead to structural damage. Desertification, salt weathering and erosion is already threatening cultural heritage in desert areas.

Climate change is also causing social and cultural impacts, with communities changing the way they live, work, worship and socialize in buildings sites and landscapes, possibly migrating and abandoning their built heritage. Furthermore, climate change also impacts on livelihoods, food security, and the social economic fabric as a whole.

Since the adoption of the this "Policy Document", a number of reports on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties affected by climate change were presented to the World Heritage Committee.

Indeed, 133 reports on 36 World Heritage properties located in 31 States Parties of **all regions** were examined by the Committee in relation to climate change events having a **negative impact on their Outstanding Universal Value**. All types of sites, cultural (21), natural (14) and mixed (1) properties are affected (source: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc>).



Acknowledging that World Heritage properties increasingly face climate change threats, the Committee strongly encouraged States Parties to participate in the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in December 2015, with a view to achieving a universal climate agreement and **mobilize global climate action on the ground**, and requested the States Parties, the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to work with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) with the objective of including a specific chapter on natural and cultural World Heritage in future IPCC assessment reports.

Lastly, aware that knowledge related to adaptation and mitigation to climate change has drastically increased over the past 10 years, it requested the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to periodically review and update the "Policy Document", so as **to make available the most current knowledge and technology on the subject to guide the decisions and actions of the World Heritage community**, and to present, subject to available time and resources, a proposed update to the "Policy Document", for possible consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 42nd session in 2018.



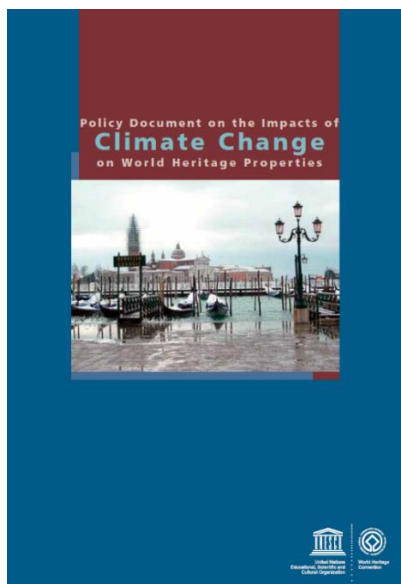


Objectives

The project ultimate objective is to propose an **updated “Policy Document on the impacts of climate change on World Heritage properties”** ideally for consideration by the World Heritage Committee at its 42nd session in 2018 and ensure its widespread communication to all stakeholders concerned.

The project will take place in a four-fold approach:

1. A **consultant** specialized in climate change and heritage matters will **review and analyze**:
 - documents, policies and strategies already adopted at the international level (such as the UNFCCC Paris Agreement and the Policy Document for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the *World Heritage Convention*)
 - outcomes of recent meetings (such as the International Expert Workshop on World Heritage and climate change, held in Vilm, Germany in October 2017);
2. **Consultation** will take place between the World Heritage Centre, the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee as well as renowned experts in order to refine the draft updated Policy Document;
3. Preparation of a series of relevant **case-studies** to accompany the updated Policy Document;
4. Development of a **communication outreach and visibility plan** to ensure the promotion of the adopted updated Policy Document to all stakeholders of the *Convention* and to the wider public. The updated Policy Document will be promoted both as a printed document and as web-based material.



Relevance

Under Article 6 of the *World Heritage Convention*, the States Parties “recognize that [such heritage] constitutes a world heritage for whose protection it is the duty of the international community as a whole to co-operate”.

The *World Heritage Convention*'s comparative advantage lies in its management of outstanding cultural and natural heritage properties around the world, and the breadth of States Parties' obligations to protect these properties.

Actions taken at these 1.073 iconic properties attract considerable attention and can influence the adoption of good management practices elsewhere.

Therefore, the World Heritage Centre will focus its efforts on optimizing this comparative advantage by actively promoting, in cooperation with States Parties, the use of World Heritage properties in the activities of other conventions, international bodies and programmes working on climate change. Priority in all climate change related actions under the *Convention* will be given to properties in **the most vulnerable locations** and part of UNESCO's **thematic action focus areas**: Africa and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

The World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies will continue to cooperate with States Parties and other relevant organizations during the Reactive Monitoring and Periodic Reporting processes and in research activities, so that the **impacts of, adaptation to, and mitigation of climate change are properly assessed, reported and managed** and so that the updated Policy Document is adequately promoted and implemented.



Outcomes & Beneficiaries

The project aims at updating the current “Policy Document on the impacts of climate change on World Heritage properties” and ensure its **widespread dissemination and communication of results**. Due to the unique scope of the *World Heritage Convention*, and the **considerable attention World Heritage properties attract**, the beneficiaries of this project are diverse: all States Parties to the *Convention*, Site-Managers of heritage sites, international bodies, universities, research institutions, private sector, NGOs and other relevant programmes working on climate change and/or heritage matters. Secretariats of other related multilateral conventions or programmes (such as the UNESCO MAB Programme, the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, etc.) will also be interested in this Policy Document.



Budget

An estimated overall extra-budgetary funding of USD 50,000 is needed for the implementation of this project.

These funds will cover the consultant fees, as well as communications and printing of the final updated Policy Document.



Visibility

A communication & visibility plan will be developed in consultation with the donor(s).

The donor's logo will be included in the printed version of the updated Policy Document as well as on the related webpage and any promotional document (for information, the World Heritage Centre website received **over 13,000,000 visits** in 2016 from over 9.5 million unique viewers).

A side-event could also be envisaged during the 43rd session of the World Heritage Committee to promote the Policy Document.



Timeline

If funds are available, the following timeline for November 2017-July 2019 can be envisaged:

Nov. 2017:

Contract of a consultant to start gathering relevant material and start drafting an updated Policy Document

April 2018:

Draft updated Policy Document, including case-studies, delivered by the consultant and shared with the World Heritage Centre's partners (e.g. Advisory Bodies) and international experts for their review and comments

May 2018:

Finalization of the draft updated Policy Document and diffusion to all World Heritage Committee members

July 2018:

Presentation of the updated Policy Document to the World Heritage Committee at its 42nd session in view of its adoption

Aug. 2018-May. 2019:

Implementation phase of the communication and visibility plan and widespread promotion of the Policy Document, including through the updating of the World Heritage Centre's webpage on climate change

July 2019:

Side-event at the 43rd session of the World Heritage Committee to promote the Policy Document

Contacts



Ms. Petya Totcharova

Chief of Unit
Policy and Statutory meetings Unit
UNESCO World Heritage Centre
p.totcharova@unesco.org

Mr. Richard Veillon

Project Officer
Policy and Statutory meetings Unit
UNESCO World Heritage Centre
r.veillon@unesco.org