Climate action is essential for transformative sustainable development. It is also a major opportunity to leverage desirable social transformations that will favour social inclusion and justice as well as safeguard the climatic and ecological systems on which we depend. It is high time to redirect our technology, science, finance and ingenuity to transform our economies, ensure equality and promote a sustainable future for all, including young people, women and indigenous and other minorities. This requires leadership from governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society as well as the active involvement of the most affected groups.

This year, the international community will have a historic opportunity to reach a global agreement on climate change and to adopt a new post-2015 sustainable development agenda with a set of sustainable development goals.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation require a holistic and long-term approach to truly sustainable; 2015 is therefore the time for global action in order to achieve the future we want.

UNESCO’s contributions to rethinking sustainability globally include a wide range of projects. Grouped under five main themes covered by our actions, our efforts reflect the multifaceted nature of climate challenges and associated mitigation and adaptation solutions. Undertaken in synergy with the overall UN System, UNESCO’s climate change actions are developed and implemented through its different Sectors, Field Offices, designated and affiliated sites, Category I and II Centres, UNESCO Chairs and Networks.

UNESCO, UNFCC and COP21
The Twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is being held from 30 November to 11 December in Paris, France, to reach a universal, legally binding agreement that will enable us to combat climate change effectively. Following by boosting the transition towards resilient, low-carbon societies and economies, UNESCO cooperates closely with the overall UN system in support of the Paris and the successful of the UNFCCC’s objectives.

UNESCO is organizing and hosting a large number of events, initiatives and activities leading up to and during COP21, several of which are being held in cooperation with France as the host country of COP21. These include (there is a full list of events and initiatives at https://en.unesco.org/themes/cop21):

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UNESCO promotes the continuous strengthening of the interdisciplinary link of climate-change knowledge based on high resources to climate-change mitigation and adaptation, and includes innovative use of social and natural sciences, education, and communication and information to improve the understanding of the complexity of climate, through natural and local climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience frameworks on science-based and indigenous knowledge, and ecologically and socially sustainable solutions.

Through its International Hydrological Programme (IHP), Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), World and the Dialogue (MIW), Programme Crustal Studies and Instability (PICS), and the Communication and Information Sector, UNESCO provides valuable data, knowledge, and tools for related concerns and related opportunities for climate change mitigation, adaptation, and sustainable development solutions, including: basic sciences, environment, and renewable energy resources; knowledge and information on sustainable development; and capacity building through collaboration and partnerships. It is essential to increase the level of understanding about climate change among islanders, and it is also necessary to increase the level of understanding about climate change and its impacts among islanders.

The Ocean and Climate Change

The ocean is one of the most important life support systems on the planet, providing oxygen, regulating climate, and supporting marine ecosystems. It is also a key player in the global carbon cycle, absorbing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The ocean's capacity to absorb carbon dioxide is crucial for mitigating climate change, as it helps reduce the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. However, the ocean is also vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels and ocean acidification, which can have serious consequences for marine life and coastal communities.

The impacts of climate change on the ocean are complex and far-reaching. Rising sea levels can lead to coastal erosion, flooding, and saltwater intrusion, affecting the habitats of marine species. Ocean acidification can harm marine calcifiers, such as corals and shellfish, which are important components of marine ecosystems. Changes in ocean circulation can disrupt marine food webs, affecting the distribution of species and altering the balance of ecosystems. The consequence of these impacts is a loss of biodiversity, which can have significant ecological and economic implications.

Climate-Neutral UNESCO

UNESCO together with the overall UNEP system is working on a UNEP report, "The Ocean and Climate Change," with the aim of creating a new global strategy on the ocean. The report will cover the latest science on the ocean and climate change, and it will provide recommendations for action. The report will be launched in 2024, and it is expected to be a key reference point for policymakers and stakeholders.

UNESCO Sites: A Climate Change Observatory

UNESCO Sites is a network of over 1,100 sites that have been designated as World Heritage Sites, cultural or natural, or both. These sites represent the best and most significant examples of the world's cultural and natural heritage, and they are managed by UNESCO and its member states. The network includes a range of sites, from natural landscapes to cultural heritage sites, and it covers all regions of the world. In 2021, UNESCO launched a new initiative called "UNESCO Sites: A Climate Change Observatory," which aims to monitor the impact of climate change on UNESCO Sites and to develop strategies for their conservation.

The observatory is an initiative to identify and monitor the impacts of climate change on UNESCO Sites, and it is expected to be a valuable tool for policymakers, stakeholders, and the public. The observatory will use a combination of monitoring and research methods to assess the impacts of climate change on UNESCO Sites, and it will work to develop strategies for their conservation and sustainable management.

The observatory will also work to raise awareness about the importance of conserving UNESCO Sites, and it will work to promote the use of sustainable practices to protect these sites. The observatory will work with local communities, governments, and other stakeholders to develop and implement strategies for conserving UNESCO Sites, and it will work to promote the use of sustainable practices to protect these sites.

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Climate Change, Education and Public Awareness

UNESCO promotes the continuous strengthening of the interdisciplinarity of climate-change knowledge bases of high relevance to climate-change mitigation and adaptation, including, but not limited to, social and cultural knowledge, as well as knowledge that is emerging through climate change research such as climate-smart agriculture, monitoring and assessment.

This is being integrated with UNESCO capacities in natural and social sciences, culture, education and communication in order to improve the understanding of the effects of climate change through natural and local climate mitigations, adaptations, and knowledge creation on science, social, indigenous knowledge, and ecological and sustainable systems. education and awareness raising play an essential role in increasing the climate change adaptation capacities of communities, enabling individuals to make informed decisions. UNESCO helps build understand the causes and consequences of climate change, prepares them to face the impacts of climate change, and empowers women and men to adopt more sustainable lifestyles. As part of its work on Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO supports research on national policies and education systems, and facilitates dialogue and exchange among stakeholders through international expert meetings and workshops on climate education in countries high risk school-approach on sustainability issues and stakeholder involvement.

Gender equality and Climate Change

Women are important agents of change, and they hold significant knowledge and skills related to mitigation, adaptation, and the mitigation of the impacts of climate change. Women also experience climate change differently, and they face particular challenges in these efforts. Gender equality and climate change are closely intertwined, and addressing them is essential for building resilience and achieving long-term sustainable development.

The involvement of women in climate change policies and practices is crucial for effective adaptation and mitigation strategies. Women’s experiences and perspectives can provide valuable insights into climate impacts and potential solutions. Gender-sensitive approaches to climate change can lead to more equitable and effective climate policies and practices.

Water resources, water science, vulnerability, biodiversity, and environmental management are essential actions to foster enhanced use of information and technologies, and to ensure the protection of the natural features of World Wetlands. UNESCO promotes the conservation of wetlands, which are crucial for the protection of biodiversity and the provision of ecosystem services, and the wise use of water resources.

The impact of climate change is already being felt, with changes in weather patterns, altered precipitation regimes, rising temperatures, and increased frequency of extreme weather events. These changes have far-reaching implications for the planet’s ecosystems and human societies.

Climate Change and Water Security

Climate Change is already affecting water resources, with impacts on the quantity and quality of water resources. It is projected that climate change will exacerbate existing water-related challenges, particularly in regions where water resources are already scarce, and will lead to increased competition for water among sectors.

Sea-level rise, melting ice sheets, and changing precipitation patterns are some of the key climate-related changes that are expected to affect water resources. These changes can have significant impacts on water supply, ecosystem services, and human health.

The Ocean and Climate Change

The ocean plays a vital role in regulating the planet’s climate, storing vast amounts of carbon, and influencing weather patterns. Climate change is already affecting the ocean, with rising temperatures, ocean acidification, and changes in sea level.

The impacts of climate change are already being felt, with warming oceans, rising sea levels, and changes in ocean currents. These changes have far-reaching implications for the health of marine ecosystems and the well-being of billions of people around the world.

The climate change impacts are likely to be more severe in coastal areas, which are home to a large proportion of the world’s population. Coastal areas are vulnerable to sea-level rise, which can lead to increased flooding and erosion, and to the loss of habitats and biodiversity.

Africa and Climate Change

The IPCC has confirmed that Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate change, with significant negative impacts on food security, health, and many other aspects of daily life. The continent’s low-lying islands and coastal areas are particularly vulnerable to sea-level rise and increased flooding.

UNESCO promotes the development of national education and awareness programs to prepare students and the public to understand climate change and its impacts. It also supports research and development in climate-related fields, including renewable energy and sustainable development.

China has made tremendous progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainable development, but there is still much work to be done to achieve the Paris Agreement goals. UNESCO collaborates with China to support its efforts to reduce emissions and promote climate action, including by building partnerships with local and national governments, and by sharing best practices and knowledge through its network of UNESCO Sites.

Climate Neutral UNESCO

UNESCO promotes the decarbonization of its operations and the development of climate-neutral strategies. It also supports the implementation of climate action plans and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions at its headquarters and other sites.

UNESCO Sites: A Climate Change Observatory

In addition to its work on education and awareness-raising, UNESCO promotes the development of regional and national observatories to track and monitor climate change impacts.

Together with other leading climatic organizations, UNESCO launched the sandwatch program, which is a Global UNESCO Priority under which focus is placed on building peace by building inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable societies. The program aims to promote a culture of peace, understanding, and tolerance among communities and to contribute to the global agenda for sustainable development.
Climate action is essential for transformative sustainable development. It is also a major opportunity to leverage desirable social transformations that will favour social inclusion and justice as well as safeguard the climatic and ecological systems on which we depend. It is high time to redirect our technology, science, finance and ingenuity to transform our economies, ensure equality and promote a sustainable future for all, including young people, women, and indigenous and attine minorities. This requires leadership from governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society as well as the active involvement of the most affected groups.

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UNESCO’s contributions to rethinking sustainability globally include a wide range of projects. Grouped under five main themes covered by our mandate, our actions reflect the multifaceted nature of climate challenges and associated mitigation and adaptation solutions.

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