

# Updating of the Policy Document on the impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage properties

Summary of the online consultation  
(30 December 2019 – 31 January 2020)

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- **The Policy Brief**

- Endorsed by the World Heritage Committee in at the 31st session (Christchurch, 2007) and adopted in 2007 by the 16th General Assembly of States Parties to the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO, 2007)
- Prepared with coordination of experts, practitioners, international organizations, civil society groups working in the fields of heritage conservation and Climate Change
- The document gives recommendations regarding :
  - development of synergies between international conventions and organizations
  - identification of future research opportunities
  - legislative questions on the role of World Heritage Convention with respect to actions and
  - synergies to deal with Climate Change at World Heritage properties

- **Summary\* of the responses to the online consultation for updating the Policy Document**

### Key challenges for Climate Change Policy Document implementation

- Passive role of the States Parties towards the Policy implementation, especially regarding Climate Change
- Lack of awareness about the alarming rate at which impacts of Climate Change are affecting the World Heritage properties
- Lack of financial resources to implement the strategy
- Lack of human resources and capacity to assess, implement and monitor the Policy Document
- Absence of knowledge resources (manuals, guidelines, toolkit) which help in providing concrete action plan for implementation of the Policy Document
- Lack of political support and coordination between local and national level

### Gaps in the Policy

- The Policy Document functions as an international tool for Climate Change but it fails to focus on implementation guidelines for a site or region specific approach
- Provision of guidance to States Parties for adaptive management has not been achieved
- The Policy Document does not recognize the direct or indirect impacts of Climate Change on Intangible Heritage
- Apart from recommendations for Global level and States Parties level, the Policy Document should also provide guidance for implementation at a regional level
- Frequent revisions to the Policy Document are required and more awareness about the publication of such a document to be raised

- The Policy Document is only available in English and French. Translation of the document in regional languages will result in easier accessibility and understanding at a local level
- Substantial recommendations and guidelines to mitigate Climate Change impacts at World Heritage properties should be incorporated

- [Comments and suggestions made by the respondents to the online consultation](#)

For improvement of the Policy Document (B5a1)

- The Policy Document discusses the internal and local policies related to World Heritage properties however, it lacks in providing mechanisms for implementation at site level
- A thematic approach with respect to different Climate Change factors, sites, regions should be developed for better functionality
- Consideration of vulnerability of Intangible Heritage due to the impacts of Climate Change should be a part of the updated Policy Document
- Translation of the Policy Document in regional languages
- Case studies and examples of best practices to be promoted as guidelines for developing active mechanisms at sites with similar contexts
- The Policy Document should reflect recommendations developed with the consideration of the interconnectedness of Nature, Culture and Climate Change
- Frequent revisions to the Policy Document should be made for it to be relevant to emerging threats
- Awareness regarding the availability of the Policy Document to be raised

Role of the World Heritage Convention in addressing Climate Change threats to world Heritage properties (C2)

- In addition to the World Heritage Convention, another supplementary protocol is required to provide more pragmatic systems to deal with Climate Change
- The World Heritage Centre (WHC) should encourage the States Parties for an active participation in monitoring, adapting, mitigating and responding to Climate Change impacts
- Development of an assessment mechanism by the World Heritage System to assist States Parties in listing and linking Climate Change pressures to hazards that may impact a site
- WHC facilitates active monitoring of the World Heritage properties through Reactive Monitoring and Periodic Reporting
- WHC should address the increasing need of community participation and adaptation for mitigation of the impacts of Climate Change
- WHC is not solely equipped to deal with the impacts of Climate Change, and synergies with international conventions and organizations should be developed
- WHC should be stringent with shifting the focus on Climate Change through necessary amendments in the Operational Guidelines, Nomination format for World Heritage properties
- Provision of a foundation for improved capacity for climate adaptation
- Identification of knowledge gaps and dissemination of information on climate science

- Role of the existing processes under the World Heritage Convention to better assess, manage and/or report climate-related activities

#### The Nomination process (D1)

- Inclusion of a revised climate policy in the updated Operational Guidelines is necessary
- The Nomination dossiers should facilitate the identification, assessment of vulnerability of the site along with current and future threats due to Climate Change
- Management plans should reflect the actions based to assess vulnerability, resilience building
- The manual on “Preparing World Heritage Nominations” should include a section that stresses on the Climate Change factors, impacts and mitigation
- Nomination process should demand a commitment from the State Party to undertake Climate Change monitoring, mitigation, adaptation
- Development of an annual questionnaire would cater to an updated status of the Climate Change threats to a site
- Incorporation of Climate Change in the relevant existing sections of the Nomination dossier and Operational Guidelines (para 111 and 118) would give a clearer picture of Climate Change impacts and potential implementation of the Policy
- Involvement of the local communities and experts to identify and include Climate Change risk factors and impacts in the Nomination dossier

#### Periodic Reporting (D2)

- Section 1 Q5.14.1.1 and Section 2 Q5.3.8 of the Periodic Reporting questionnaire, which report on the activities undertaken for Climate Change risk assessment and implementation of related measures, can be expanded further
- Reporting on the adaptations for damage mitigation and impacts of Climate Change should be made mandatory
- A report with comparison of properties with similar case studies for implementation of effective best practices can be made available to the States Parties
- An open data platform to make Climate Change research data available to academics, site managers and other parties can be developed
- Guidance documents by the WHC and Advisory Bodies, which will give a deeper insight on templates and examples of best practices, should be developed

#### Reactive Monitoring (D3)

- Need for an increased focus on monitoring of the mitigation strategies not just at site level but also at States Parties level
- An integral section on Climate Change impacts in the Reactive Monitoring of World Heritage properties should be included in the existing format
- Monitoring of the implementation of activities to strengthen the capacities of communities and traditional knowledge about Climate Change for mitigation
- Promotion of best practices dealing with Climate Change through Reactive Monitoring reports could also be instrumental in developing mechanisms
- The Operational Guidelines should be updated to recognize that causes of Climate Change are amenable to correction by human actions at global level

- Corrective measures should be more focused on adaptation rather than mitigation
- Collaborative measures with other conventions should be encouraged however, the current focus on property management at site level should be consistent
- Rather than limiting the value of “in danger” properties at individual site level, grouping of similar classes of properties will help formulating a thematic approach
- An informal list of potential “in danger” sites to be drafted to draw public attention to significant risks posed by Climate Change
- Developing thematic vulnerability assessments for different types of World Heritage properties can be made available to the States Parties and guidance on the management for resilience to adapt to Climate Change can be provided

#### Management planning / Management systems (D4)

- The new Policy needs to include Climate Change adaptation and a new emphasis on managing for resilience to be made evident
- Property specific initiatives to strengthen the capacity of World Heritage to be designed and implemented
- Action Plans for an assessment of risk and vulnerability to Climate Change adaptation should aim to improve resilience of the sites
- A platform to share best practices for management of heritage sites could help in disseminating knowledge and information on a global level
- Activities and curriculum for educating site managers, communities on Climate Change specific approaches at properties should be developed for building capacity
- Resilience building mechanisms can be incorporated in the site planning and management process
- All Management plans should be dedicating a special section for risk preparedness for Climate Change impacts
- Management plans should be active under the purview of national and regional legislations rather than being directed only towards international ties

#### National implementing legislation and regulation (D5)

- Regulation systems should promote and work towards development of synergies between international conventions, national and local organizations
- Collaborative efforts to propagate impact assessment tools for natural and cultural heritage conservation should be undertaken
- Clear definitions and roles of national, local and international regulations in implementing the Climate Change Policy Document to be defined
- Awareness raising programmes for parliamentarians, politicians should be conducted for stronger credible regulatory legislative framework
- Measures and actions identified in the heritage management plan to be integrated in local legislation could have potential impact on the preservation of the property

*\* Disclaimer: The ideas and opinions expressed in this summary are those of the respondents to the online consultation and do not necessarily represent the view of UNESCO*