

**Committee:** United Nations Office of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

**Agenda Item:** Role of conventions in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage

**Student Officer:** Ceylin Çınar, Çağan Hançer

## **Introduction**

Heritage is the cultural legacy that we receive from the past, which we live in the present and which we will pass on to future generations. With the 1972 Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, UNESCO established that certain places on Earth have "exceptional universal value" and belong to humanity's common heritage, such as the Serengeti Forest in East Africa, the Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia and the Baroque cathedrals of Latin America.

Nonetheless, cultural heritage is not limited to monuments and collections of objects. It also consists of living expressions inherited from our ancestors, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social manners, rituals, festive events, knowledge, and practices related to nature and the universe, and knowledge and techniques linked to traditional crafts. Despite its fragility, intangible cultural heritage or living heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity.

Not only cultural heritage is getting threatened but also natural heritage, with destruction by the traditional causes of decay, and by changing social and economic conditions. Considering that deterioration or disappearance of any item of the cultural or natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world, in order to protect the heritage one of the best possible solutions is to recommend the concerned nations to make conventions and resolutions on the topic with the propositions from the related organizations such as UNESCO.

The World Heritage Convention,

The convention, which was already being developed as early as 1965, went on to state that such deterioration would be a "harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world" and concluded that the organization would seek to protect the world's heritage by building a list of significant sites, enhancing awareness and appreciation for them within the specific country and internationally.

The World Heritage Convention is one of the most important global conservation instruments. Created in 1972, the primary mission of the Convention is to identify and protect the world's natural and cultural heritage considered to be of Outstanding Universal Value. The convention still keeps its validity through our day and it is one of the things that determines the role of the conventions. It shows that conventions can be a source of help with protecting and adopting cultural heritage.

World Heritage Site,

A World Heritage Site is a landmark or area with legal protection by an international convention administered by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). World Heritage Sites are designated by UNESCO for having cultural, historical, scientific, or other forms of significance. The sites are judged to contain "cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity".

### **Definition of Significant Terms**

Cultural Heritage, is the legacy of tangible and intangible heritage assets of a group or society that is inherited from past generations. Not all legacies of past generations are "heritage"; rather, heritage is a product of selection by society.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), are formed independently from the government. They are typically nonprofit entities, and many of them are active in humanitarianism or the social sciences; they can also include clubs and associations that provide services to their members and others.

Natural Heritage,

Natural heritage refers to natural features, geological and physiographical formations and delineated areas that constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants and natural sites of value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.

Cultural Heritage,

Cultural heritage includes artifacts, monuments, a group of buildings and sites, museums that have a diversity of values including symbolic, historic, artistic, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological, scientific and social significance.

### **Reducing Disasters Risks at World Heritage Properties**

Natural heritage can, quite similarly, be threatened by such events. Disaster risk at heritage sites is in part a function of their exposure to hazards that are determined by their natural and technological environment (e.g. earthquake- or flood-prone areas, industrialized zones, human-activity etc.). However, disaster risk is not only a measure of external, potential threats, but also of the inherent vulnerabilities existing at any given site.

Recent studies, moreover, have demonstrated how heritage, in both its tangible and intangible forms, is not simply a passive entity in the face of disaster, but has a significant potential for reducing disaster risks *in general*. This potential can be harnessed to reduce vulnerabilities, and thus negative impacts on lives, property, and livelihoods, before, during and after a catastrophic event.

Heritage plays a crucial role in fostering resilience by reducing vulnerabilities, and also by providing precious assets for the sustainable social and economic development of an affected region during its recovery phase, by attracting investment, creating employment, or providing renewable natural resources. This is why the protection of heritage in the event of disaster is of paramount importance.

### **World Heritage Programmes**

**World Heritage Marine Programme,**

launched in 2005, the mission of the World Heritage Marine Programme is to establish effective conservation of existing and potential marine areas of Outstanding Universal Value to make sure they will be maintained and thrive for generations to come. The program has four focus areas to fulfill its mission.

### **Central Africa World Heritage Forest Initiatives (CAWHFI),**

the conservation, sustainable exploitation, and management of forest sites in Central Africa, and in particular in Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, and the Central African Republic, have since 2004 benefited from the activities of the Central Africa World Heritage Forest Initiative (CAWHFI), which aims to strengthen the management of protected areas while improving their integration within the region's various ecological landscapes.

Using the World Heritage Convention as a tool to strengthen international cooperation in the field of cultural and natural heritage conservation in Central Africa, CAWHFI has implemented various activities since 2004 to promote the sustainable management of wildlife and identify potential natural World Heritage sites.

### **World Heritage Cities Programme,**

The World Heritage Cities Programme is one of six thematic programmes formally approved and monitored by the World Heritage Committee. The programme is structured along a two-way process, with the development of a theoretical framework for urban heritage conservation, and the provision of technical assistance to States Parties for the implementation of new approaches and schemes.

## **Major Organizations Involved**

### **United Nations Office of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),**

UNESCO is the main body on this topic. UNESCO's mission is to contribute to the building of a culture of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development, and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication, and information. Through the committee's agenda item we will focus on the importance of this organization on cultural heritage alongside its other contributions.

### **UNESCO World Heritage Centre,**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) seeks to encourage the identification, protection, and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty called the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972. The organization is an under-body of UNESCO that focuses on cultural and natural heritage.

Many countries have their own organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), we suggest you look it up to your own country's organizations if it does have such. It will be beneficial for the debate.

## **Timeline**

### **1972: Adoption**

Adoption of the Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, a groundbreaking international treaty that connects the concepts of nature conservation and cultural property preservation for the first time, recognizing how people interact with nature and the critical need to maintain the delicate balance between the two. On November 16, 1972, the UNESCO General Conference approved the Convention.

### **1975: Ratification**

The World Heritage Convention formally takes effect upon ratification by the first 20 States Parties. The World Heritage in Danger List was intended to bring attention to properties that require special international attention and help. Through both mandatory and voluntary contributions, the World Heritage Fund was formed to help States Parties in identifying, preserving, and promoting World Heritage sites.

### **1978: Operational Guidelines**

The World Heritage Committee creates selection criteria for properties to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, as well as Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, which include rules for property monitoring and reporting. The Galápagos Islands, located off the coast of Ecuador, are the first of twelve sites to be inscribed on the World Heritage List

### **1992: Cultural Landscapes**

The World Heritage Centre is established to handle the Convention's day-to-day maintenance, with 377 sites inscribed in the first twenty years of its existence. The Convention now includes a new category of sites, making it the first legal instrument to recognize and protect cultural landscapes.

### **1994: A Global Strategy**

The Committee endorses the Global Strategy for a Balanced, Representative, and Credible World Heritage List, which aims to correct imbalances on the List between areas of the world, monument types, and periods represented. The Strategy represents a shift in World Heritage from a monumental to a much more people-centered, multipurpose, and global perspective. The Nara Document on Authenticity is adopted, which acknowledges the unique nature of historic values in each cultural setting.

### **2002: The 4 C's**

The Committee approves the Budapest Declaration on World Heritage on the occasion of the Convention's 30th anniversary, asking all stakeholders to assist World Heritage protection through four important Strategic Objectives (the "4 Cs"): credibility, conservation, capacity-building, and communication. The World Heritage Partners Initiative, now known as PACT, was established to promote public-private partnerships and to establish a framework through which a diverse range of organizations and individuals can contribute to the conservation of World Heritage sites around the world.

### **2007: The 5 C's and Community**

The World Heritage Committee adds a fifth 'C' to its Strategic Objectives - Community – to emphasize the critical role of local communities in the preservation of World Heritage.

### **2014: 1,000th inscribed site**

Botswana's Okavango Delta is the 1,000th site to be put on the World Heritage List. The cheetah, white rhinoceros, black rhinoceros, African wild dog, and lion are among the world's most endangered large mammal species found in this delta, which includes permanent marshlands and seasonally flooded plains.

### **2018: The Warsaw Recommendation**

The "Warsaw Recommendation on Cultural Heritage Recovery and Reconstruction" was established at the "International Conference on Reconstruction: The Challenges of World Heritage Recovery," which took place in Warsaw, Poland, from May 6 to 8. These are general standards for the recovery and repair of World Heritage assets, particularly historic urban districts, following armed conflict or natural disasters.

### **2022: The 50th Year of the Convention**

A year of activities, including events, conferences, workshops, exhibits and a targeted communication campaign, celebrates the 50th Anniversary of the adoption of the World Heritage Convention

### **Points to be addressed**

How did the past conventions affect the cultural heritage, did it secure the existence of it or threaten it?

What are the past attempts?

What is the role of significant organizations such as UNESCO, NGOs, and your country within this topic?

### **Useful Links**

<https://whc.unesco.org/>

<https://en.unesco.org/creativity/convention>

<https://en.unesco.org/fieldoffice/santiago/cultura/patrimonio>

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/>