

IS HERITAGE LEFT BEHIND IN THE HLPF MINISTERIAL DECLARATION?

STATEMENT FOR INCLUSION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE WITH REFERENCE TO SDG 11 AND OTHER GOALS

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The Ministerial Declaration of the UN High-Level Political Forum 2018, in its first revised draft issued on June 28, 2018, has **little mention of culture, and none at all of cultural and natural heritage**, either in the context of SDG11 (paragraph 27) or in other Goals. This is a **significant gap in the mission to ‘leave no one behind’** and in the spirit of thinking holistically. Considering the vital contributions that heritage protection makes to sustainable development, particularly expressed in **Target 11.4 to “protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage”** in order to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” (Goal 11), we advocate for the rightful recognition of heritage at the highest level of policy debate on Agenda 2030, i.e. in the Ministerial Declaration.

Both **cultural and natural heritage** sites, while under increasing pressure from the impacts of urbanization, climate change and degradation due to other natural and human factors, play a **crucial role supporting local economies, livelihoods and quality of life** in human settlements. The destruction of ecosystems can have devastating consequences that go beyond their exceptional beauty and natural value. Similarly, the loss of cultural sites that embody social memory and identity threaten the social cohesion and **well-being of communities**. Leading local governments, cities, regions and their networks are considering heritage as the foundation of policies and programmes in the localization of the SDGs.

The important place of heritage, particularly its cultural dimension, has often been **under-recognized** in the general debate on sustainable development. However, there is already much **research and policy work** to draw from, including the UN GA Resolution 68/223 on Culture and Sustainable Development (2013), the Hangzhou Declaration on Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies (UNESCO, 2013), the Paris Declaration on Heritage as a Driver of Development (ICOMOS 2011), ‘The Future We Want Includes Culture’ campaign (global cultural networks, 2013-2015), the Culture 21: Actions toolkit (Agenda 21 for Culture, UCLG 2015), the Report of the Horizon 2020 Expert Group on Cultural Heritage (European Union 2015), Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe (Europa Nostra et al, 2016), the Nature-Culture Journey (IUCN World Conservation Congress 2016) and the Davos Declaration “Towards a High-quality Baukultur for Europe” (Ministers of Culture of the Council of Europe, 2018), the Berlin Call to Action “Cultural Heritage for the Future of Europe” (2018) and the European Commission proposal for a “New European Agenda for Culture” (2018).

Building on this body of evidence, we commend the recognition of the importance of “**cultural diversity**” in context of human rights and the need for “a **culture** of innovation, sustainability and inclusiveness”. (Paragraph 13 of the Ministerial Declaration).

However, we advocate, in addition, for:

- the recognition of “**indigenous and traditional water management** systems as a resource for resilience and sustainability”. (Paragraph 25, on SDG6, Water).
- the recognition of “opportunities for **adaptive reuse** and harnessing the **embodied energy** inherent in the historic built environment” (Paragraph 26, on SDG7, Energy); the most sustainable building is the one that already exists.
- **adequate reference to Target 11.4** on cultural and natural heritage, alongside its sister targets covered under Goal 11. While commending the reference to the New Urban Agenda, we advocate for reference also to the Kuala Lumpur Declaration of the 9th World Urban Forum, and for the inclusion of “**cultural diversity and dialogue**” in the context of “cities acting as agents of positive change, catalysts for inclusion, and powerhouses of equitable economic growth.” We stress that **heritage has a crucial role in the urban development process**, shaping the identity, collective memory and ‘**sense of place**’ that all sustainable cities require to be people-centred. It fosters socio-economic regeneration, supports urban density and strengthens the social fabric, enhancing the appeal and creativity of cities and regions. The international community must seriously take up the challenge of protecting and safeguarding the natural and cultural heritage as a fragile, non-renewable resource for current and future generations. (Paragraph 27, on SDG11, Cities).
- the recognition of “**long-term sustainable tourism benefits** afforded by preserving cultural resources” and “the role of the historic built environment in supporting the **circular economy**” in the context of the life cycle approach (Paragraph 28, on SDG12, Production and Consumption).
- enhancing the important reference to “integrated **landscape** management approaches” with mention of “the conservation of **cultural landscapes** as harmonious interactions between humans and nature”, “**traditional and indigenous land management** approaches as a resource for resilience and sustainability”, the role of the “**historic urban landscape (HUL)** approach in participatory and transparent land-use planning” and the success of “landscape-scale approaches to advance integrated **nature-culture solutions**, in the context of climate change and food sovereignty”. (Paragraph 29, on SDG15, Life on Land).

With appreciation for your support in this advocacy effort, for the HLPF2018 and going forward in future platforms,

International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) - United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) – Agenda 21 for Culture – Global Planners Network (GPN) – Europa Nostra – International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)