ICOMOS Report: Engaging Cultural Heritage in Climate Action

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ICOMOS - the International Council on Monuments and Sites has recently published a report entitled "Future of Our Pasts: Engaging Cultural Heritage in Climate Action," which aims to increase engagement of cultural heritage in climate action. Putting forward a multi-disciplinary approach to cultural heritage, the report is intended for site managers, scientists, researchers, but also to climate activists and policy-makers. 28 ICOMOS members representing 19 countries served as lead and contributing authors for the report. 11 ICOMOS International Scientific Committees and 21 ICOMOS National Committees provided feedback. In addition, almost 50 invited experts provided peer review.

The report highlights a number of ways in which the core considerations of cultural heritage intersect with the objectives of the Paris Agreement, including heightening ambition to address climate change, mitigating greenhouse gases, enhancing adaptive capacity, and planning for loss and damage. Indeed, cultural heritage offers immense and virtually untapped potential to drive climate action and support ethical and equitable transitions by communities towards low carbon, climate resilient development pathways. Realizing that potential, however, requires both better recognition of the cultural dimensions of climate change and adjusting the aims and methodologies of heritage practice.

At the same time, climate change is already impacting communities and heritage globally, and these trends are rapidly worsening. The report provides a framework for systematically cataloguing the impacts of climate change drivers on six main categories of cultural heritage, in order to aid in evaluating and managing both climate risks to cultural heritage and the positive role it can play as a source of resilience. Given the nature and scale of climate impacts, the report concludes that how we conceive of heritage and how we manage it will require updating.

New, multi-disciplinary approaches will be required in areas such as heritage documentation, disaster risk reduction, vulnerability assessment, conservation, education and training as well as in the ways heritage sites are presented to visitors. The "Future of Our Pasts" report was prepared under the scientific leadership of ICOMOS' Climate Change and Heritage Working Group, established in 2017. ICOMOS initially plans to use the report to organize its inputs into a proposed update of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee's 2007 Policy Document on the Impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage sites, to develop a roadmap for heritage organisations to engage on climate change issues, and to organise outreach to the scientific community on research gaps and opportunities. For additional information and access to "Future of Our Pasts: Engaging Cultural Heritage in Climate Action," please visit https://www.icomos.org/en/77-articles-en-francais/59522.icomos-releases-future-of-our-pasts-report-to-increase-engagement-of-cultural-heritage-in-climate-action.
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