

Global Call to Put Cultural Heritage, Arts and Creative Sectors at the Heart of Climate Action

The process to organise this Call to Action campaign was launched on 28 September 2023 during the European Cultural Heritage Summit held in Venice, Italy at the European Heritage Hub Forum "Reimagining the Anthropocene: Putting Culture and Heritage at the Heart of Climate"

A bold but necessary path towards mobilising creative solutions for tackling the climate crisis.

We, the undersigned, ask the national governments who are parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement to adopt a 'Joint Work on Culture and Climate Action' decision (JWD) at the COP.

This decision would reflect a commitment from the UNFCCC to begin a consultative process to understand the full contribution of culture - including cultural heritage, arts and the creative sectors - to climate action. The process would examine what culture-led climate responses are already happening, where and by whom; share recommendations for scaling out culture-based solutions; and help ensure that culture is fully integrated into the future work of the Convention.

Culture has unparalleled capacity to enable change.

The world's diverse cultures touch everyone, everywhere; encompassing the full range of voices, perspectives and tools to communicate urgency, mobilise action, and champion sustainable and justice-led ways of living. Through cultural participation, safeguarding, dialogue, experiences, narratives, and stories; and through creative images, events and offerings, culture inspires action, especially when fortified by respect for cultural rights.

Harnessing the power of diverse cultural values and ways of knowing, education and storytelling, art and craft, tangible and intangible heritage, and design and creativity can in turn guide and scale that action to create the systems change needed to tackle the twin climate and biodiversity crises.

Tangible and intangible heritage as well as traditional knowledge enhance resilience and offer time-tested, low-carbon, circular and regenerative technologies and solutions across sectors including the built and natural environment, agriculture, energy, and care for habitats and communities.

Anchored in shared human values of solidarity, care and respect, the collective effort of artists, creative activists, designers, culture and heritage institutions and civil society bringing together both professionals and volunteers, as well as scholars and holders of ancestral wisdom, enlightened policy makers, and communities and audiences,

challenge dominant paradigms and offer visions and examples of sustainable futures, freed of reliance on fossil fuels, restoring biodiversity, and championing social justice.

Culture-based climate action promotes local solutions to universal problems, filling gaps in current climate planning through strategies that are inclusive, rights-based, place-specific, demand-side, and people-centred, within a framework that recognises the interdependence of all living things.

Despite insufficient emphasis on the key role of culture in much official climate policy and funding, artistic and heritage voices are on the forefront of work for triple transformation (green, digital, and social), pursuit of 1.5-degree pathways, and systems change. A persistent lack of formal policy recognition, however, undermines the vital contribution of culture and ultimately the effectiveness of global climate action.

A “Joint Work” is a recognised process by which the COP can request the UNFCCC Secretariat and its subsidiary bodies to jointly address a critical, gap issue – in this case the intersections of culture and climate action. It would pave the way to the adoption at a subsequent COP of a landmark work programme putting culture and heritage at the heart of climate policy, planning and action.

Such a future work programme would bolster attention to the socio-cultural enabling conditions for transformative climate action and support more effective mitigation and adaptation. At the same time, it would address critical issues of loss and damage to culture and heritage already recognised in the Sharm El Sheikh Implementation Plan adopted at COP 27. Last but not least, it would support global efforts to put culture at the heart of climate resilient sustainable development.

Integrating cultural voices into international climate policy will elevate locally-led heritage, artistic and creative approaches that offer scalable solutions to the climate crisis. It will also better support the work of Indigenous Peoples who have long championed a culture of care for Mother Earth. **All in all, it would enable the global cultural community, which is rich and diverse, to speak with one clear and united voice** thus mobilising the global network of cultural, heritage, artistic and creative advocates, civil society, institutions and public bodies at all levels to support the UNFCCC in its vital mission.

To tackle climate change, we must unlock the transformational power of culture - from arts to heritage - to help people imagine and realise low carbon, climate resilient and just futures.

We the under-signed join the call that delegates to the UN Climate Conference adopt a Joint Work Decision that would finally put the world on the path to recognising culture as an indispensable pillar of a more effective and a more just climate action.

_____ **[signatories]**

END

GLOBAL CALL TO PUT CULTURAL HERITAGE, ARTS AND CREATIVE SECTORS AT THE HEART OF CLIMATE ACTION

Key Messages, Campaign Timetable, and FAQ's

This campaign aims to unite culture and heritage voices in a global effort to put culture from arts to heritage at the heart of climate change planning, policy, and action.

KEY MESSAGES

What are we asking for?

We are asking the national governments that are parties to the UN Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement to adopt a 'Joint Work on Culture and Climate Action' decision (JWD) at the UN Climate Change Conference known as the Conference of the Parties or "COP."

What is that?

The JWD is a request from the national governments that govern the UNFCCC and thus international climate policy to the UNFCCC staff and the UNFCCC's subsidiary technical bodies to jointly address issues related to culture including arts and heritage, including through workshops and expert meetings, working with constituted bodies under the UNFCCC as well as other interested organisations in order to make recommendations for consideration and adoption. The terms of the JWD are discussed in more detail below.

Why is it important?

A Joint Work decision would launch a process to:

- Bolster climate action by beginning to harness social and cultural tools that enable transformative climate action.
- Enable culture and heritage-based climate action to scale up around the world
- Influence key policies and discussions on adapting to our changing climate, reaching net zero, encouraging culture and heritage based transformational learning experiences, safeguarding heritage and culture, and more.
- Unite and empower the culture sector through coming together to influence decision-making in this area.

What do we mean by culture?

This Campaign considers the concept of culture in its broadest sense.

Culture encompasses the arts (includes spoken word, poetry, literature, music, visual arts, and performing arts and so on), creative sectors (includes film, TV and broadcast), design and fashion, and digital.

Heritage is understood as a dimension of culture made up of elements from the past deemed important in the present for the future, encompassing tangible, intangible, moveable and immovable, documentary, and natural heritage. This includes sites, landscapes, monuments, objects, and collections. It also includes the knowledge derived from human experience and the human past. This knowledge is dynamic and is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment and their history. It reflects and embodies contemporary knowledge of environments, land use, and resource stewardship developed over generations of Indigenous and local communities; patterns and events in the development of the modern world, including histories of colonialism, capitalism, and industrialization. Cultural heritage is the record of human creativity through time and all forms of heritage are bases for creativity in the present.

What's the bigger picture?

Culture is critical in finding solutions to the climate crisis. It plays a powerful role in our lives. It can inspire change, shift hearts and minds, and imagine and create new ways of living. Adopting this JWD will play a crucial role in the implementation of change in societies by recognising that culture, heritage and arts are integral to human life, expression, beliefs and behaviour and therefore integral to embracing the changes needed to create a better future.

What can you do?

If you recognise culture as an indispensable pillar of climate action, sign up to support the campaign, and share it with your networks and communities.

- **Share the campaign's message with diverse individuals and organisations that have the ability to pass the message to national governments, which are the ones who will take the final decision.**
- **Share the Campaign's message with diverse cultural voices and encourage them to begin thinking now about the contributions they would like to make to a global, UN-level consultative process aimed at understanding the full contribution of culture to climate action; where and how culture-led climate solutions are already in place, and by whom; and making recommendations for incorporating arts, culture and heritage-based strategies into future climate UNFCCC policy and work plans.**

Who are the stakeholders and who should sign up to this campaign?

This campaign is for everyone who cares about empowering cultural voices, actors and sectors in the fight against climate change. Everyone in cultural, heritage, arts and entertainment, sector, including artists and creatives, cultural institutions, units of government at all levels, SMEs and design firms, organisations, universities and educational institutions, Indigenous Peoples' organisations, and individuals. It also includes environment and climate activists who recognise that addressing the cultural dimensions of the climate crisis are critical to getting the world back on track to meeting Paris Agreement targets.

The COP28 Presidency is arranging a high-level meeting (planned for 8 December 2023 at the COP) where ideas like the JWD can be discussed. The JWD idea also builds on the Kashi Cultural Pathway adopted in August at the G20 Culture Ministers' meeting in India which noted 'growing culture-related concerns raised in the context of the UN Climate Action Summit and the COP, by...building on the opportunities of culture-related practices and knowledge systems, including local and indigenous knowledge and practices, to inform adaptation and mitigation strategies and plans as well as solutions for climate action'

FAQs

What is COP?

COP (COP is short for Conference of the Parties) is an international climate meeting held each year by the United Nations. The countries involved are committed to taking actions outlined in an international treaty called the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). COP 28 takes place this December 2023 in Dubai, U.A.E.

What happened at COP 27?

In November 2022, COP 27 delivered exciting news and a historical win for the creative climate movement. For the first time ever, national governments included cultural heritage in statements on both 'loss and damage' and 'adaptation'.

CHN and partners delivered a significant achievement, ensuring that culture is recognised as an asset to be protected from climate impacts and a resource to strengthen communities' transformative change.

What is the Context for this Campaign?

To date, engagement with the cultural dimensions of climate action has been led in many places by civil society and other non-state actors. The JWD would not change that. Rather, the idea is that mainstreaming art, culture, and heritage perspectives into international climate change policy would support local cultural-based climate action by helping to deliver policy and funding frameworks that valorise this work. All of this would in turn help improve the efficacy of climate planning and action.

Who is leading the effort at national government level?

We are encouraged to see the ideas embodied in the Call to Action being championed by the host country of COP28, the United Arab Emirates, and by the COP28 Presidency. Dr Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, President Delegate for CO28 UAE, and H.E. Salem bin Khalid Al Qassami, Minister of Culture and Youth, UAE have now jointly issued an invitation to a High Level Ministerial Dialogue on Culture-based Climate Action to be held at COP28 on 8 December which will see the launch of the new Group

of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action at the UNFCCC. The Group of Friends is to be an informal coalition of UNFCCC member states focused on strengthening political momentum for an effective, coherent, and coordinated action to support and advocate for culture and heritage-based climate action as well as for the protection of culture and heritage from climate impacts. The initial focus of the Group of Friends will be to advocate for the inclusion of the JWD on the COP agenda, and subsequently, for its adoption.

We welcome this strengthened political momentum for advocacy and action by national governments.

Who else can influence the decision?

While the ultimate choice to take a decision at the COP will be made by such Member States, there is a critical role for Non-State Actors to play. This includes local governments and municipal authorities; civil society including cultural institutions; creative industries, design industries, artists and craftspeople; universities and research; culture and heritage professionals; and activists and advocates.

If a Joint Work Decision is achieved what will this mean?

A “Joint Work” decision is a recognised process that national governments meeting at a COP can follow. Some things to keep in mind:

- A JWD can result in new platforms that provide a permanent role for a topic or sector -- like culture – in climate talks and in the work of the UN climate agency (the UNFCCC).
- Through workshops and expert meetings, the process would take into consideration the vulnerabilities of cultural heritage to climate change and approaches to culture and heritage as a driver of climate action.
- The goal of this process would be to make recommendations for consideration and adoption at COP 29 in 2024. Ideally, this would be a comprehensive work plan by the UNFCCC on engaging with the cultural dimensions of transformative climate action.

The initial JWD that we are seeking directs the UNFCCC and its Subsidiary Bodies to jointly commence a one-year consultative process to address issues related to arts, culture, and heritage through workshops and expert meetings, taking into consideration the vulnerabilities of cultural heritage to climate change and approaches to culture and heritage as a driver of climate action. Engagement by Non-State Actors in such a consultative process will be crucial. We expect that this process would include a call for submissions to the UNFCCC of ideas on the intersections of culture and climate action as well as opportunities to intervene as scientific meetings that would be convened to discuss these issues.

Topics that might be discussed as part of the consultation include:

- The power of culture, including artistic practice, creativity, heritage, and traditional knowledge systems, to help people imagine and realise sustainable consumption and production patterns, and low-carbon, climate resilient futures;
- Culture and heritage practices as contemporary climate technology and its role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- The culture and heritage dimensions of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change and the consequences of the impacts of climate hazards on culture and heritage on the resilience of people and communities;
- Synergies and tradeoffs between the safeguarding of cultural heritage and transformative climate action;
- Role of culture and heritage in avoiding maladaptation and mal-mitigation;
- Socioeconomic and cultural dimensions of climate resilient sustainable development.

What happens next?

In order for the one-year consultative process that would be launched by the JWD to be successful, we will need robust engagement and co-creation from diverse culture and heritage voices. Everyone's creativity will be needed to share with the UNFCCC visions for how to unlock the power of culture to help people imagine and realise low carbon, just, climate resilient futures. Engaging with the JWD consultative process begins with engaging with the campaign to secure a JWD. Many Non-State Actors can play a key role in encouraging support for the JWD objective from national governments and the time for that work is now.

By Signing the Call to Action What Are You Consenting To?

You consent to our name being shown publicly on the website and in other campaign assets as being in full support of the campaign and a signatory on the Call to Action Letter'