

Committee: UNESCO

Delegation: Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Topic: Protection of Historical Monuments Amidst Changing Climate

Climate change is a threat to the world's cultural heritage, especially as rising sea levels, increasing temperatures, desertification, and more frequent natural disasters place hundreds of global historical monuments at risk. According to UNESCO, nearly three-fourths of World Heritage sites face significant threats from water-related hazards like droughts and flooding. Further, the State of Conservation Information System (SOC), reports that roughly one-third of SOC reports related to climate change were in the last five years, suggesting an intensification of climate-related risks (UNESCO). Many heritage sites date back thousands of years, representing core pieces of history, culture, and knowledge. As such, it is imperative to further develop protection frameworks for these sites against the intensification of climate change.

UNESCO has recognized the connection between climate change and cultural preservation through the 1972 World Heritage Convention and its *Policy Document on the Impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage Properties*. An update to this policy document was adopted in November 2023. Key elements of these documents include recommendations on the global, regional, and state levels, highlighting “the need and importance of creating systems of international cooperation and assistance to...conserve heritage” (UNESCO). Additionally, UNESCO currently supports various Climate Change Adaptation Projects, contributing to disaster risk management for Heritage sites.

Jordan considers cultural heritage as an essential part of national identity and sustainable development. Home to eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Petra, Quseir Amra, and Umm er-Rasas, Jordan understands both the cultural and economic importance of preserving historical monuments. With an economy dependent on tourism, an industry which contributes 14% to Jordan's GDP and supports over 60,000 jobs, the protection of these sites is a national

priority (Yousef 1). Jordan has partnered extensively with UNESCO and international conservation organizations to improve disaster preparedness and archaeological preservation while also sustaining the tourism industry. After two flash floods in 2018 which posed risks to Petra and tourists, Jordan worked with UNESCO and its Heritage Emergency Fund to collect baseline data for the Petra heritage site. From this project, Jordan designed a roadmap for flash flood mitigation in the area (UNESCO). Additionally, Jordan has encouraged local communities to participate in heritage conservation, particularly through the Youth for Heritage Conservation and Risk Prevention project. This project, in partnership with UNESCO and with funding from Italy, aims to mitigate landslide risks by providing safety and security training to the local community on conservation and management (UNESCO).

Jordan believes that collaboration between less developed nations and countries with greater technical and financial capacities is key to safeguarding the world's historic monuments from the consequences of climate change. To strengthen international cooperation, Jordan advocates for increased information sharing technology, through which member states could share scientific research and restoration technologies. Further, though UNESCO currently offers assistance mechanisms for heritage protection in the form of an Emergency Assistance fund and a Conservation and Management fund, Jordan supports expanding UNESCO's assistance programs to prioritize more preventative action. Such an expansion would include increased climate risk assessments, digital mapping, and educational initiatives for local communities to ensure sustainable, long-term preservation efforts. Jordan looks forward to collaborating with Morocco and Peru, both of which have significant cultural heritage sites threatened by climate change, and with Italy, which has strong expertise in cultural preservation.

Works Cited

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