Submission by ICOMOS on behalf of the
Climate Heritage Network

This Submission is made in response to the following Call for Submissions:

Issue: Sharm el-Sheikh mitigation ambition and implementation work programme

Title: Parties, observers and other non-Party stakeholders to submit their views on opportunities, best practices, actionable solutions, challenges and barriers relevant to the topics of the dialogues referred to in paragraph 13 of Decision 4/CMA.4 (4 weeks before each dialogue)

Session Name: 6th Global Dialogue

Mandate: Decision 4/CMA.4, para 14 FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/L.16, para 9

Date of Submission: 30 June 2025
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1. Introduction

1.1. Decision 4/CMA.4, paragraph 1 decided to establish the Sharm el-Sheikh mitigation ambition and implementation work programme (the "Work Programme") for urgently scaling up mitigation ambition and implementation in this decade.

1.2. Paragraph 8 of decision 4/CMA.4 decided that at least two global dialogues shall be held each year as part of the work programme.

1.3. The decision requested the co-chairs of the work programme to decide on and communicate every year the topics to be discussed at each dialogue and to invite views relevant to the topics of these dialogues (4/CMA.4, paragraphs 13 and 14).

1.4. On 7 March 2025 the co-chairs communicated that the sixth global dialogue taking place under the work programme in 2025 will focus on "enabling mitigation solutions in the waste sector, including through circular economy approaches," and encouraged Parties, observers and other non-Party stakeholders to submit views on opportunities, best practices, actionable solutions, challenges and barriers relevant to this topic.

1.5. The Climate Heritage Network appreciates the opportunity to share its views on opportunities, best practices, actionable solutions, challenges and barriers relevant to the topic of "enabling mitigation solutions in the waste sector, including through circular economy approaches" for urgently scaling up mitigation ambition and implementation.

The Climate Heritage Network[1] (CHN) is a global network whose members are committed to unlocking the power of culture, from arts to heritage, to help people imagine and realize low-carbon, just, climate-resilient futures and to support communities in achieving the ambitions of the Paris Agreement. Both multilevel governance of climate action and intersections of culture and heritage and waste and circularity are key issue areas under the CHN 2022-24 Action Plan.[2]

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)[3] is an international non

[1] https://www.climateheritage.org/.
[2] https://www.climateheritage.org/actionplan.
[3] https://www.icomos.org/fr.

governmental organization which works for the conservation of monuments and sites around the world. It has over 11,000 members in 132 countries and is an organization with observer status before the UNFCCC and is making this submission on behalf of and for the CHN.

2. Cultural Heritage, Mitigation and Waste

In order to provide an urgently needed complement to the global stocktake and to accelerate action in this critical decade, the CHN proposes that the Work Programme's 2025 global dialogues on the topic of "Enabling mitigation solutions in the waste sector, including through circular economy approaches" include a focus on culture and built heritage.

2.1. Culture is crucial to scaling up mitigation ambition and implementation in this decade

The Emirates Declaration on Cultural-based Climate Action[4] adopted by over 30 countries at COP28 summarises well the intersection of culture and heritage and mitigation:

> We stress that any path to fully achieving the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement, including those related to mitigation … and in promoting climate-resilient sustainable development, must include a focus on cultural heritage, arts, and creative industries and the socio-cultural enabling conditions for transformative climate action.
>
> We recognize that culture, from arts to heritage, has a fundamental role to play in helping people to imagine and to realise low carbon, just, climate resilient futures and that … diverse ways of knowing, education and storytelling, art and craft, tangible and intangible heritage, and creativity … represent culture's unparalleled capacity for enabling a powerfully inclusive response to create the systemic change needed to tackle the climate crisis.

The Declaration calls for scaling-up mitigation activities emphasising the role of arts, culture and heritage programmes in place-based, demand-side, and people-centred strategies, including a focus on the cultural dimensions of reducing waste and shifting to more sustainable production and consumption approaches.

IPCC WGIII's 2022 report on Mitigation of Climate Change contains a detailed assessment that reveals how social norms, culture, and individual choices interact with infrastructure and other structural changes, providing insight into climate change mitigation strategies.[5] WGIII found "high confidence in the potential of narrative shifts, social influencers, and thought leaders to drive widespread adoption of emissions-reducing technologies, behaviors, and lifestyles."

Cultural voices in many cities have not been adequately mobilized for climate action, presenting an immediate opportunity to rapidly scale up mitigation ambition and implementation.[6] This includes individual operators such as archaeologists, architects, landscape architects, administrators, archivists, artists, crafts persons, conservators, curators, engineers, geographers, historians, librarians, musicians, museum professionals, performers, site managers, urban planners, and writers, as well as networks of arts organisations, Indigenous Peoples' organisations, cultural institutions, archives, libraries, museums, and heritage sites. This also includes supporting culture governance, research, and funding mechanisms, including prominently at urban (local and regional) levels.

[4] https://tinyurl.com/yc3vzje7. See generally, COP28 High Level Ministerial Dialogue for Culture-Based Climate Action. https://www.cop28.com/en/schedule/high-level-ministerial-dialogue-for-culture-based-climate-action. [5] Creutzig, F. et al., 2022: Demand, services and social aspects of mitigation. In IPCC, 2022: Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [P.R. Shukla et al. (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA. doi: 10.1017/9781009157926.007.

[6] See generally "The Culture for Climate Agenda, Unleashing the Power of Culture as a Pillar of Climate Action: Policy Paper Prepared for the UCLG World Congress and Summit of World Leaders, Daejeon, Korea October 10-14, 2022 [hereinafter, "Culture for Climate Agenda"] (pg. 19), https://www.uclgmeets.org/processes/Climate-Culture?locale=en.

2.2. Culture and heritage are crucial to the topic of built environment waste and circular economy

The building and construction industry consumes 40-50% of globally extracted raw materials, and building and construction materials are expected to comprise a third of the increase in materials use through 2060.[7] The 2024/2025 UNEP Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction urges action on circularity in the built environment and identifies building reuse, durable materials, maintenance, and increased recycling as key actions.[8] These strategies are core to cultural heritage practices.[9]

Heritage practices, including vernacular and traditional building practices, demonstrate an alternative model for circular supply chains and management of the built environment that reduce the need for raw materials extraction and reframe the concept of waste.[10] The Emirates Declaration particularly highlight co-benefits such as social cohesion, wellbeing, creativity, education and intercultural dialogue from culture and heritage-based mitigation activities with reference to the built environment.

Tangible and intangible heritage as well as traditional knowledge offer time-tested, low-carbon, circular and regenerative technologies and solutions across sectors including the built environment[11] and urban and territorial planning.[12]

2.3. Focus on cultural heritage urgently needed to implement the Declaration de Chaillot

Two important pathways to overcoming these challenges are set forth in the recently adopted Declaration. The Declaration de Chaillot aims to enable international cooperation towards a rapid, fair, and effective transition of the building and construction sector.[13] It was adopted by representatives of 70 countries in March 2024 at the first Buildings and Climate Global Forum organised by the French Government and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). The Declaration calls for, inter alia:

- Prioritising the reuse, re-purposing and renovation of existing buildings and infrastructures
- Plan, design, build, operate and manage culturally and socially climate adapted buildings through a whole life cycle approach
- Prioritising on-site assets, recycled and end-of-life use, local, sustainable building materials
- Enhancing local sourcing of traditional appropriate low-tech solutions

[7]United Nations Environment Programme (2020). 2020 Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction: Towards a Zero-emission, Efficient and Resilient Buildings and Construction Sector. Nairobi. https://globalabc.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Buildings-GSR-2020_Report_24-03-21_0.pdf

[8]United Nations Environment Programme (2025). Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction 2024/2025: Not just another brick in the wall - Thesolutions exist. Scaling them will build on progress and cut emissions fast. Paris. https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/47214

[9] Historic England. “Heritage in a Circular Economy.” Historic Englaned. June 19, 2024. https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-and-environment/circular-economy/#ref18

[10] Dabaieh, Marwa, Dalya Maguid, and Deena El-Mahdy. 2022. "Circularity in the New Gravity—Re-Thinking Vernacular Architecture and Circularity" Sustainability 14, no. 1: 328. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14010328

[11] See ICOMOS Climate Change and Cultural Heritage Working Group. 2019. The Future of Our Pasts: Engaging Cultural Heritage in Climate Action, July 1, 2019. Paris: ICOMOS. [Hereinafter, “Future of Our Pasts”], pp. 47-56. 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; Potts, A (Lead Author). 2021. European Cultural Heritage Green Paper. Europa Nostra, The Hague & Brussels. [hereinafter, “Cultural Heritage Green Paper”], pp. 17-33. https://www.europanostra.org/putting-europes-shared-heritage-at-the-heart-of-the-european-green-deal/.

[12]Cultural Heritage Green Paper, supra note 11 at p. 35.

[13] https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/declaration-de-chaillot-forum-batiments-climat.pdf.

The CHN recommends that these themes be emphasised in buildings-related dialogue within the Work Programme through a focus on the following best practices:

- Raising the profile of reuse and retrofit of the existing built environment as an effective means of dramatically reducing waste while achieving sectoral decarbonization and resilience.
- Illustrating why heritage and indigenous knowledge must inform contextually appropriate circularity frameworks, metrics, and practices for new development in the Global South to achieve sustainable and equitable climate action.
- Highlighting the culture-based climate action opportunities and co-benefits inherent in the historic built environment to mobilise action, strengthen social inclusion, and build social capital, as well norms and values that support notions of sufficiency and circular economy.

The GST synthesis report[14] released by the UNFCCC in September 2023 found that to strengthen the global climate response, governments need to support "systems transformations;" "whole-of-society approaches," "and immediately strengthen "social" enabling conditions while "finding creative ways to overcome "social and capacity barriers." The IPCC has also identified socio- culture as a key enabling condition for climate action and for achieving sustainable development in a 1.5°C warmer world.[15] All of this underscores the immediate opportunity to complement the GST through attention to the socio-cultural dimension in the dialogues of the Work Programme.

3. Cultural heritage, mitigation and waste: best practices, actionable solutions, and barriers

Drawing on existing science and recent policy developments, the CHN submits the following best practices and actionable solutions as well as challenges and barriers relevant to the topic of "Enabling mitigation solutions in the waste sector, including through circular economy approaches" for urgently scaling up mitigation ambition and implementation.

3.1. Urban waste and circularity systems and cultural heritage

The 2021 International Co-Sponsored Meeting on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change co sponsored by the IPCC, ICOMOS and UNESCO is a valuable source on this topic. Of note is the Global Research and Action Agenda (GRAA).[15] GRAA Case Study Box 1 on "Cities as Engines of Transformation for Global Sustainability in the Urban World of the 21st Century"[16] identifies the following key mitigation-related areas concerning the role of culture and heritage for climate change in urban areas as related to circular economy and waste:

- Strengthening connections between urban planning, spatial design and the key roles culture, values, and heritage play in circular economies.
  Potential best practices and actionable solutions:
  - 848th Street Rehabilitation Demonstration Project, Izmir, Turkey[17]

[14] Technical Dialogue of the First Global Stocktake: Synthesis Report by the Co-facilitators on the Technical Dialogue (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2023); https://go.nature.com/3LkZgCX. See, for example, Allen, M.R., et al., 2018: Framing and Context. In: Special Report on 1.5°, 56 ("The feasibility of staying within 1.5°C depends upon a range of enabling conditions with geophysical, environmental–ecological, technological, economic, socio-cultural, and institutional dimensions.").

[15] GRAA, supra note 7. See also Shepherd, Nick, Cohen, Joshua Benjamin, Carmen, William, Chundu, Moses, Ernsten, Christian, Guevara, Oscar, Haas, Franziska, Hussain, Shumon T., Riede, Felix, Siders, A. R., Singh, Chandni, Sithole, Pindai and Troi, Alexandra (2022) ICSM CHC White Paper III: The role of cultural and natural heritage for climate action: Contribution of Impacts Group III to the International Co-Sponsored Meeting on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change. Discussion Paper. ICOMOS & ISCM CHC, Charenton-le-Pont, France & Paris, France, 91p. ISBN 978-2-918086-73-4. [Book] https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/2719/.

[16] GRAA Box 1, "Cities as Engines of Transformation for Global Sustainability in the Urban World of the 21st Century," supra note 7.

[17] Id at pg. 61.

- Examples listed in the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) report on the role of culture and history in ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns by centering local, traditional foods and products (Chefchauen, Morocco; Florianópolis, Brazil; La Paz, Boliva; Gaziantep, Turkey).[18]

- Challenging Inherited Mindsets and Shifting Narratives: 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, to challenge dominant paradigms and offer visions and examples of sustainable futures, freed of reliance on fossil fuels, restoring biodiversity, and championing social justice.[19]
  - During COP28, a coalition of 175 organizations hosted the inaugural Entertainment and Culture Pavilion in the Blue Zone. The Pavilion showcased diverse programming to involve creative industries and key stakeholders on culture-based climate action. The Entertainment + Culture Pavilion held programming for SB60, COP16, COP30, and SB62 is also planning an edition at COP30 in Belem.
  - Makers Valley/Community Recycling Swop Shop, Johannesburg, South Africa.[20]
  - Culture & Creative Sectors & Industries driving Green Transition and facing the Energy Crisis Brainstorming Report Appendix of Case studies and best practices, Voices of Culture, European Commission Structured Dialogue with the Cultural and Creative Sectors in the EU. 2023.[21]

3.2. Buildings and Circular Economy Practices

Existing and historic buildings and traditional knowledge present tremendous climate mitigation opportunities. Two-thirds of the buildings that exist today will still be here in 2040. In the Sixth Assessment Report, the IPCC both identifies the SER framework - which prioritises sufficiency and efficiency - and advises that rates of retrofit must increase significantly to meet climate targets. The Global ABC's "Building Materials and the Climate: Constructing a New Future," identifies the criticality of both reusing existing materials and scaling up the use of natural, traditional materials. All of these recommendations align with activating heritage and indigenous knowledge in the built environment.

Challenges to unlocking this potential exist, however. To date, sectoral approaches to climate action in the built environment have been dominated by Global North industrial practices, products, and markets; and a focus on new construction and technologies. This has largely overlooked embodied and avoided carbon; critical knowledge from history and from indigenous practice; and the inherent societal capacity-building potential of cultural heritage.

Lessons embedded in heritage places and many cultures around the world that never adopted a linear economy offer successful examples of circular economy. Proven heritage strategies already in practice in communities around the world range from preserving and reusing whole buildings, to repairing and salvaging building materials, to building new structures with local, durable, repairable materials.

[18] Marcolin, V. 2021: "Accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility." In: Cultural Heritage Green Paper, supra note 11.

[24] https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/culture_in_the_sdgs.pdf

[19] See Bridging the gap – the role of equitable low-carbon lifestyles, Capstick, S. et al. In: UNEP (2020). The Emissions Gap Report 2018. United Nations Environment Programme, Nairobi. Pg 75 (noting that research indicates that changes to underlying cultural norms are more difficult to accomplish than transitory behavioural changes but once established, are likely to be more durable and to support a wider range of low-carbon lifestyles)

[20] Culture in Climate Resilient Development, supra note 6, at pg. 56.

[21] https://voicesofculture.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/VoC-Report_Greening-CCSI.pdf.

Heritage strategies also integrate with new technology, such as AI generated materials inventories from existing buildings and modular approaches to deconstruction and reuse. These approaches reduce carbon emissions and land degradation, preserve local culture, create local skilled labor and local supply chains, and support community cohesion grounded in the built environment.

Action solutions include:

- Policies to promote building reuse, deconstruction, and materials salvage:
    - The City of San Antonio, Deconstruction and Circular Economy Program requires deconstruction of older residences, leading to reduction of waste, local job creation, and local economic development.[22]
    - City of Westminster, Retrofit First Policy prioritizes reuse of buildings as a default development option and maximizes recycling when demolition is required. The policy is intended to reduce carbon emissions, reduce waste, and create new housing.[23]
- Technology solutions based on old and new technologies:
    - Low-tech, traditional approaches, such as the Takienta, a traditional housing typology in Bening and Togo, and the only one-story dwelling in the world built entirely of local materials. Part of a World Heritage Site, these dwellings are a model of both building and maintenance practices to prioritize local, renewable materials and minimize materials extraction, processing, and waste.
    - High-tech solutions such as three-dimensional scanning and digitization to develop materials inventories from existing buildings. Gordon, M., von Zimmerman, L., Haradhun, O., Campanella, D., Bräutigam, M., De Wolf, C. (2024). Digitising Building Materials for Reuse with Reality Capture and Scan-to-BIM Technologies. In: De Wolf, C., Çetin, S., Bocken, N.M.P. (eds) A Circular Built Environment in the Digital Age. Circular Economy and Sustainability. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-39675-5_3
- Tools:
    - The Historic Building Energy Retrofit Atlas, which demonstrates vernacular approaches to biobased materials, durability and maintenance, and materials reuse to promote circular economy value chains.[25]

[22]https://www.sanantonio.gov/historic/CurrentProjects/Deconstruction

[23]https://www.westminster.gov.uk/media/document/ev-r-004-retrofit-first-policy-guidance-for-environment-spd-november-2024

[24]https://www.construction21.org/case-studies/h/the-takienta.html

[25]https://hiberatlas.eurac.edu/en/welcome-1.html