

UNESCO

ECOSOC

TOPIC B:

---

“The Impact of Climate  
Change on World Heritage  
Sites”

NC  
MUN  
2018





*“Considering that parts of the cultural or natural heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole.”*

-Preamble of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

Andrea Austria González  
Undersecretary of ECOSOC

NC  
MUN  
2018

## Topic B:

### *The Impact of Climate Change on World Heritage Sites*

UNESCO is responsible for coordinating international cooperation in education, science, culture and communication. It strengthens the ties between nations and societies, and mobilizes the wider public so that each child and citizen:

- has access to quality education; a basic human right and an indispensable prerequisite for sustainable development;
- may grow and live in a cultural environment rich in diversity and dialogue, where heritage serves as a bridge between generations and peoples;
- can fully benefit from scientific advances;
- and can enjoy full freedom of expression; the basis of democracy, development and human dignity.

The UNESCO has designated around 900 places World Heritage Sites because of their cultural or natural significance. These places are considered to have “outstanding universal value.”

Some of the most well known World Heritage sites include the Taj Mahal in India, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, and the Grand Canyon in the United States.

The international community now widely agrees that climate change will constitute one of the major challenges of the 21st century. Heritage preservation is divided into five chapters that deal with glaciers, marine biodiversity, terrestrial biodiversity, archaeological sites, and historic cities

and settlements.

World Heritage properties also harbor options for society to mitigate and adapt to climate change through the ecosystem benefits, such as water and climate regulation, that they provide and the carbon that is stored in World Heritage forest sites. Cultural heritage, on the other hand, can convey traditional knowledge that builds resilience for change to come and leads us to a more sustainable future.

Climate change is also expected to damage archaeological World Heritage sites, according to the report which examines prospects for Chan Chan Archaeological Zone, Peru, alongside other World Heritage properties in Canada and the Russian Federation. Changes in precipitation and drought cycles, in humidity, water-table levels and ensuing soil chemistry will, inevitably, impact the conservation of archaeological remains.

Marine and coastal sites are facing particular challenges due to sea level rise, ocean acidification, and increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events. In Australia's Great Barrier Reef – the world's largest coral reef system – rising water temperatures are causing coral bleaching, and ocean acidification is restricting coral growth and survival. In East Rennell, Solomon Islands, a World Heritage site listed as 'in danger' due to logging activities, the increasing salinity of Lake Tegano as a result of sea level rise has c

UNESCO has been at the forefront of exploring and managing the impacts of climate change on World Heritage. In 2006, under the guidance of the World Heritage Committee, it prepared a report on Predicting and Managing the Effects of

Climate Change on World Heritage (2007), followed by a compilation of Case Studies on Climate Change and World Heritage, and a Policy Document on the Impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage Properties in 2008.

Points to address:

- What is your country doing to safeguard and protect WHS from different natural factors?
- How can the UNESCO develop alongside Member States an efficient policy towards protection and restoration?
- What is the future for Natural Heritage Sites?

# SOURCES

- World Heritage and Climate Change. IUCN. Retrieved 11 October 2017, from <https://www.iucn.org/theme/world-heritage/our-work/more-projects/climate-change-and-world-heritage-0>

- CONVENTION CONCERNING THE PROTECTION OF THE WORLD CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE. (1972). Retrieved from <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>

NC  
MUN  
2018