



ICOMOS coordinates *Preserving Legacies: A Future for our Past*, a new global initiative to safeguard heritage sites from climate change impacts

Press release – 7 March 2023

ICOMOS announced today a new global initiative to safeguard sites of cultural significance from the impacts of climate change. ***Preserving Legacies : A Future for our Past*** will equip communities worldwide with the tools to accurately assess worsening and future climate impacts on cultural heritage sites in order to rescue them before it is too late.

ICOMOS is partnering with National Geographic Society and the Climate Heritage Network, as well as with local communities and site management teams to carry out the Manulife-funded project.

People and their cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, are increasingly vulnerable to climate change hazards. The resulting impacts on monuments, inherited traditions, and knowledge systems in turn affects values, livelihoods, and identity, with profound consequences for communities. And yet cultural heritage is rarely prioritised in national and international climate change policy agendas. To fill this gap, there is an urgent need to equip communities worldwide with the tools to accurately anticipate and assess worsening and future climate impacts on culture, and help them turn that scientific knowledge into action to safeguard sites.

Preserving Legacies : A Future for our Past is carrying out the project on 10 heritage sites, including 2 primary sites:

- the Rice Terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras, Philippines;
- Petra, Jordan;

and 8 observer sites:

- Angkor Archeological Park, Cambodia;
- Border Fields, USA;
- Historical Mosque City of Bagerhat, Bangladesh;
- Nan Madol, Micronesia;
- Levuka, Fiji;
- Koutammakou, the Land of the Batammariba, Togo and Benin;
- Sceilg Mhichil, Ireland;
- Port, Fortress, and Group of Monuments at Cartagena, Colombia.

At the 2 primary sites, ***Preserving Legacies*** will link climate science and site conservation by enabling access to locally downscaled climate change models, and supporting site custodians with the training to organise community-led, values-based assessments of the sites' climate vulnerability as well as impacts on local communities.

Observer sites will engage fully in climate heritage trainings and a peer-to-peer learning experience.

Participants from all sites will help grow an international community of practice focused on climate action at the intersections of cultural heritage and climate adaptation.

The program integrates scientific, local, and Indigenous knowledge to find sustainable and culturally appropriate solutions to the long-term preservation of cultural heritage sites. The goal is to foster better approaches to adaptation and learning from past ancestral practices to safeguard values for the next generations.

'Our ambitious approach to addressing this critical issue will not only lead to tangible protection of cultural heritage sites; it will be the game-changers needed to increase access to heritage adaptation and transform conservation as a field to meet the challenges of a climate changed world.'

Dr Victoria Herrmann, National Geographic Explorer and Project Director of *Preserving Legacies*

'ICOMOS firmly believes in the power of culture and heritage for climate action. This important project will empower communities and site custodians to protect their heritage from the impacts of climate change. It will also provide them with a platform to tell their stories and share their valuable experiences with the world.'

Dr Will Megarry, Focal Point for Climate Change at ICOMOS, Senior Lecturer at Queen's University Belfast

*'Just as heritage places anchor communities, they should be at the forefront of climate change response. The CHN is proud to be a part of the work of **Preserving Legacies** to scale up climate action at culturally significant places through global peer learning, networking, storytelling and new open access resources.'*

Andrew Potts, Coordinator, Climate Heritage Network

'Climate change is threatening the rice terraces and its living traditions. SIRT and ICOMOS Philippines are delighted to partner on this important project, as a learning exchange experience with those involved in heritage protection with climate change preparedness.'

Tina Paterno, President of ICOMOS Philippines

'By working and sharing experiences this project can better develop and present culture-based solutions to many climate challenges and build more resilient communities. The joint efforts will document, study and utilize diverse knowledge, skills and practices, inherited and adapted methods of learning and technical know-how to build resilience and transform communities to meet climate-adaptation goals.'

Zeina Khashashneh, Project Manager, Petra National Trust

[The International Council on Monuments and Sites \(ICOMOS\)](#) is a non-governmental, not for profit international organisation, committed to furthering the conservation, protection, use and enhancement of the world's cultural heritage. With over 11,000 members, 100+ National Committees, 30 International Scientific Committees and several Working Groups, ICOMOS has built a solid philosophical, doctrinal and managerial framework for the sustainable conservation of heritage around the world. As an official Advisory Body to the World Heritage Committee for the implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, ICOMOS evaluates nominations and advises on the state of conservation of properties inscribed on the World Heritage List.

with

[The National Geographic Society](#)

[The Climate Heritage Network \(CHN\)](#)

[The Petra National Trust \(PNT\)](#)

[ICOMOS Philippines](#)

[Manulife](#)

[State of California Office of Historic Preservation](#)

[Save the Ifugao Rice Terraces Movement](#)

International team

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