



## STATEMENT

### WATER RELATED SPIRITUALITY FOR CLIMATE ADAPTATION

We, the undersigned, declare that water related spiritual wisdom generated over millennia could and should be a source of inspiration **to design adaptation strategies** to the water management challenges created by the unequivocal and catastrophic impacts of climate change on the water cycle, which are exacerbated by changes in land use, population pressure and current economic development models.

Our statement adds to the statements of the indigenous peoples<sup>i</sup> and the Christian leaders<sup>ii</sup> to COP 26.

#### Rationale

People managed to adapt to water related challenges to sustain life, health, economies and ecosystems; inestimable cultural heritage has been created around water sources and water bodies over the millennia. Tangible examples are civil structures for water supply and for defence against water-related perils, for navigation, and for the generation of energy. An example of the intangible part of this heritage is the governance systems set up for the equitable and efficient management of water resources. Furthermore, societies and religions have developed a multitude of visions, rituals and practises related to water..

Notwithstanding the wealth of water-related cultural heritage, its significance for present and future climate related challenges is not widely recognised. This is due to the complexity of our relationship with water, and because of disciplinary and institutional divides between water managers and climate change experts on the one hand, and spiritual leaders on the other. To bridge these gap the International Scientific Committee on Water and Heritage of ICOMOS (International Council of Monuments and Sites) in cooperation with CIRAT (International Center on Water and Transdisciplinary) and the Global Center on Adaptation, organised a dialogue between leaders of religious organisations and indigenous peoples titled 'Water related Spirituality for Climate Adaptation'<sup>iii</sup>. This [round table discussion](#) took place online on October 19<sup>th</sup> 2021.

#### Conclusions

This dialogue brought together spiritual leaders representing religions and indigenous peoples from around the world. It presented and examined the wisdom generated by religions and the traditions of indigenous peoples developed over millennia to manage and overcome challenging circumstances. While the crisis we face today are unprecedented for scale and magnitude, as we deal with both severe and prolonged droughts and violent and deadly floods we all agreed there is so much we can learn from the collective wisdom brought forth. Participants were unanimous in recognising the **sacred nature** of the water resources of our planet and of our planet itself; in acknowledging that **hope** is essential to face the challenges of our times; and in appreciating the importance of both the local and global **community** to confront current challenges.

In addition, our collective response to the current crisis needs to be fair and equitable, adaptation strategies to climate change impacts need to be inclusive and pay special attention to the most vulnerable.



## Commitment

We, the ICOMOS ISC Water and Heritage in cooperation with the participants in the Dialogue, commit to continue our dialogue and initiate a [Water Adaptation Community](#) platform. This will include a [community of practice on water and culture](#) to inspire climate adaptation professionals with water related spiritual wisdom through the sharing of examples, case studies and articles, videos etc.

## Signatories

Ian Travers, President of the Board of the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee Water and Heritage

Sergio Ribeiro, Director General of CIRAT, Brazil, and Board Member of ICOMOS ISC Water

Ms Maria Hammershoy, Vice President of Justice and Peace Europe, member of the European Laudato Si' Alliance (ELSiA)

Valériane Bernard, Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University UN Representative

Dharma Master Hsin Tao, Founder of Ling Jiou Mountain Buddhist Society. Founder of University for Life and Peace. Founder of the Museum of World Religions

Sister Marvie L. Misolas, MM, NGO Representative to the UN, Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Inc. (ECOSOC Accredited NGO)

## Other speakers

Mr. Núñez, Leader of the Wa:k Community San Xavier District of the Tohono O'odham Nation near Tucson, Arizona, USA

Ms. Mona Polacca, Native American Spiritual Elder

Daniel Iberê Guarani Mbyá, Guarani tribe, Brazil

Hasan Shikoh, Prof. Islamic studies, Birmingham University, UK

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.fordfound.org/just-matters/just-matters/posts/this-alliance-of-indigenous-peoples-brings-climate-solutions-to-cop26/>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2021/09/07/0543/01167.html>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://gca.org/video/water-adaptation-community-webinar-water-and-spirituality-for-climate-adaptation/>