



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

INTRODUCTION

The **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN). Its declared purpose is to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through educational, scientific, and cultural reforms in order to increase universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and human rights along with fundamental freedom proclaimed in the United Nations Charter. It is the heir of the League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation.

Protecting world Heritage sites against new and emerging Threats

Problem

Armed conflict and war, earthquakes and other natural disasters, pollution, poaching, uncontrolled urbanization and unchecked tourist development pose major problems to World Heritage sites. Dangers can be 'ascertained', referring to specific and proven imminent threats, or 'potential', when a property is faced with threats which could have negative effects on its World Heritage values.

The annual UNESCO World Heritage meeting is often an occasion for countries to celebrate the inscription of new sites on the World Heritage List, but is also the time when threats to existing sites must be addressed.

Over the past year there have been disturbing headlines about the destruction of archaeological sites in the Middle East, and global outrage has been expressed over the

expansion of coal mega ports near Australia's Great Barrier Reef. But many of the risks to World Heritage Sites never receive this sort of attention.

As conservationists, Susan Brown, Director, Global and Regional Policy, WWF International And Zach Abraham, Director, Global Campaigns, WWF International stated- 'We are particularly concerned about the increasing number of natural World Heritage Sites that are coming under threat from the extractive industries, namely oil, gas and mining.' There are fewer than 230 natural and mixed sites listed by UNESCO, yet according to IUCN's World Heritage Outlook, 54 are at risk from oil, gas and mining operations. Many more are threatened by large-scale infrastructure projects such as road construction, port expansion and pipelines.

They further stated "We are not dealing with a handful of isolated cases; the threat of industrial destruction is spreading like an epidemic over natural World Heritage Sites. It seems that some companies and governments are prepared to go to the ends of the earth in the pursuit of short-term gains."

The preservation of these places is important not only in terms of the value of their natural capital, but it is also crucial for the livelihoods and future prosperity of people who depend, directly or indirectly on them.

UNESCO and the World Heritage Committee have a long-standing position against oil, gas and mineral exploration and exploitation in natural sites. But stating and restating this position has not deterred governments from opening up more and more properties to potentially destructive activities. Similarly, it has not prevented certain companies from going into these places seeking to extract their resources, despite their protected status.

Mere concern is not enough. It's high time when UNESCO, the World Heritage Committee, member states, business groups and concerned civil society need to not only join hands but to circumscribe the destructive industrial activities. It is time to formalize what until now has been only a *de facto* prohibition against extractive operations in World Heritage Sites

The head of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) strongly appealed for the international community to help counter the emerging threat of violent extremism and cultural cleansing, in remarks to the opening of the 39th session of the World Heritage Committee in Bonn, Germany.

“Heritage is under attack today. In Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen, we see the brutal and deliberate destruction of heritage on an unprecedented scale. This is a call for action,” said UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova, as she addressed participants at the Committee’s session this June. “Our response to ignorance and criminal stupidity, must also have a cultural dimension: knowledge, the sharing of Islam’s millennial learning and wisdom, sharing the message of Palmyra, the ‘Venice of the Sands’, that is like a bridge between the legacies of ancient Greece and Rome, the Persian Empire and the Arab culture from ancient times to the present,” declared Mrs. Bokova.

Committee Chair, Maria Böhmer, Minister of State at the German Federal Foreign Office and member of the Bundestag, said the fury of terrorist organizations like ISIS [also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levans, or ISIL] in Iraq surpasses the imagination.

“World Heritage is the foundation of people’s existence and cohesion [...]. It is the wellspring of social identity,” she added, invoking the role of culture in peacebuilding.

Yemen: UNESCO deplores destruction of Sana'a heritage site bearing 'soul of Yemeni people'

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) condemned the early morning bombing raid on June 12, 2015 on the Old City of the Yemeni capital Sana'a, saying “this heritage bears the soul of the Yemeni people, it is a symbol of a millennia history of knowledge and it belongs to all humankind.”

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It was not only loss of human lives, destruction of houses and historic buildings but the damage also inflicted on one of the world’s oldest jewels of Islamic urban landscape. The magnificent many-storeyed tower-houses and serene gardens were reduced to rubble thereby urging the authorities to join hands to overcome such irreparable destruction and to be extra vigilant that such incidences never recur in future.

Sana'a has been inhabited for more than 2,500 years and bears witness to the wealth and beauty of the Islamic civilization, according to UNESCO. By the first century, it emerged as a centre of the inland trade route and its houses and public buildings are an outstanding

example of a traditional, Islamic human settlement. Sana'a's dense rammed earth and burnt brick towers, strikingly decorated, are famous around the world and are an integral part of Yemen's identity and pride.

Since the beginning of the conflict in Yemen, UNESCO reported, several houses within the heritage city of Sana'a have suffered damage and collapses as a consequence of shelling and explosions. On 9 June, the Ottoman era Al-Owrdhi historical compound, located just outside the walls of the Old City, were severely damaged. Historic residential buildings, monuments, museums, archaeological sites and places of worship have not been spared.

Another threat to World Heritage sites has been the climatic changes. The 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention is the principal instrument for identifying and protecting, for the benefit of current and future generations, the outstanding natural and cultural heritage of the world, and encouraging international cooperation for its conservation. Climate change has now emerged as one of the most serious threats impacting on the conservation of this heritage.

Lessons learnt at some sites show the relevance of designing and implementing appropriate adaptations measures. Research at all levels would also have to be promoted in collaboration with the various bodies involved in climate change work, especially for cultural heritage where the level of involvement of the scientific community needs to be enhanced. The global network of World Heritage sites is ideally suited to build public awareness and support through sharing of information and effective communication on the subject, given the high-profile nature of these sites.

UNESCO's World Heritage Centre is committed to working closely with all stakeholders including the States Parties to the 1972 Convention, other international conventions and organizations, the civil society and the scientific community to address the multiple challenges posed by climate change to the precious and fragile cultural and natural heritage of the world.

So, come let's debate on emergent global issue and find out ways and solution to overcome the problem of posing threat to the World Heritage Sites!!!

To be addressed in resolutions:

How to protect the outstanding universal values, integrity and authenticity of the world?

How hazards resulting from human activities can be avoided to safeguard precious asset for the sustainable social and economic development

Continued preservation of World Heritage properties requires understanding the impact of climate change to their outstanding universal value and responding to them effectively.