

**CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**Nineteenth session
Asunción, Republic of Paraguay
2 to 7 December 2024**

**Item 11 of the provisional agenda:
Thematic initiatives on living heritage and sustainable development**

Summary

The present document reports on the progress made since the last Committee session under the three thematic initiatives launched by the Secretariat in 2021, namely (i) the economic dimensions of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, (ii) safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and climate change, and (iii) the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts.

Decision required: paragraph 22

Background

1. Growing challenges, such as the rise in inequalities, climate change and urbanization, are posing severe threats to communities and to the safeguarding of their living heritage worldwide. In the context of increasingly complex and interwoven crises, living heritage must be recognized as a vital, cross-cutting dimension that can promote more inclusive, people-centered, and contextually relevant policymaking for sustainable development. The thematic initiatives of the Convention aim to leverage the strengths and contributions of the Convention to address these pressing challenges through culturally grounded responses anchored in living heritage.
2. These thematic initiatives align with global efforts advocating for culture's role in fostering peace, innovation, development and wellbeing, notably at the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – [MONDIACULT 2022](#), the Group of Twenty ([G20](#)), and the Group of Seven ([G7](#)). Recently, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the '[Pact for the Future](#)', which calls to, inter alia, ensure that culture can contribute to more effective, inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, as well as to integrate culture into their economic, social and environmental policies. Building on this momentum, the thematic initiatives seek to provide guidance for stakeholders of the Convention on integrating living heritage in social, environmental and economic policies for a more inclusive and sustainable future.
3. Following the request made by the eighteenth session of the Committee (Decision [18.COM 12](#)), this document presents a summary of the main activities conducted in 2024 under the three thematic initiatives of the Convention, namely: (i) the economic dimensions of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, (ii) safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and climate change, and (iii) the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts.

A. Economic dimensions of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage

4. The guidance note on economic dimensions of intangible heritage safeguarding under the 2003 Convention (document [LHE/23/18.COM/12 Rev.](#)) outlines key issues for integrating economic considerations into the safeguarding of living heritage. Considered by the Committee as a useful reference document at its eighteenth session, the note advocates for a flexible, heritage-sensitive, and rights-based approach to responsible and inclusive planning and management of intangible cultural heritage, tailored to the specific needs and contexts of communities. Rather than serving as a prescriptive document, it provides a framework for stakeholders of the Convention to better understand the opportunities and risks involved, enabling them to navigate effectively the complexities associated with the economic dimensions of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding.
5. Throughout 2024, the Secretariat has actively engaged in intersectoral dialogue to enhance knowledge about specific aspects related to the economic dimensions of living heritage. In line with the Committee's encouragement (Decision [18.COM 12](#)), informal technical consultations with institutions and other UN agencies have taken place, including with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Food and Agriculture Organization, UN Tourism, UN Women, and the World Intellectual Property Organization, among others. These consultations are ongoing and aim to foster connections and facilitate resource and knowledge sharing, enabling the collection of diverse case studies and experiences. It has been particularly valuable to receive pertinent insights into existing strategies to respond to the risks associated with inappropriate economic exploitation of living heritage, including monitoring tools. This has shown how better monitoring and evaluation frameworks can help more broadly in tracking progress towards equitable economic benefit and safeguarding goals in community-based initiatives.
6. Through this collaborative approach, the Secretariat is deepening understanding of new areas where living heritage safeguarding intersects with market engagement and other economic uses. This includes, for example, traditional knowledge notification systems, geographical indications and appellations of origin, product labelling and certification, and place-based community-led tourism strategies. Advancing this understanding will inform the development of capacity-building approaches aimed at promoting safeguarding strategies as well as legal

and policy frameworks that empower communities to enjoy fair and equitable benefits from the economic uses of their living heritage. Inter-agency training in entrepreneurship and community-based business models, along with mentoring and matchmaking programmes are capacity-building approaches that could be further pursued in the future.

7. In order to reflect the progress made since the adoption of the guidance note, the [webpage dedicated](#) to this thematic initiative is being updated on an ongoing basis. It now showcases a few summary case studies that illustrate how developing heritage-sensitive and rights-based approaches to managing the economic dimensions of living heritage can address both sustainability and safeguarding concerns in rapidly changing contexts.
8. Building on the conceptual foundations established in the guidance note, progress to date has focused on developing sector-specific knowledge related to the economic dimensions of safeguarding living heritage. This will be used as the basis for the creation of capacity-building and awareness-raising strategies, including tailored toolkits and resources for specific sectors (i.e. tourism, craft, agriculture) and stakeholders (including Indigenous Peoples and local communities) to effectively utilize the guidance note.

B. Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and climate change

9. The Secretariat organized a two-part expert meeting (category VI)¹ to ‘contribute with proposals for States Parties and other relevant stakeholders on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the context of climate change’ as requested by the eighteenth session of the Committee (Decision [18.COM 12](#)). Part I of the meeting was held *in presentia* from 19 to 20 June 2024, at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France, while Part II of the meeting was held online on 25 to 26 September 2024. Participants included twenty-six experts from diverse geographical regions, identified through a call requesting that States Parties nominate appropriate experts. The experts were selected based on their specific expertise and/or experience in the field of intangible cultural heritage and climate change. In addition to the listed participants, UNESCO colleagues from other programmes and sectors were invited to join as observers. The discussion of the meeting was based on the thorough preparations made, including a comprehensive desk-based study and a global survey as well as a collaborative review process undertaken by experts forming a peer review panel.
10. The working documents presented to the expert meeting are summarized in the table below²:

Expert meeting working documents	
List of participants	LHE/24/EXP THEMA-CLIMA/1 REV.3
Agenda and timetable	LHE/24/EXP THEMA-CLIMA/2 Rev.7
Draft guidance note on climate action for living heritage	LHE/24/EXP THEMA-CLIMA/3 Rev.3
Defining the field: a preliminary literature review	LHE/24/EXP THEMA-CLIMA/4a
Survey methodology and overview of results	LHE/24/EXP THEMA-CLIMA/4b
Terms and concepts	LHE/24/EXP THEMA-CLIMA/4c
Roles and risks	LHE/24/EXP THEMA-CLIMA/4d
Policy frameworks on living heritage in the climate emergency	LHE/24/EXP THEMA-CLIMA/4e Rev.
Policy development, partnerships and capacity building for living heritage in the climate emergency	LHE/24/EXP THEMA-CLIMA/4f

¹ See the [webpage](#) of the Convention dedicated to this meeting of experts.

² Documents 3-5 were prepared with the contribution of a preliminary peer review panel which provided inputs on earlier drafts. Document 3 was revised following Part I of the meeting to reflect feedback from the participants and was then presented and discussed in detail during Part II of the meeting.

Bibliographic references

[LHE/24/EXP THEMA-CLIMA/5](#)

11. The experts welcomed the extensive documentation provided and raised several key issues during the discussions:
 - Further elaboration and definition of key terms and concepts was regarded as essential for all stakeholders in the conversation between climate change and intangible cultural heritage. The experts noted the additional challenge of navigating between different institutional frameworks and terminologies on climate change and disaster risk, which often operate in parallel or overlapping ways.
 - The experts underscored the importance of clarifying the contribution of climate change among a range of different drivers of impact to intangible cultural heritage, including conflict, urbanization and growing inequalities. Several experts stressed that the focus should be on both the direct and indirect impacts of climate change to intangible cultural heritage practice, resources, and transmission, including both rapid (resulting from sudden-onset hazard disasters) or slow-onset impacts (such as habitat transformation or sea-level rise).
 - The need to set discussion of climate change and intangible cultural heritage within a framework of human rights and cultural rights was widely supported by the experts. Similar support was expressed for the importance of drawing on established ethics frameworks in engaging with stakeholders and articulating and upholding the values of intangible cultural heritage bearers.
12. The draft guidance note can be found in Annex and includes an introduction providing key terms and concepts as well as the main findings based on the background documents prepared. This is accompanied by the guidance note which proposes a comprehensive, rights-based and people-centred approach to climate action for living heritage through three key goals, two transversal concerns and five potential areas for intervention by stakeholders of the Convention.
13. The text is not intended to be exhaustive in nature but rather raises a series of issues, offering a collective perspective on how the Convention can contribute to climate action across three key areas: a) climate change adaptation, b) climate change mitigation and c) living heritage safeguarding. Given the dynamic and rapidly evolving nature of this field, and the diversity of stakeholders involved, the guidance note is designed to remain flexible to accommodate the varying contexts, communities and types of living heritage concerned. Although the text is aimed at a wide audience, and avoids specific references to particular groups, interests or institutions, the experts discussed several ongoing initiatives of relevance to the intersection of living heritage and climate change.
14. In particular, the experts acknowledged recent statements and progress made on integrating culture in global climate discussions, including the creation of the Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action during the 28th UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in 2023. In addition, they highlighted the target on protecting cultural heritage from the impacts of climate-related risks in the UAE Framework on Climate Resilience, which guides the achievement of the global goal on adaptation. They also discussed the relevance of efforts to incorporate the perspectives of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in climate action, such as through the Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform (LCIPP) under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.³

C. Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts

15. Most urban planning focuses on functional structures without adequately considering how spatial organization and management can impact communities' living heritage. Additionally, it often overlooks the actions required to ensure that cities facilitate the ongoing transmission of living heritage as a crucial component of the social wellbeing of inhabitants. It is therefore

³ Document [LHE/24/EXP THEMA-CLIMA/4e Rev.](#) provides further details on relevant international policy frameworks on living heritage in the climate emergency.

important to identify key issues, challenges and opportunities related to safeguarding living heritage in urban contexts from planning perspectives.

16. During the reporting period, the Secretariat has made progress toward the finalization of a set of documents intended to support expert consultations and the organization of a meeting of experts (category VI), scheduled for 2025. The further revisions of the background document benefitted from the contribution of the peer review panel established for this thematic initiative. By integrating the literature review and case studies, the document points to key issues in fostering synergies between heritage safeguarding and sustainable urban development, also outlining methodological approaches for integrating living heritage in urban contexts. It is planned to identify a group of experts through a call requesting that States Parties nominate appropriate experts.
17. In parallel, a notable achievement has been the development of a capacity-building approach, collaboratively created by an expert in intangible cultural heritage and an urban planning specialist. This training programme encompasses the relationship between safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and sustainable urban development, explores synergies with key policy frameworks in the areas of heritage and urban development, and provides a selection of practical tools for the effective integration of living heritage within urban contexts. This approach was developed in the context of a regional project Latin America and the Caribbean: Strengthening Capacities for Resilient Communities through Sustainable Tourism and Heritage Safeguarding, which involves ten countries from the region. The capacity-building approach, relying on intersectoral collaboration, is going to be reviewed by country expert teams through an online training course to be convened in the first half of 2025. This process draws on the teams' dual expertise, which combines intangible cultural heritage and urban development at the national level. Based on the input, the training materials are being finalized and the approach rolled out across the participating countries in close collaboration with the Central American Educational and Cultural Coordination and the Central American Integration System (CECC/SICA).

Key considerations

18. This year marks the third report regarding the thematic initiatives focused on living heritage and sustainable development. Over this period, substantial advancements have been made across the three thematic areas through stakeholder mapping, expert consultations, operational projects and actions to raise awareness. These efforts have highlighted both new opportunities and ongoing challenges, prompting reflection on how best to harness the Convention's strengths going forward. To ensure the sustainability of next steps, the Committee may wish to encourage States Parties and other potential partners to provide financial contributions in support of the Convention's thematic initiatives.
19. **Intersectoral and interagency collaboration:** A key focus of the thematic initiatives has been fostering stronger intersectoral collaboration, which has seen notable progress. This has been achieved through technical exchanges between institutions and United Nations agencies, the mapping of relevant policy frameworks and the engagement of experts from various sectors. However, continued engagement with global development agendas is essential to maximize the impact of these initiatives. Strategic collaboration and advocacy—through global initiatives, such as MONDIACULT and the Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action—will be crucial to bridge global discussions on culture and sustainable development and to reinforce living heritage as a tool for transformative social, economic and environmental change. Following the twentieth anniversary of the Convention, there is an opportunity to reflect on how its mechanisms can further enhance intersectoral efforts across each of the thematic areas through the exchange of good practices, data collection and awareness raising.
20. **Roles of stakeholders and actors:** The contribution and engagement of the Convention to these initiatives will continue to be complemented by the activities of various stakeholders of the Convention, including category 2 centres, UNESCO Chairs and accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs). For example, as reported to the current session of the Committee under item 13 (document [LHE/24/19.COM/13](#)), the ICH NGO Forum through its working groups has conducted research in various thematic areas, including on sustainable tourism, intellectual property issues and climate change. The twelfth annual coordination

meeting of category 2 centres active in the field of intangible cultural heritage also included in its agenda a session on living heritage and climate change. Strengthening these networks and collaboration will be important in advancing a coherent and sustainable approach to the Convention's thematic initiatives in the future.

21. **Additional theme:** While the three ongoing thematic initiatives continue to be pertinent for the development of the Convention, reflections undertaken through the twentieth anniversary in 2023 highlighted the need to also consider opportunities and challenges presented by emerging digital technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), for safeguarding living heritage. While AI offers pathways to broaden access to and forms of living heritage, it also introduces unprecedented risks. As technology becomes more accessible, it will be crucial to ensure that communities are able to harness it for safeguarding purposes, while mitigating the risks they may encounter in an increasingly digitalized environment. The Secretariat has initiated actions in this area, including through a webinar⁴ focusing on 'Artificial Intelligence and Intangible Cultural Heritage' held on 17 October 2024, in celebration of the first International Day of Intangible Cultural Heritage.
22. The Committee may wish to adopt the following decision:

DRAFT DECISION 19.COM 11

The Committee,

1. Having examined document LHE/24/19.COM/11 and its annex,
2. Recalling the Chapter VI of the Operational Directives, Decision [18.COM 12](#), the [Operational Principles and Modalities for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Emergencies](#), as well as the [Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage](#),
3. Further recalling the Final Declaration of the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT 2022), the G20 Leaders Declaration, the G7 Ministerial Declaration on Culture and the Pact for the Future, which calls to, inter alia, ensure that culture can contribute to more effective, inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, as well as to integrate culture into their economic, social and environmental policies;
4. Welcomes the progress made in the implementation of the thematic initiatives on the (i) economic dimensions of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, (ii) safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and climate change, and (iii) safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts;

Economic dimensions of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage

5. Takes note of the activities undertaken by the Secretariat regarding the thematic initiative on the economic dimensions of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, particularly in advancing with intersectoral cooperation and with developing sector-specific guidance and encourages the Secretariat to continue this endeavour;
6. Further encourages States Parties and relevant stakeholders to continue incorporating heritage-sensitive and rights-based approaches into the economic dimensions of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, and to enhance the exchange of good practices;

Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and climate change

7. Welcomes the outcomes of the expert meeting on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and climate change, and expresses gratitude to the experts for their efforts and pertinent contributions;
8. Takes note of the guidance note on climate action for living heritage annexed to this decision and encourages the Secretariat to pursue its efforts in raising awareness and

promoting the implementation of the guidance note among a diverse range of stakeholders and to continue strengthening cooperation with other international frameworks, such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and its Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action;

9. Recalls that, consistent with Article 18 of the 2017 UNESCO Declaration of Ethical Principles in relation to Climate Change, no document or declaration produced within this thematic initiative should be understood as an interpretation of any of the principles and provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and of the Paris Agreement adopted under it;

Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in urban contexts

10. Appreciates the preparatory activities undertaken so far and invites the Secretariat to pursue its endeavours through the organization of an expert meeting in 2025 with a view to develop a guidance note to support the efforts of States Parties and other stakeholders in integrating intangible cultural heritage safeguarding in sustainable urban development;
11. Welcomes the elaboration in parallel of a capacity-building approach, including practical tools for urban planners and heritage practitioners, and further invites the Secretariat to continue its refinement with a view to fostering resilience and sustainability in urban contexts;

Ways forward

12. Encourages the Secretariat to continue its engagement with global development agendas to further amplify the visibility and impact of the thematic initiatives, and to strengthen the Convention's contribution to advancing the sustainable development goals;
13. Further encourages the Secretariat to explore the implications of emerging technologies on living heritage, and to take steps toward developing guidance on how to effectively harness digital tools for safeguarding purposes while addressing potential risks;
14. Calls upon States Parties and potential partners to provide financial contributions in support of the ongoing thematic initiatives as well as the new initiative related to emerging technologies;
15. Requests the Secretariat to report on the progress made in the implementation of thematic initiatives for examination by the Committee at its twentieth session in 2025.

Annex

Introduction to the guidance note⁵

1. Intangible cultural heritage (or living heritage) covers a range of domains, including oral expressions such as poetry and song, performing arts such as dance and theatre, social practices, including rituals and festive events, and crafts and knowledge related to nature and the universe, encompassing agricultural practices and fisheries. These forms of knowledge and practice are typically enacted and transmitted by communities, groups or individuals (hereafter “communities”); which they consider as part of their living heritage. In addition to these conventional activities and functions, living heritage has a dual dimension in all emergencies, including climate change. In the context of climate change, living heritage can play an important positive role as a source of preparedness, recovery and prevention measures to manage and reduce vulnerability and exposure to risks associated with climate change, as well as in the mitigation of carbon emissions. At the same time, the viability of living heritage and its bearers are also fundamentally at risk from climate change impacts, either directly or from the multiplier effects of climate change on other conditions for vulnerability. Distinguishing clearly between these potential positive and negative roles and risks, and understanding how and when living heritage becomes vulnerable or can be harnessed as a positive force to address climate change-related challenges, are important areas for consideration in designing relevant policies and climate actions.
2. The UNESCO [2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) (hereafter, the Convention) acknowledges the potential role of living heritage to strengthen community-based resilience to disasters and climate change in the [Operational Directives](#) (Chapter VI.3.3) and the recently adopted [Operational Principles and Modalities for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Emergencies](#) (2020). While there is a large body of literature and numerous instruments relating to climate change and different forms of local and Indigenous knowledge, they do not refer specifically to the role of living heritage from the perspective of the Convention. Further guidance is therefore needed for stakeholders of the Convention seeking to engage in and enhance dialogue between the sectors of climate change and living heritage.

Climate change

3. Climate change is indicated by detectable and persistent change in the average or variability of the earth's climate. In Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) usage, climate change can result from either natural variability or human activity, while the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) focuses on that component of climate change that exceeds natural variability and that can be linked either directly or indirectly to human activity.
 - The impacts of climate change on living heritage are ongoing, multiple and diverse, and operate over a wide range of time scales from slow to rapid. Climate change impacts also contribute to and heighten a complex and compounding series of other, non-climate threats and pressures, including conflict, disease, economic vulnerability, pollution and other sources of emergency, which can act together to exacerbate critical risks for the viability of living heritage.
 - While climate change is a global phenomenon, its effects are highly variable around the world, and experience of its direct and indirect impacts is mostly local and specific to the conditions and vulnerabilities of particular places and communities. Living heritage that

⁵ This guidance note was prepared by the consultant Chris Ballard, with assistance from participants to the Category VI expert meeting and peer review panel on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and climate change (Ibidun Adelekan, Gül Aktürk, Aet Annist, Saruul Arslan, Heba Aziz, Greg Bankoff, Karima Bennoune, Chantal Bisschop, Donatas Brandišauskas, Luciana Gonçalves de Carvalho, Nigel Crawhall, Ginbert Cuaton, Harriet Deacon, Gabriel Philip Essack, Sandra Fatorić, James D. Ford, Rahul Goswami, Qunli Han, Kristen Hausler, Lisa Hiwasaki, Cornelius Holtorf, Susan Keitumetse, Lucas Lixinski, Anare Leweniqila, Přemysl Mácha, Eva Martínez Ordoñez, Barbara Mínguez García, Elinaza Mjema, Edaly Quiroz Moreno, Victoria Reyes-García, Andrea Richards-Cummins, Irina Ruiz, Getachew Senishaw, Pasang Dolma Sherpa, Ahmed Skounti, Annie Tohme Tabet, Laurier Turgeon, and Chul-In Yoo), in collaboration with the UNESCO Living Heritage Entity. The content does not necessarily reflect the institutional views of UNESCO, or the views of individual peer reviewers or experts consulted.

relates to the site-specific management of changes and impacts thus provides a highly relevant and significant resource for climate change adaptation strategies in the past and present, and for planning future responses. Practical experience of climate change impacts at a local level can relate to localised or regional environmental change and weather extremes, as well as to natural hazard emergencies such as floods, droughts, cyclones or invasive pests. A vast body of local and Indigenous knowledge and experience of these changes and hazards is increasingly informing risk reduction strategies.

- At the local scale, climate change is evident in both slow- and rapid-onset phenomena, ranging from temperature increase or the consequences of sea-level rise and desertification through to changes in the intensity and frequency of natural hazards. From this perspective, instruments and methods that relate to either climate change or disaster risk reduction are equally relevant. Stakeholders of the Convention will need to develop their own methods and protocols for climate action, drawing on models and insights from both the climate change and disaster risk reduction sectors.

Climate action for living heritage

4. Climate action for living heritage refers to all three of the key areas of intervention – climate change adaptation, climate change mitigation and living heritage safeguarding:
 - a. **Climate change adaptation** is defined by the IPCC as ‘the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects in order to moderate harm or take advantage of beneficial opportunities.’ Importantly, while planned adaptation policy is usually a matter for national bodies, the implementation of local or autonomous adaptation strategies on the ground should always involve and reflect the agency, knowledge and living heritage of local communities.
 - b. **Climate change mitigation** refers to actions that limit or reduce emissions of greenhouse gases or the presence of gases in the atmosphere, according to the IPCC definition, and not to the reduction of impacts from climate change. Drawing on their living heritage, local communities and Indigenous Peoples have considerable capacity to contribute to mitigation strategies through their knowledge of low-carbon practices.
 - c. **Living heritage safeguarding** remains a central focus for stakeholders of the Convention, but the direct and indirect impacts of climate change present a new and expanded range of risks to the practice and transmission of living heritage. Understanding the vulnerability of communities and their living heritage to these new forms of risk is a pressing priority in order to provide Convention stakeholders with the knowledge and means to support and strengthen the necessary safeguarding measures.

Risks for living heritage in the climate emergency

5. The risks posed to living heritage by climate change and related emergencies are wide-ranging. They include both the catastrophic degradation, destruction and disappearance of places, practices and practitioners as well as slower but equally dangerous processes such as loss of culturally significant habitats and environments, disruption of the dynamics of knowledge transmission, particularly those relating to nature and the universe, increasing precarity of community livelihoods, and dislocation of populations. The often inter-connected and compounding nature of climate change impacts to living heritage remains poorly understood.
 - The loss or transformation of habitats and environments, built structures, spaces for practice and resources strikes deeply at livelihoods, identity and spirituality. It threatens the capacity of a community to manage and reproduce itself and to ensure the transmission of its living heritage to future generations.
 - The displacement of a community and related loss of relevant contexts and relationships, regardless of cause and whether rapid or slow, is a paramount threat to the practice and transmission of living heritage. Living heritage travels with and is transmitted amongst mobile communities, but the impact on the living heritage of displaced residential communities or mobile communities constrained in their movement is not yet well understood.

- Aspects of livelihood that are underpinned by living heritage may come under threat, including food systems, dwellings and assets, habitats and environments, cultural resources and raw materials, wild and domesticated plants and animals, market access and social capital, diverse economies and income generation in all its forms.
6. Living heritage can also be threatened by responses to climate change and related emergencies. In some cases, climate change adaptation and mitigation policies and assistance may undermine the practice and viability of living heritage through imposed interventions such as relocation, inappropriate aid and development policy practice and provision, and the denigration of local and Indigenous knowledge systems or their selective decontextualized use in formal risk reduction and planned adaptation strategies.

General considerations

7. For each climate action for living heritage – adaptation, mitigation and safeguarding – the likely benefits of the proposed action are usually understood, but both action and inaction also entail costs. These costs range from the direct national or international funding of activities by state and non-state actors, or the self-funded costs to communities of their independent actions, through to economic and non-economic forms of loss and damage for living heritage bearers and their communities. Inadvertent costs include the unintended consequences of actions, aid or intervention, including the impacts on living heritage of relocation, maladaptive practices, actions that increase emissions, and safeguarding measures that undermine local values and modes of transmission. Opportunity costs are incurred through the selection of one activity or community over another, and the uneven distribution of benefits, or non-consultation of sectors of community. Changes induced by climate change impacts in value systems or significant adaptive modifications to practices may also lead to the deliberate loss or discarding of elements of living heritage by communities. Conversely, the involuntary effects induced by climate change can be beneficial for the living heritage of certain communities, in certain environments and over certain periods.
8. Living heritage reflects social values, beliefs and worldviews that shape and reaffirm people's relationships to each other and to the natural world, often fostering respect, custodianship and reciprocity. Adaptation to climate change is a process of adjustment to limit harm from a changing climate as well as a chance to identify and take advantage of new opportunities. Both aspects of climate change adaptation are strongly influenced by living heritage: autonomous adaptive choices made by local communities and Indigenous Peoples are influenced and shaped by local culture and history, and by the values expressed through their living heritage; and planned adaptation policies are largely implemented by local or regional agents operating under particular social and cultural conditions. Creating and supporting the conditions for understanding and learning from local communities and Indigenous Peoples will be an essential step in climate change adaptation strategies.
9. In this regard, the proposed guidance note draws strength from profound engagement by communities with their local conditions, often over long periods of time, which has generated bodies of knowledge and techniques for identifying, assessing and monitoring change and impact. These bodies of knowledge are focused importantly on community wellbeing and may be complementary to scientific knowledge. It cannot be stressed enough that measures to integrate climate change issues and living heritage should be led by the communities concerned, assisted where necessary by other stakeholders, including national authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations, and the private and informal sectors. Given the rapidly evolving nature of this new intersectional field, and the diversity of stakeholders involved, policy guidance should also be flexible in nature so as to accommodate the varying contexts, communities and types of living heritage concerned, and to effectively coordinate planned and autonomous modes of adaptation. More specific guidelines, tools and case studies might then be developed based on the specific needs and contexts identified.

Guidance note on climate action for living heritage

1. Climate change is a powerfully destructive and largely irreversible process that is already inflicting significant damage on the wellbeing and cultural heritage of communities, groups and individuals worldwide. Stakeholders of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage face the dual challenge of developing and implementing plans that support communities to safeguard their living heritage from the direct and indirect impacts of climate change, while also drawing on that living heritage as a resource for adaptation to changing environmental and social conditions, and for the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. Addressing these challenges is a matter of real urgency, in terms of supporting and improving the capacity of communities both to adapt to changing conditions and to contribute to the mitigation of carbon emissions. Living heritage is not always a passive casualty of climate change but can be an important source of strategies for adaptation and resilience, developed by communities to accommodate and thrive in changing environmental conditions and socio-economic circumstances.
2. This guidance note on climate action for living heritage imposes no new obligations on States Parties. It is coherent with existing statements of the Convention, including Article 3 on the relationship with other international instruments, and aligns with but does not aim to duplicate the mandates of any other multilateral agreements, frameworks, processes, or instruments relating to climate change or disaster risk reduction. In particular, this note should not be understood as an interpretation of any of the principles and provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and of the Paris Agreement adopted under it. Key principles to be observed in this integration of living heritage and climate change include the [Chapter VI of the Operational Directives](#) (2016), the [Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) (2015), the [UNESCO Declaration of Ethical Principles in relation to Climate Change](#) (2017), the [UNESCO Policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples](#) (2018), and the [Operational Principles and Modalities for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Emergencies](#) (2020).
3. This guidance note proposes a comprehensive, rights-based and people-centred approach to climate action for living heritage through three key **goals**, two transversal **concerns**, and five potential **areas** for intervention by stakeholders of the Convention.
4. The three key **goals** include:
 - a) **Promote and enhance the positive role of living heritage in climate change adaptation**

Living heritage has a critical positive role to play in the adaptation of societies and environments to climate change through the management of its impacts by: a) identifying, assessing and monitoring climate change impacts; b) limiting direct and indirect climate-related impacts; and c) understanding, promoting and facilitating societal and environmental adaptation to climate change. Stakeholders of the Convention, and local communities and Indigenous Peoples in particular, are important mediators in climate adaptation processes. Appropriate mechanisms and forums that promote the role of living heritage in climate change adaptation and that provide for dialogue and exchange between local and scientific knowledge systems on strategies for climate change adaptation will be crucial in realising this potential.
 - b) **Promote and enhance the positive role of living heritage in climate change mitigation**

Climate change mitigation strategies can learn from the knowledge and experience of local communities and Indigenous Peoples, particularly from their low-carbon emission practices. Local and Indigenous fire management regimes, low carbon agricultural heritage and environmental management systems, and the management of natural carbon sinks are among some of the demonstrated forms of mitigation that draw on living heritage. Stakeholders should be supported to further promote the scope for learning from and scaling up this living heritage for climate change mitigation.

c) Improve measures for safeguarding living heritage in the climate emergency

Living heritage has been an important source of resilience to both slow transformations in local environments and rapid onset hazard disasters and will prove vital as a resource for communities and the safeguarding of their heritage in the climate emergency. Understanding the sources of vulnerability to direct and indirect climate change impacts for communities and their living heritage is a pressing priority if stakeholders are to be supported effectively in strengthening the necessary safeguarding measures.

5. Two transversal **concerns** should be addressed in the design and implementation of each of the above goals, as along with a consideration of the direct and indirect costs of each action:

- i. **Roles of stakeholders and actors:** For each climate action for living heritage – adaptation, mitigation and safeguarding – the roles of stakeholders and actors need to be clearly specified and understood. To affirm and unlock the knowledge and agency of all communities, climate action requires engagement at a wide range of scales, from local through to global, and the involvement of multiple and diverse actors. Action at different scales will call for variable input from different actors, including global, national, provincial and municipal bodies, the private, non-governmental and informal sectors, urban and rural communities and Indigenous Peoples. Reflecting the primacy of local communities and Indigenous Peoples in the Convention's vision of living heritage, acknowledgement of and respect for the knowledge and contributions of the full range of stakeholders is paramount. Diversity and inclusivity amongst the stakeholders involved is essential to the success of climate actions, requiring equal access and voice for marginalised communities or members within communities, and across distinctions by gender, age, ethnicity, location and wealth.
- ii. **Rights and values:** For each climate action for living heritage – adaptation, mitigation and safeguarding – consideration should be given to the specific suite of human rights and cultural rights instruments, ethical standards and values relevant to the proposed action. Cultural rights standards, grounded in the provisions of international law, along with standards that relate to the rights of particular groups and peoples, including Indigenous Peoples, migrants, immigrants and refugees, people of different ages and genders, persons with disabilities and members of vulnerable groups, and environmental and climate change standards, provide a strong framework for the design and implementation of climate actions for living heritage. The social and cultural values particular to communities are less clearly codified but exert a powerful influence over all forms of community action at all scales; the values of living heritage bearers should prevail in prioritising actions that relate to their heritage.

6. The following potential **areas** for intervention have been identified for stakeholders of the Convention:

A. Integrate climate change awareness in living heritage safeguarding

7. All stakeholders, including communities who should have the primary role in safeguarding their own living heritage, are encouraged to integrate and mainstream climate change awareness into living heritage safeguarding plans and measures at all levels. The existing mechanisms of the Convention can make a significant contribution to this process by incorporating an awareness of climate change challenges and the needs of various climate actions in the development and documentation of inventories, the promotion of good practices, and (if appropriate) nomination files and periodic reporting under the Convention.
8. Inventories of living heritage are an important resource for safeguarding strategies in the context of climate change and any other form of emergency, and management of and access to inventories at the community level should be promoted. Additional support for community-led inventories might explore digital modes of documentation and safeguarding, and the dissemination of good practice materials that relate to climate action.
9. Further development is also encouraged of the relationship between living heritage safeguarding and the documentation of loss and damage through mechanisms such as the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) framework, as well as longer-term monitoring of the consequences of this loss and damage.

B. Strengthen collaboration and partnerships with key stakeholders

10. Strategic collaborations and partnerships should be fostered between living heritage stakeholders, including communities, groups and individuals, and institutions and other actors engaged in climate action for living heritage. The breadth of institutions and instruments already involved in this intersectional field will require a strategic and selective process of engagement by stakeholders of the Convention. Approaches to collaboration may include:
 - enhancing mechanisms for existing partnership with communities, practitioners and other living heritage stakeholders (including NGOs and researchers);
 - strengthening synergies among the UNESCO Culture Conventions and programmes, and those stakeholders working on natural and cultural (tangible and intangible) heritage, as well as the cultural and creative industries, and education sectors;
 - investing strategically in partnerships both within and beyond the heritage, climate change and disaster risk reduction sectors, and with key humanitarian and United Nations organizations; and
 - engaging or facilitating regional and transboundary partnerships, communities of practice and agreements, where appropriate.

C. Promote collaborative research and case study development

11. All stakeholders are invited to foster research programmes and the development of case studies, notably those conducted by communities and groups themselves, aimed at understanding and monitoring the climate change dimensions of living heritage safeguarding under the Convention, to inform more detailed guidance and effective policy. A renewed commitment to profoundly collaborative research with local communities and Indigenous Peoples is essential, learning from alternative modes of enquiry and adopting cross-sectoral, trans-cultural and interdisciplinary research approaches and methodologies; this may require further refinement of protocols and principles for living heritage research more generally. The network of UNESCO Chairs and accredited non-governmental organizations should also be engaged in promoting research and education objectives, and in advocating for research programmes as a source of funding. Specific priorities for research might address:
 - the negative and positive consequences for living heritage of direct or indirect climate change impacts, including relocation or changes in migration patterns, and adoption of new forms of living heritage;
 - the vulnerability of transmission of living heritage to climate change impacts;
 - the contribution of living heritage to climate change mitigation strategies;
 - the interdependence of tangible and intangible, and cultural and natural forms of heritage in a climate change context;
 - the relationship between living heritage, livelihoods, and wellbeing in a climate change context;
 - the scope for living heritage climate change action in the context of human and cultural rights frameworks;
 - engagement with the new fields of artificial intelligence and futures thinking; and
 - models for measuring and monitoring impacts against climate action initiatives.

D. Co-design and implement policy and advocacy

12. States Parties are encouraged to develop policy, in consultation with stakeholders at all levels, on how best to integrate living heritage into strategies, plans and programmes that address climate change adaptation, mitigation, and safeguarding in the context of the climate emergency.
13. States Parties are encouraged to consider how best to adopt appropriate legal, technical, administrative and financial measures to fully integrate living heritage into systems and programmes of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation. This

would include establishing effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for climate action on the regional, national or sub-national levels, informed, among other sources, by the UNESCO Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda.

14. Communities and organizations should be fairly represented in this process, to ensure that the values and concerns of living heritage bearers inform the development and ongoing refinement of these mechanisms.
15. Stakeholders at all levels should advocate for the role of living heritage in climate action, including in international discussions on climate change and in synergy with relevant international organizations, frameworks and mechanisms.

E. Strengthen capacity through communication, education, training and exchange

16. The strengthening of communication, education, training and exchange should be promoted to enhance the capacity and understanding of all stakeholders in implementing climate action for safeguarding living heritage. Some of the measures that might be adopted in pursuit of this goal include:
 - integrating climate action for living heritage within the UNFCCC's Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE), which provides an important framework for the development of education and public awareness, training, public participation, public access to information, and international cooperation at the intersection of climate change and living heritage;
 - tailoring communication to particular audiences, and seeking innovative partnerships with individuals and organizations in media and arts to enhance the reach of messages around climate action for living heritage;
 - promoting alternative modes of training and transfer already practiced by communities, based on mutual respect and exchange between knowledge systems;
 - strengthening collaboration and joint action with climate change education stakeholders to enhance transmission of living heritage in formal and non-formal education and create synergies with initiatives to integrate climate change awareness in education systems; and
 - developing or enhancing training programmes aimed at integrating knowledge of living heritage and climate change, addressed to the particular needs of the full range of stakeholders, and building on the existing capacities of participants.
17. UNESCO is well positioned to promote the online exchange of good practices, case studies and experiences relevant to climate action for living heritage, and to assist States Parties and international organizations in the development of national and regional forums, networks and alliances, drawing on strategic alliances between regional UNESCO offices, UNESCO Category 2 Centres, national heritage, emergency and climate change institutions and agencies, and practitioners and communities.