

HERITAGE

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q & A

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WHY SAFEGUARD HERITAGE?

UNESCO works to safeguard heritage so that future generations can enjoy, benefit and learn from the legacy of the past. In addition to its intrinsic value, heritage can be a driver of sustainable development and local job creation. Conserving the world's natural heritage is also essential for the health of the planet and plays a key role in addressing the risk of natural and human-made disasters. Finally, safeguarding heritage brings countries and communities together, uniting people of different backgrounds around a common belief in the value of our history and environment. This is particularly crucial in times of emergency, when the safeguarding, continuation or rehabilitation of heritage provides an invaluable source of stability and hope for affected communities. Given the immense value of heritage for present and future generations, countering the growing threats it faces has never been more important.

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WHERE DOES UNESCO CONCENTRATE ITS SAFEGUARDING EFFORTS?

- ✓ **World Heritage.** World Heritage includes cultural, natural and mixed heritage sites that have been inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List for their outstanding universal value to humanity. World cultural heritage can include monuments, archaeological or urban sites, or sites that combine the works of man and nature, while natural heritage can include natural features, geographic formations or natural sites.
- ✓ **Intangible Heritage.** UNESCO works to safeguard the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills that are continuously being created and recreated when transmitted from generation to generation. This intangible or "living" heritage includes oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, traditional craftsmanship, and knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe.
- ✓ **Underwater Cultural Heritage.** Safeguarding underwater heritage – defined as traces of human existence that have been under water for at least 100 years – also forms an important part of UNESCO's work.
- ✓ **Safeguarding cultural property.** UNESCO works with its partners to halt the illicit trafficking of cultural property, while also working to protect and promote museums and their collections.
- ✓ **Protecting heritage in emergencies.** UNESCO has adopted a Strategy that aims to strengthen the ability of Member States to prevent and mitigate the loss of cultural heritage as a result of conflict and natural disasters, and to incorporate the protection of culture into humanitarian action, security strategies and peacebuilding processes.

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HOW DOES UNESCO WORK TO SAFEGUARD HERITAGE?

- i. **Encouraging safeguarding through its normative tools.** Five UNESCO Conventions underlie its efforts to safeguard heritage: the 2003 Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, the 2001 Underwater Heritage Convention, the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the 1970 Convention on Preventing the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property and the 1954 Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two (1954 and 1999) Protocols.
- ii. **Leading emergency safeguarding efforts.** In Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Brazil, Mali, Peru, Afghanistan, Haiti, Nepal, Bosnia and elsewhere, UNESCO has consistently led international efforts to safeguard heritage in crisis. Following the 4 August 2020 explosions in Beirut, UNESCO launched the Li Beirut ("For Beirut") initiative, which aims to reconstruct and recover Beirut's cultural heritage and cultural life. UNESCO's

flagship initiative to “[Revive the Spirit of Mosul](#)” seeks to restore and reconstruct Mosul’s cultural and educational institutions. Days after the devastating fire at the National Museum of Brazil in Rio de Janeiro, which destroyed an estimated 80-90% of the museum's 20 million-piece collection, UNESCO sent an [emergency mission](#) to the site to support the preparation of an Action Plan for the museum’s recovery. UNESCO encouraged the adoption of the [first UN Security Council Resolution](#) to focus on the protection of cultural heritage in March 2017, and has since led the elaboration of the UN Secretary General’s [report](#) on its implementation by Member States.

- iii. **Monitoring heritage in the face of global challenges.** Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO has monitored World Heritage site closures through an [online map](#); during the height of the crisis, 89% of World Heritage properties were closed or partially closed. UNESCO has also launched a [web platform](#) of living heritage experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. UNESCO monitors the impact of climate change on cultural heritage and is in the process of updating its [Policy Document on the impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage](#).
- iv. **Promoting reconciliation through heritage safeguarding.** Traditional Korean wrestling was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity following a [historic joint nomination](#) by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea – a highly symbolic step towards inter-Korean reconciliation. UNESCO and Colombia recently launched an innovative project to [integrate ex-combatants](#) of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC-EP) in the territory of Pandores and to restore social links with host communities through living heritage, in support of the 2016 Peace Agreement.
- v. **Strengthening the links between heritage and education.** Through the [World Heritage Education Programme](#), more than 3,500 young volunteers have learned about the value of heritage by taking part in 359 youth camps in 61 countries. The 2003 Convention, in cooperation with UNESCO’s Education Sector, has launch a series of projects aimed at integrating intangible cultural heritage into both formal and informal education, in line with SDG 4.7. Young people from 17 countries in the Arab States region participated in the [Arab World Heritage Young Professionals Forum](#), held in Tunis in December 2019. These young professionals focused on the links between peacebuilding and the protection, preservation and promotion of World Heritage.
- vi. **Prioritising cities.** UNESCO has kick-started a project on the role of living heritage in cities, which will support community-based inventories of intangible cultural heritage in [nine pilot cities](#) around the world. In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and UNESCO’s 2011 [Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape](#), UNESCO published the Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development, *Culture: Urban Future*, which aims to promote a culture-based approach to urban planning, regeneration and development. UNESCO and the World Bank have jointly launched a Position Paper on “[Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery](#)”, which proposes a new framework for integrating culture into city reconstruction and recovery following conflict, natural disasters or crises.
- vii. **Building stakeholder capacity.** In February 2018, UNESCO announced the launch of a three-year project co-financed by the African Development Bank to safeguard the [Lake Chad Basin](#). The project will aim to implement pilot projects to rehabilitate Lake Chad's ecosystems and cultural landscapes, as well as develop a road map for the nomination of the Lake Chad Basin to the World Heritage List. The 2003 Convention’s [global capacity-building programme](#) works to create positive institutional environments for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, while the [UNESCO Chair Programme on Cultural Heritage and Risk Management](#) supports training courses on disaster risk management.

HERITAGE

KEY MESSAGES



UNESCO works to protect and safeguard heritage so that future generations can enjoy, benefit and learn from the legacy of the past. For UNESCO, the safeguarding of heritage is a collective responsibility, as well as a powerful means of promoting peace – uniting the world’s peoples around shared values.



As recognized by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, heritage is a driver of development that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable. SDG 11, as well as the New Urban Agenda, particularly highlights the role cultural heritage plays in making cities inclusive, safe, sustainable, and resilient.



Heritage can be an enabler of inclusive economic growth, attracting investment and creating local, decent jobs. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, cultural tourism accounted for about 40% of world tourism revenues.



The conservation and safeguarding of natural heritage directly contributes to environmental sustainability and is essential to addressing the risk of natural and human-made disasters, strengthening the resilience of communities, including in the face of climate change.



Intangible heritage contributes to social cohesion, strengthening the social fabric of communities and groups in an inclusive way and acting as an enabler for sustainable development.



Participation in the identification, conservation, promotion and transmission of heritage can create important spaces for dialogue about gender roles. As a result, UNESCO believes that cultural heritage can be a powerful tool for the achievement of gender equality.



Ensuring the continuity of cultural heritage can help communities recovering from the trauma of conflict or disaster to rebuild their lives, while also fostering tolerance and a respect for difference, which is a precondition for dialogue and peace.

For more information, visit:

<http://en.unesco.org/themes/protecting-our-heritage-and-fostering-creativity>