

Resolution 21GA 2023/18 – Recognizing Indigenous Peoples' Values and Interconnections between Culture and Nature in the Outstanding Universal Value of World Heritage Sites

Voted on online platform

The 21st General Assembly of ICOMOS,

Recalling resolutions 18GA 2014/46 “Connecting Practice: supporting integrated approaches to nature and culture” adopted by the 18th General Assembly of ICOMOS (Florence, 2014), 19GA 2017/25 “Incorporating the interconnectedness of nature and culture into heritage conservation” adopted by the 19th General Assembly (New Delhi, 2017), and 19GA 2017/27 “Indigenous Heritage” (New Delhi, 2017);

Acknowledging the rights of Indigenous Peoples to maintain, control, protect, and develop their cultural heritage and to define and implement the best methods to conserve heritage of significance to their culture;

Recognizing that for Indigenous Peoples, cultural and natural values are inseparably interwoven and should be managed and protected in a holistic manner;

Considering that heritage policies, programmes and activities affecting Indigenous Peoples should be based on full recognition of the inseparability of natural and cultural heritage, and the deep-seated interconnectedness of intangible cultural heritage and tangible cultural and natural heritage;

Recognizing that adverse outcomes can occur when heritage processes do not adequately reflect the interrelated character of nature and culture, and that these can intersect with sustainability objectives as well as rights concerns, especially for Indigenous Peoples;

Recognizing that many World Heritage sites are fully or partially located in the traditional lands and territories of Indigenous Peoples;

Acknowledging that for many of those World Heritage sites, the Outstanding Universal Value was defined without the meaningful participation of the Indigenous Peoples concerned and may not reflect their perspectives, their cultural context, their relationship to the land, and the interconnectedness of nature and culture; and that this continues to have significant negative impacts on some Indigenous Peoples' rights, practices, traditions, livelihoods, and cultural heritage;

Acknowledging that the World Heritage Convention provides a context where new practices supporting integrated approaches to nature and culture can be forged, given that it provides an international instrument for both natural and cultural heritage;

Noting that ICOMOS has worked together with both the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) to develop more integrated approaches and practices to natural and cultural heritage in the context of their work as Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee;

Requests the ICOMOS Board to:

1. Advocate for positive changes to World Heritage processes, including to the criteria for the assessment of Outstanding Universal Value that would consider cultural and natural values within individual criteria, in order to facilitate the recognition of interconnections between culture and nature on the World Heritage List in particular with regard to indigenous people's values.
2. Collaborate with the other Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee (IUCN and ICCROM) and the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on World Heritage (IIPFWH) in order to develop options for changes to the criteria that would address this issue, for the consideration of the World Heritage Committee.

3. Advocate for a comprehensive review of sites inscribed on the World Heritage List to identify sites where the values of Indigenous Peoples may have not been recognized when the Outstanding Universal Value was defined and which may thus warrant re-evaluation of the sources of their Outstanding Universal Value and/or their conservation strategies.
4. Ensure that the rights, perspectives and values of Indigenous Peoples and the relationship of Indigenous Peoples to the land are duly considered and recognized in the advice provided by ICOMOS to the World Heritage Committee.

