

Country: Tajikistan

Committee: UNESCO

Topic: Preservation of World Heritage Sites

School: The Study

World Heritage sites represent important pieces of the world’s culture, history and beauty. Many of these sites have preservation measures that allows them to remain beautiful for all to see. However, many of these sites are subjected to deterioration due to war, climate change, and private interests. Climate change affects all countries and if it persists, we could be facing a loss of the world’s most prized sites because of increasing temperatures, rising sea levels, and worsening droughts. The recent conflicts in Syria and Iraq have led to almost all of their World Heritage Sites to be exposed to significant destruction due to intense firefights, pillages, and black market sales of prized artifacts1. This is important because the destruction and deterioration of these prized sites can lead to a loss of beauty and culture, as well as historical artifacts.

According to Mechtild Rossler, director of UNESCO’s World Heritage Center, “achieving the Paris Agreement’s goal of limiting global temperature rise […] is vitally important to protecting World Heritage for current and future generations”. In order to preserve the future of World Heritage Sites, it is crucial that the mitigation of climate change happens. The main organizations working on this issue are UNESCO, UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme), and UCS (Union of Concerned Scientists). In May 2016, a report was released stating a list of World Heritage Sites said to be in danger due to environmental factors. However, many countries do not wish to have their World Heritage Sites included due to fears that it will decrease the tourism associated with those sites. Especially in the case of natural sites, these private interests lead to negative impacts on the ecosystem. Some governments have managed to combine tourism with the demand of the preservation of World Heritage Sites. In the case of World Heritage Sites that have been affected by war, for example in Syria, Russian forces have helped the Syrian army by helping to establish a plan in order to restore some of Syria’s sites. However, there has been a struggle between the government’s power and the foreign intervention.

Tajikistan currently has two World Heritage Sites. One of these sites is Tajik National Park which includes the Mountains of Pamir. Currently, there is a medium-term management plan that is responsible for all the activities in the park where local communities can participate and their traditional rights are respected2. The park was also divided into zones such that it can accommodate the biodiversity of the park. In addition, the fact that it was added to the list of World Heritage Sites attracted tourism. However, long-term investments will have to be made to decrease the negative impacts of tourism while still having enough tourism to boost the economy of Tajikistan. In order to fully implement the management plan and accomplish law enforcement measures, there is a need for financing2. Alternate sources of funding are necessary since the government’s funds are limited.

Tajikistan believes that the UN should consider plans that would encompass both the income from tourism and the appeal of World Heritage Sites. The UNESCO World Heritage Center should provide countries with different amounts of funds based on how many World Heritage Sites they contain. These funds would be used towards the maintenance of these sites and would provide as motivation to keep the sites in good shape. For instance, if one where to misuse the money, they would be cut off. Furthermore, having properly maintained sites would increase the tourism, thus increasing the economy of the country. Tajikistan believes that this would work because the money provides a motivation for countries to maintain their sites. In the case of the many Syrian and Iraqi sites that have been destroyed, sufficient funding could help them restore their sites. If the UN were to help with their restoration plans, they would not have to worry about Russia’s intervention. The money for these preservation plans need to come from somewhere. By mediatizing this issue, people would see that there is a problem and they need to help in order to restore their World Heritage Sites. By making people aware, more people will donate, thus increasing the amount of funds that can be spent on preserving and restoring the worlds’ prized Sites.