

Mandate of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

QUESTIONNAIRE ON CULTURAL RIGHTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Subject: Negative impacts of climate change on culture and cultural rights

Response of the *Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage in Cyprus*

1. Introduction – Understanding the subject

1.1 What is Climate Change? According to the official definition given by the *United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)*, climate change refers to a statistically significant variation in either the mean state of the climate or its variability, persisting for an extended period (typically decades or longer). Climate change may be due to natural internal processes or external causes, or to persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use (*IPCC 2007a*). The *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)* focuses specifically on anthropogenic climate change, i.e. ‘*the change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity, that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods*’ (UN 1992).

Some additional definitions associated with climate change that have been addressed by the *UNFCCC* (1992) aim at providing a better understanding of the overall situation: Climate system means the totality of the atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere and geosphere and their interactions. Adverse effects of climate change are changes in the physical environment or biota resulting from climate change which have significant deleterious effects on the composition, resilience or productivity of natural and managed ecosystems or on the operation of socio-economic systems or on human health and welfare.

1.2 Understanding the human rights dimension. Concerning human rights and human rights defenders the February 20 Reports explains the following: ‘The rights that cultural rights defenders defend are a core part of international human rights law. They are vital to the human experience and critical to implementing other human rights and to sustainable development. They include the right of all to take part in cultural life, without discrimination (one component of which is the right to access and enjoy cultural heritage), and the rights to freedom of artistic expression and scientific freedom. Despite the importance of these rights, and their normative grounding, they are not always given the attention they deserve, and not always recognized as human rights with the same standing as other rights. Cultural rights defenders are therefore often not fully recognized for their work, do not receive adequate support and are not granted appropriate protection. This must change, and both cultural rights and those who defend them must be acknowledged as critical to the human rights framework and its full implementation’. (*Human Rights Council Forty-third session 24 February–20 March 2020A/HRC/43/50*) <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/43/50>

1.3 Brief climatic information on Cyprus. Cyprus has an intense Mediterranean climate with the typical seasonal rhythm strongly marked in respect of temperature, rainfall and weather generally. Hot and dry summers from mid-May to mid-October and mild, rainy, rather changeable, winters from November to mid-March are separated by short autumn and spring seasons of rapid change in weather conditions

Cyprus has a hot summer and mild winter, but this generalization must be modified by consideration of altitude, which lowers temperatures by about 5oC per 1,000 metres and of marine influences which give cooler summers and warmer winters near most of the coastline and especially on the west coast.

The annual mean temperature for Cyprus varies from year to year, from 16.1oC to 19.7oC, with an average of 17.5oC. The year 2010 was the warmest ever recorded in Cyprus. The years 1961, 1965 and 1967 were the coldest in the last 62 years.

The seasonal difference between mid-summer and mid-winter temperatures is quite large at 18oC inland and about 14oC on the coasts. Differences between day maximum and night minimum temperatures are also quite large especially inland in summer. These differences are in winter 8 to 10oC on the lowlands and 5 to 6oC on the mountains increasing in summer to 16oC on the central plain and 9 to 12oC elsewhere

1.4 Climate Change in Cyprus in brief. The most recent report on climate change (2018) for most areas in Cyprus representative of the island (Report prepared under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) reviews the condition of all resources (water, soil, air, agricultural land forests, coastal habitat, etc.) effected by all sources of change (energy, transport, building development, etc.) evaluates policies and measures in place to monitor change and possible vulnerabilities on the quality of resources and of infrastructure and the need for possible further measures to minimize likely climate change impacts. Generally, Cyprus suffers from no important impacts from climate change as far as it can be predicted and certainly no changes that may create conditions that may contribute to any negative impact on the exercise of cultural rights on any community in any area (*United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Seventh National Communication, 2018*). A scholarly book on climatic change in Cyprus ('*Climate Change in Cyprus: Review of the Impacts and Outline of an Adaptation Strategy*', 2016, *Spinger Briefs in Environmental Science, Theodoros Zachariadis*) the review of causes, impacts and medication strategies there is no reference to any kind of negative impact on climate change on conditions affecting cultural rights.

1.5 The Work of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage (TCCH): Cases of note on actions taken by the *Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage*: Having all these in mind, a few examples of weather conditions causing damage to cultural monuments (which will be mentioned below) refer to the heavy rainfall this winter causing damages to part of the City Walls of Nicosia and the cumulative effects of past flooding in part of the Mesaoria plain causing subsidence and structural damage to heritage buildings notably to the Panayia Church in Ashia / Pasakoy. These projects are part of the current work of the *Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage* funded by the EC and implemented in cooperation by UNDP.

Taking a broader view of the human dimension in the work of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage and how that work enhances cultural rights, common values and opportunities, it is important to explain that throughout the project planning cycle, from project inception to completion, there are regular contacts with the stakeholders in the field of cultural heritage and the local communities concerned to increase awareness of the diverse importance of the monuments as part of the life of a local community and Cyprus at large. Despite the constraint of the continuation of the Cyprus problem where, in both communities, population had moved and settled in other places, the emotional links with the monuments identifying birth places and ancestral villages remain strong and bring people together. The participation of local communities in the ceremonies organized at the completion of each monument conserved is evidence of the underlying significance of conservation in promoting cultural rights and without any hinderance from adverse conditions caused by climate change. Among many notable experiences of community get-together at TCCH events, was the participation and turnout at the completion ceremonies of the Mosques in Ayis Yiannis and Ayis Nikolas in Paphos, the Famagusta Walled City Bastions and Churches (Ravelin Land Gate and Martinengo, Carmelite, St. Anna's, St. Mary's)

2. The Questionnaire

1. What negative impacts of climate change on culture, heritage and the enjoyment of cultural rights by all have been documented in your context? Are particular groups, such as women, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, rural persons or peasants, and youth or future generations, as well as cultural practitioners being impacted in specific and disproportionate ways? What efforts are being undertaken to inventory and monitor such impacts? **Response: In Cyprus climate change has not been important in any area of life and to any extent to cause infringement to the cultural rights of any group of people.**

2. Are cultural sites or resources which are critical to participation in cultural life identified as being threatened due to climate change and if so, how? What processes are used to analyse the risk of harm or inaccessibility to these areas and resources? Are records being kept about these risks and impacts? **Response:** Here again, climate change has not been responsible for threatening participation in cultural life, However, the main threat to cultural sites in Cyprus continues to be the continuation of the division of the island which has long prevented proper conservation until 2008 when the bicomunal *Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage* has been established whose activities up until now resulted in the conservation of 55 monuments and sites with another 20 either under conservation or design study.

3. Please provide examples of specific natural resources, local sites used for cultural practices or seasonal patterns that influence the ability to participate in diverse aspects of cultural life that may be subject to volatility due to climate change. Consider also diffuse geographical features or resources that may be at risk and are definitive or influential in the practice and development of culture on either a collective or individual basis. **Response: Cultural heritage sites located in the coastal zones of Cyprus are relatively more vulnerable to increased deterioration due to sea breeze that tends to cause erosion of building materials mainly stone. However, there has not been important climate change to cause increased damage to the extent of affecting the enjoyment of cultural rights of any community or group.**

4. What are ways in which culture and cultural resources, such as traditional knowledge, are being used to mitigate and/or adapt in the face of climate change? Where available, please share examples of best practices for applying traditional knowledge and cultural practices, such as those of indigenous peoples, peasants and fisher people, including traditional fire management and agricultural techniques that should be considered in developing mitigation and adaptation responses. What is being done to inventory and preserve such cultural resources that could be useful to addressing climate change? **Response: No comment can be made about the experience of Cyprus in this respect.**

5. What are the diverse legal frameworks, trends and practices at the national and international levels that promote intervention from across the cultural ecosystem, including by cultural rights defenders and cultural practitioners, as well as women, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, rural people and peasants, and youth, in addressing disparate impacts and influencing decisions around climate change mitigation and adaptation? What are the challenges to such inclusivity and how are they being addressed? **Response: The legal framework is of lesser importance as an instrument for promoting interventions compared to the bicomunal cooperation platform offered by the *Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage* which enables regional assistance to be channeled to the conservation of monuments promoting cultural rights of all communities in all Cyprus.**

6. What opportunities are available for people to publicly engage in cultural life in ways that demonstrate contemporary cultural shifts in response to climate change? Are there currently visible signs of cultural change underway? What factors might impede such practice of cultural life? **Response: Notwithstanding the absence of any serious degree of climate change in Cyprus as a cause for restriction on cultural rights, opportunities for engagement in cultural life are facilitated by the increased communication of people across the island except access to military areas. There are numerous NGOs engaging in cultural life and recently a new platform has been established under the *Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage* encouraging and enabling the involvement of young people to participate in the *Young Ambassadors* programme comprising about 35 young people from both communities involved in organizing visits to the monument conserved under the *Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage* and inform them on conservation techniques, history and the importance of cooperation,**

7. In what capacities do experts from across the field of culture and climate interact and exchange knowledge at the national or international levels? For example, are experts from various cultural fields involved in relevant climate change policy? Are climate change experts engaging with the cultural sectors, and if so how? **Response: In Cyprus there is no significant involvement of climate change experts in the field of culture because there is no such need to any significant extent. However, professional with technical background (engineers, architects, etc.) are involved in the field of culture in all parts of Cyprus either as members of the *Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage* or independently.**

Measures taken and recommendations

8. Are affected persons and groups being consulted and enabled to participate in discussions related to climate policy and climate action? **Response: No groups are affected by climate changes in the field of culture Cyprus**

9. Are cultural rights defenders¹ who are working on climate-related harms to culture and cultural rights facing specific challenges in their work, and are they at particular risk of threats, harassment and human rights violations? If so, how should these human rights defenders be better protected and supported? ? **Response: No groups are affected by climate changes in the field of culture Cyprus**

10. Has your country adopted specific regulations or measure to address the negative impacts of climate change on culture and cultural rights? If so, please specify the content of such regulation and measures. Is a human rights approach taken to these questions? **Response: No groups are affected by climate changes in the field of culture Cyprus. However, even though climate change refers to a major change in climatic conditions, Cyprus experienced heavy rain last winter that contributed to damages to several parts of the Vancian City Walls of Nicosia. Due to the significance of the monument the *Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage* has included in its programme the conservation of the most damaged parts of the Walls and Bastions as a propriety action, specifically parts of the Walls between *Roccas* and *Mulla Bastions*, *Quirini Bastion* and a few others.**

11. Are the impacts of climate policy and climate action on culture, cultural rights and human rights more broadly being assessed? What should be undertaken in future in this regard. **Response Climate change is not a major policy issue as a source of problems for cultural rights**

Defenders of cultural rights in accordance with international standards; see A/HRC/43/50

12. What opportunities or mechanisms, if any, for remedies and redress are being made available to respond effectively to the harm to culture and cultural rights caused by the climate crisis? . **Response: Climate change is not a major policy issue as a source of problems for cultural rights**

13. What national, regional and international initiatives are being undertaken to address the intersections of climate change, culture and cultural rights? How effective have such initiatives been, what primary challenges have they faced, and what additional efforts should be suggested in this regard? **Response: Climate change is not a major policy issue as a source of problems for cultural rights**

14. What recommendations should be made to States and other stakeholders concerning these topics? **Response: Climate change is not a major policy issue as a source of problems for cultural rights**

Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage in Cyprus

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