**QUESTIONNAIRE ON CULTURAL RIGHTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

In her next report to be presented to the General Assembly in October 2020, the United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Karima Bennoune, will consider the theme of climate change, culture and cultural rights.

The Special Rapporteur believes it is critical to think more broadly about the relationship between culture and cultural rights on the one hand, and addressing climate change on the other. The report will address both the threats posed by climate change to culture, heritage and the cultural rights guaranteed by international law, including the right to take part in cultural life without discrimination, the rights to artistic and scientific freedom, the right to enjoy and access cultural heritage, as well as the positive potential of culture, heritage, and traditional knowledge, and the enjoyment of cultural rights, to help avoid catastrophic climate change and to adapt to the changes already in motion.

As climate change is, and will continue, changing our habits, ways of life, modes of production and of interaction, addressing climate change requires marshaling cultural resources and necessitates cultural change, including improving the culture of our relationship with nature. A vital aspect of the human rights approach is the emphasis on participation and consultation of affected people especially those most affected with regard to policies and responses.

*Those submitting information should feel free to answer only specific questions that they find most relevant.*

**Negative impacts of climate change on culture and cultural rights**

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?**

The Sámi people are recognised as the second constituent people of Norway. Norway has an obligation to ensure that the Sámi people are able to exercise their traditional cultural and commercial activities. The ability to continue exercising traditional, culturally significant commercial activities is an important and recognised right of indigenous peoples. Research shows that reindeer husbandry and other Sámi livelihoods are under pressure and can expect increasing challenges due to climate change (Buanes et al. 2009a).

The magnitude of the expected climate change will, along with various economic and social factors, create new challenges for the traditional ways in which the Sámi people have used nature, and will therefore also have an impact on Sámi culture and society.

Historically, indigenous peoples in the High North, such as the Sámi, have been dependent on surviving in, and adapting to, a challenging and variable natural environment (Buanes et al. 2009a). The knowledge accumulated through generations of practical experience has been necessary for survival and represents a rich source of experiential knowledge about both the Arctic natural environment and the interaction between nature and society. For this reason, the traditional knowledge possessed by indigenous peoples continues to be important in the context of the current and projected changes.

Climate change has negative impacts on cultural heritage sites. The risk of erosion, flood and avalanche is increasing, and due to warmer, more moist and more extreme weather we face a faster decomposing and destruction of buildings, archaeological sites and cultural landscapes. These negative impacts are especially severe in the northern and arctic areas where the warming is twice as fast as the global intermediate. The consequences of climate change apply for all types of heritage sites, but some more than others. Archaeological remains and Sámi indigenous heritage sites that are subtle and integrated parts of a cultural landscape are examples of heritage that can be especially vulnerable.

The project *Adapt Northern Heritage* is concerned with adapting northern cultural heritage to the environmental impacts of climate change and associated natural hazards through community engagement and informed conservation planning. The project will develop an online tool to assess the risks for and vulnerabilities of historic places and provide guidance for the planning of strategic adaption measures that takes into account cultural, economic, environmental and social sustainability. This is a collaborative project between partners in Ireland, Iceland, Russia, Scotland, Sweden and Norway. Norway's Directorate for Cultural Heritage (Riksantikvaren) and the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research (Norsk institutt for kulturminneforskning) are among the participants. More information about the project: <http://adaptnorthernheritage.interreg-npa.eu/>

Riksantikvaren, The Directorate of Cultural Heritage in Norway, has published a "Strategy for Management of Norwegian Urban Cultural Heritage 2017-2020". This strategy also contains some climate guidelines. The directorate will develop a climate strategy for cultural heritage as well. They will begin their work this year. The directorate is also publishing guidelines on the website regarding preservation of cultural heritage – this includes [guidelines about how to adapt to the changing](https://www.riksantikvaren.no/tilpasning-til-endra-klima) climate. To monitor negative impacts of climate change on culture, heritage and the enjoyment of cultural rights, two environmental surveillance programmes focussing specifically on these challenges have been established. This includes monitoring of the impact of climate change on 45 listed buildings and the preservation conditions for cultural deposits from the middle ages in Bergen, Tønsberg and Trondheim. The Stave churches are among Norway’s most valuable cultural heritage sites, and the churches mean a lot to many people. The churches have also been assessed systematically over many years when it comes to impact of climate change.

Byggnettverket and Håndverksnett have, in cooperation with the open-air museums, developed the project *Common effort in order to meet the challenges from climate change* ([Felles innsats for å møte klimautfordringane](http://ryfylkemuseet.no/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/MANUS-nettutgve.pdf)) in 2017. They identified huge challenges on keeping the technical condition of the buildings at the museums at an acceptable level, and that these challenges are getting bigger as the climate is changing.

1. **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?**

Increased precipitation combined with milder winters will reduce opportunities for practising winter sports, which is considered an important expression of Norwegian culture and pivotal to the quality of life for many Norwegians.

1. **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.**

**Positive potential of culture and cultural rights to enhance responses to climate change**

1. **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?**

Municipal and Regional Planning

Ongoing project: Development of online tool for use in municipal and regional planning: climate adaptive management of reindeer husbandry. Project led by the County Governor in Troms and Finnmark. Built on report that refers to relevant legislation, including international covenant on Civil and Political Rights art. 27, that states that "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language."

Central Government Planning Guidelines on Climate Change Adaptation

The Sámi Parliament of Norway has been part of the reference group in the development of central government planning guidelines on climate change adaptation and associated web-based tool.

Living Off the Land on Its Terms

A report by the Sami Parliament’s executive council on the environment and land use, “Living Off the Land on Its Terms” (2009) highlights the importance of making use of the knowledge that indigenous peoples have acquired over generations, but also of combining this with scientific knowledge. The report concludes that the traditional indigenous knowledge has proved useful in relation to documenting climate change and developing positive adaptation strategies.

International Cooperation

Norway participates in cooperation under the Arctic Council aimed at strengthening the cultural rights of indigenous peoples in the Arctic in the situation of climate change and making use of traditional knowledge. Examples of projects are the Circumpolar Local Environmental Observer Network (CLEO), aimed at increasing awareness of vulnerabilities to the impacts of unusual changes in the environment through observations by local residents of Arctic communities, Arctic Wildland Fire Ecology Mapping and Monitoring Project (ArcticFIRE), and Meaningful Engagement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in Marine Activities (MEMA). Norway has contributed to the CLEO-project by establishing a HUB for knowledge exchange in the Sámi community, Kautokeino, and co-financed a project for cleaning up waste in Sámi communities on the Kola Peninsula.

Cultural Heritage

A new white paper from the Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment, [*Meld. St. 16 (2019-2020) Nye mål i kulturmiljøpolitikken – Engasjement, bærekraft og mangfold*](https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-16-20192020/id2697781/), describes cultural heritage as a mitigation tool when it comes to climate change. The re-use of buildings instead of demolishing and building new ones, is an example of cultural heritage politics that reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Cultural heritage can be a substantial contributor in circular economy. The white paper also emphasizes that everyone should have the opportunity to get involved and take responsibility for the cultural heritage, cf. The Faro Convention.

The Directorate of Cultural Heritage is supporting a primary gathering of knowledge about construction solutions traditionally used to meet the climate change challenges in Norway.

1. **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?**

Under various international agreements, Norway has an obligation to maintain and safeguard the culture and livelihood of indigenous peoples, as well as their property rights to natural resources and land.

* UN Covenant Civil and Political Rights (article 27)
* ILO Convention No. 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples
* Convention on Biodiversity (particularly articles 8 and 10)
* The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the UN’s General Assembly in 2007
* Article 110a of the Norwegian Constitution states that: “It is the responsibility of the authorities of the State to create conditions enabling the Sami people to preserve and develop its language, culture and way of life.”
* The Planning and Building Act requires facilitation for the general public to participate in planning processes.

Climate change is a global problem that will impact local communities and individuals. Regardless of whether changes are viewed in a national or global context, there will be large variations in the consequences for, and vulnerability of, the people affected. The variation in vulnerability towards climate change is also closely linked to the capacity of groups and individuals to respond to the challenges. The local perspective will be important for understanding how climate change will affect our society, and how various players will have to respond to the changes.

As for the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, this also promotes intervention from across the cultural ecosystem as long as the interventions are sustainable/in line with sustainable development goals: <http://whc.unesco.org/en>

1. **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?**
2. **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?**

UNESCO is currently revising their climate change policy (last one from 2008). The drafting is outsourced to consultants from WWF and ICCROM. Norway is a member of the World Heritage Committee (2017-2021) and the delegates have the opportunity to contribute to the development of the policy. Ultimately the Committee will adapt the policy. We still have a long way to properly manifest the role of cultural heritage in the mitigation of climate change, on a local, national as well as an international level. One of the key factors might be to see climate change, cultural heritage and sustainable development combined.

Norway is the main donor behind the World Heritage Leadership Program. The Programme is a partnership between ICCROM, IUCN, and the Norwegian Ministry of Climate and the Environment, in collaboration with the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS. It aims to improve conservation and management practices for culture and nature through the work of the World Heritage Convention, as an integral component of the contribution of World Heritage Sites to sustainable development. The Programme's Resilience Module will, amongst others, focus on gathering knowledge, developing tools and providing guidance for climate change mitigation and adaptation in World Heritage sites.

**Measures taken and recommendations**

1. **Are affected persons and groups being consulted and enabled to participate in discussions related to climate policy and climate action?**
2. **Are cultural rights defenders[[1]](#footnote-1) 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?**
3. **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?**
4. **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?**
5. **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?**
6. **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?**

See question 7.

1. **What recommendations should be made to States and other stakeholders concerning these topics?**

Comment:

We would also like to refer to Norway's input last year to the thematic report focusing on human rights obligations related to global climate change – UNs Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment. Norway's input last year will supplement the answers above.

1. Defenders of cultural rights in accordance with international standards; see A/HRC/43/50. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)