

ICOMOS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS Working Group (SDG WG)



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Opening Note

Moving from Advocacy to action
By Dr Naima Benkari, ICOMOS- SDGWG
Focal point

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Moving from Advocacy to Action: A New Chapter for Heritage

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the ICOMOS Sustainable Development Goals Working Group (SDGWG) newsletter. Curated by our dedicated communication team led by Linda Shetabi, this publication arrives at a critical juncture. As we witness heritage increasingly caught in the crosshairs of intensifying climate crises and regional conflicts, our mission has evolved. We are moving beyond broad advocacy to provide the structured, technical tools necessary for genuine resilience and recovery.

Global Advocacy and Strategic Milestones

Our 2026 roadmap focuses on embedding heritage within high-level global policy to address systemic vulnerabilities. A significant milestone was reached through the PAGUS Initiative, led by Dr Paolo Motta; the PAGUS Manifesto on urban-rural territorial rebalance was officially annexed for the Second UN World Social Summit in Doha. Looking toward the ICOMOS General Assembly 2026 in Kuching, our confirmed session, "Redefining Emergency Response through Community Leadership," is currently seeking abstracts that highlight grounded, local responses to heritage in crisis.

Simultaneously, we are amplifying underrepresented voices on the world stage. We are collaborating with ICOMOS Türkiye and CAWG to empower Indigenous leaders at COP31 in Antalya, while partnering with IFLA at the World Urban Forum to champion a dedicated "SDG18" for Culture in the post-2030 agenda.

Operationalising Our Mission

To move beyond theory, we are developing the practical infrastructure needed to measure heritage's true impact. In the realm of water security, we are building on a successful ECOSOC intervention—admirably delivered by ISC Water President Meisha Hunter, as we prepare for the UN Water Conference in Abu Dhabi this December. To support these high-level efforts with data, we have begun pilot testing a new mapping template. This tool will allow National Committees to translate abstract alignment into measurable, reportable contributions to the SDGs.

Special Feature: The SDGWG Spotlight

We are thrilled to launch the Spotlight section, a space dedicated to the individuals who power our Working Group. It is only fitting that we begin this series with our first focal point, Andrew Potts, whose foundational leadership and vision have been instrumental in shaping our current trajectory.

Upcoming Engagement

We invite you to join us on Saturday, March 7, at 1 PM CET for our International Women's Day webinar, where five global leaders will discuss women's pivotal roles in heritage and crisis response. While you wait, do not miss Angela López Sabater's "Voices of Heritage" essay in this issue, which offers a poignant look at the climate urgency facing the built heritage of Valencia.

As we navigate these turbulent times, it is your engagement that transforms our policy goals into tangible protection for the world's cultural legacy.

In solidarity,
Naima



Prepared by:
Dr Naima Benkari
ICOMOS SDGWG Focal Point

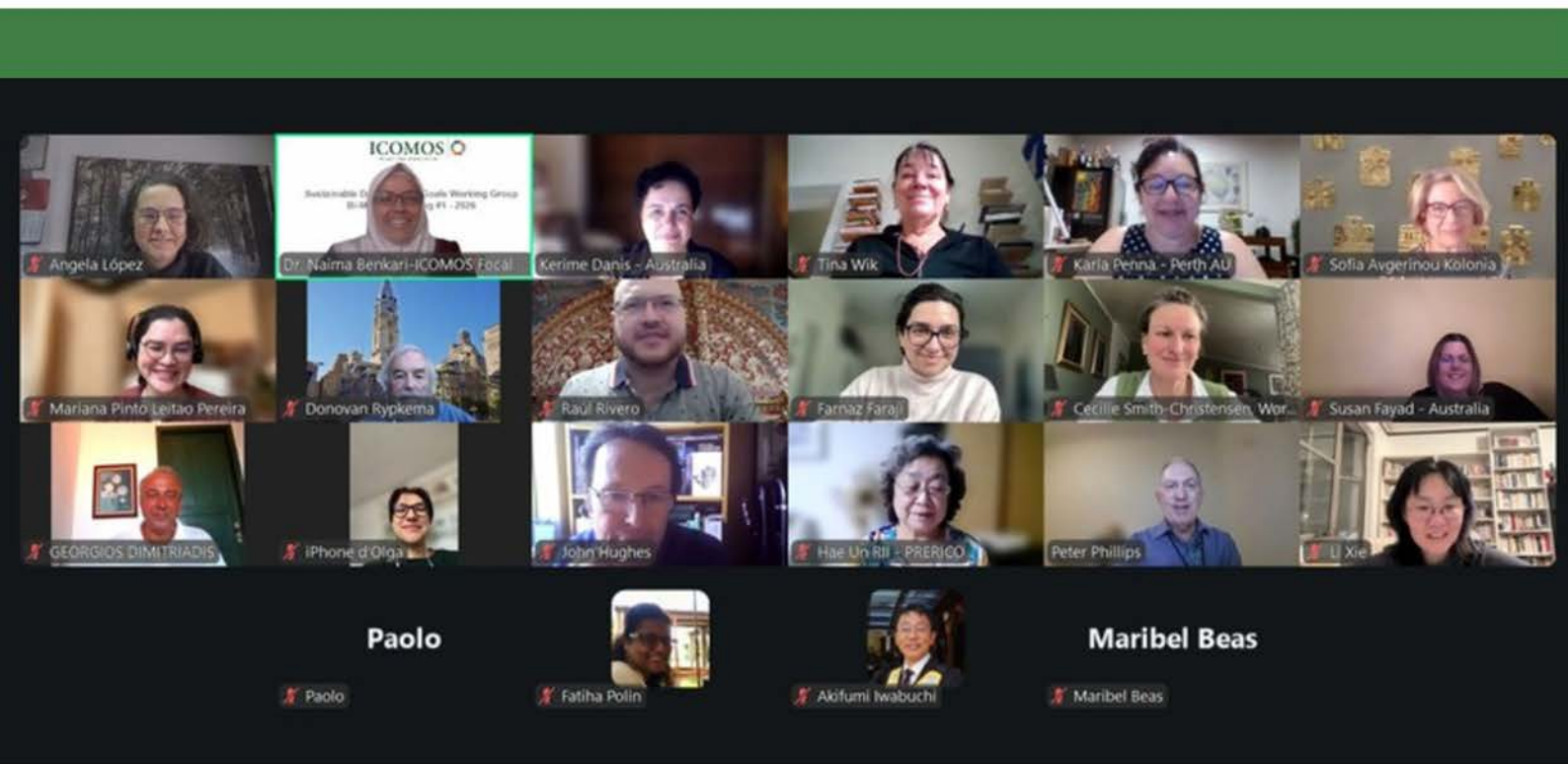
Summary of the first ICOMOS SDG WG bi-monthly meeting in 2026

The ICOMOS SDG Working Group (SDGWG) bi-monthly meeting, held online on 13 February 2026 and chaired by Dr Naima Benkari, focused on finalising strategic directions for 2026, strengthening partnerships, and putting advocacy for culture into practice within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The session was both forward-looking and action-driven.

A key procedural item was the formal approval of the 2025 annual meeting’s minutes, which were accepted without amendment. This set a constructive tone, allowing the group to move quickly into substantive agenda items.

One major focus was **preparation for the ICOMOS General Assembly 2026 (GA2026)**, to be held in Kuching in October 2026. The SDGWG confirmed submission of its dedicated session (Session #11), centered on “*Redefining Emergency Response through Community Leadership*.” The thematic emphasis is on community-led, First Nations, and local responses to both natural and human-made crises. Members were encouraged to participate as organizers, contributors and reviewers, and to engage via a dedicated WhatsApp coordination group. The strategy here is clear: move from abstract policy discussions to grounded case studies that demonstrate how heritage actors contribute directly to SDG implementation in crisis contexts.

Climate advocacy through the UNFCCC COP processes formed another major pillar of the discussion. Updates on coordination toward COP31 in Antalya were shared by the SDGWG representatives Karla Penna, Ege Yildirim, and Ozgun Ozcakir, building on momentum from COP30 in Belém. Collaboration is ongoing among the SDGWG, the Climate Action Working Group, and ICOMOS Türkiye, with engagement anticipated at both official COP venues and public-facing side events. Participants emphasised early logistical planning due to restricted access zones typical of COP settings.



Summary of the first ICOMOS SDG WG bi-monthly meeting in 2026

Importantly, reflections on COP30 highlighted both progress and gaps. While political movement on fossil fuels and energy remained limited, culture-based climate action gained visibility. A notable concern was that First Nations and traditional leaders are frequently discussed but insufficiently platformed. In response, proposals for COP31 include a “*Voice from the Ground*” workshop for traditional and Indigenous leaders and a complementary session aimed at helping community representatives translate their knowledge into formats compatible with COP negotiation and reporting frameworks. The direction is pragmatic: empower local actors not only to speak, but to be understood in policy arenas.

Communications and outreach were also prioritised. The SDGWG’s first quarterly newsletter (Issue 1) is scheduled for release on 25 February 2026. Members were urged to submit content promptly and to amplify outputs across social media platforms. The group is clearly investing in visibility as a lever for influence.

The meeting also highlighted **successful engagement with UN processes.** Meisha Hunter (Isc. Water President) reported on her intervention, in partnership with the SDGWG, at the ECOSOC Partnership Forum in New York on 27 January, where she emphasised traditional water systems and water-related heritage as living assets contributing to SDG6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). Her intervention was well received, and an invitation for continued collaboration with ECOSOC was extended. Work is now advancing toward the UN Water Conference in Abu Dhabi in December 2026, with plans for a side event in collaboration with ICOMOS ISC Water and SDGWG. This represents a concrete example of how heritage expertise can shape global sustainability discourse.

Another strategic initiative discussed was a **joint proposal for the World Urban Forum (WUF13)** in collaboration with IFLA and partners. The core objective is to build support for a dedicated culture goal, often referred to as “SDG18”, in the post-2030 development agenda. The proposed session would combine global policy updates with practical workshops enabling cities to map and report cultural contributions within Voluntary Local and National Reviews (VLRs/VNRs). Donovan Rypkema confirmed that, if accepted, a booth presence would be used to distribute digital materials and gather support. This signals a shift from advocacy alone toward coalition-building at the city level, where implementation power often resides.

Task Team updates reflected steady technical progress. Task Teams 2 and 3, led by Olga Partina and Dr Andris Kairiss respectively, are advancing advocacy around the culture goal and preparing webinars for National Committees. Task Team 3 is developing a mapping template to support heritage actors in systematically documenting cultural heritage's contributions to the SDGs. Pilot testing is planned for late February–March 2026, with initial translations foreseen in Spanish, French, and Arabic. This is practical infrastructure work, turning abstract alignment into measurable reporting tools. Task Team 3 has also prepared a draft cultural heritage chapter structure for VNRs, with pilot testing provisionally planned in cooperation with Task Team 2 beginning in March 2026.

Task Team 4, led by Georgios Dimitriadis, is working to explore collaboration between UNESCO Global Geoparks and ICOMOS. Regularised reporting structures and internal coordination channels are being established to enhance accountability and coherence.

Summary of the first ICOMOS SDG WG bi-monthly meeting in 2026

On Heritage and SDG5, Task Team 8, led by Fatiha Polin, is organising a webinar for International Women’s Day (to take place on 7 March 2026), highlighting women’s leadership in heritage and crisis response, with speakers from multiple regions confirmed. Additionally, planning is underway for an International Day for Monuments and Sites (IDMS) webinar around 18 April, focusing on endangered sites and emergency response, with an emphasis on improving production quality and reviving YouTube documentation.

Overall, the meeting demonstrated three defining characteristics: strategic alignment with global policy processes (COP, ECOSOC, WUF), operationalisation through concrete tools (SDG mapping template, VNR chapter draft), and enhanced communications infrastructure (newsletter, social media, digital outreach). The group is moving beyond conceptual advocacy toward structured engagement and measurable contributions. The challenge ahead will be sustaining coordination across multiple global platforms while ensuring that community voices remain central, not symbolic, in heritage-led sustainable development.

ICOMOS | 2026 Heritage & Sustainability Roadmap: ICOMOS SDGWG Strategic Actions

Integrating cultural heritage into the global sustainability framework, focusing on high-level advocacy and practical tools for climate resilience and urban development.

GLOBAL CLIMATE & HERITAGE ADVOCACY

COP31 Coordination (Antalya)
Coordinated with Climate Action groups and local ministries for official side events and public panels.

"Voice from the Ground" Workshop
Depicting traditional community leaders and First Nations representatives in discussion, sharing knowledge and initiatives.

Technical Literacy Support
Translation workshops and guides, helping local leaders present traditional heritage work in formats recognized by technical COP processes.

THE QUEST FOR 'SDG 18' (THE CULTURE GOAL)

Advocacy for a Standalone Culture Goal
Building support for a dedicated "Culture Goal" in the post-2030 agenda, cultivating city-level champions at the World Urban Forum.

City-Level Mapping Tools
Workshops for cities to map and report cultural heritage assets against global sustainability indicators.

Digital Outreach Campaign
Digital handouts on use of QR-code based materials to drive support for the culture goal initiative. (conceptual, no actual code).

MAJOR 2026 CONVENINGS

GA2026 General Assembly (Kuching)
A dedicated session on community led and First Nations responses to heritage crises (natural and human-made). October 2026.

UN Water Conference (Abu Dhabi)
Presenting traditional water systems and water-related heritage as living assets for the water heritage for SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation). - December 2026.

ECOSOC Partnership Forum
Continued high-level engagement following interventions regarding the role of heritage in global water security.

KNOWLEDGE TOOLS & THEMATIC ACTIONS

Heritage-SDG Mapping Template
Developing a structured template for heritage actors to document and compare contributions to various Sustainable Development Goals

VNR Cultural Heritage Chapters
Drafting 3-4 page conceptual chapters for Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), pilot-tested and translated into Spanish, French, and Arabic.

Women's Day & IDMS Webinars
Global webinars in March and April focusing on gender equality (SDG 5) and emergency response for endangered heritage sites.

COMMUNICATION & OUTREACH

Quarterly E-Newsletter Launch
Launching a streamlined digital publication featuring "Voices of Heritage" essays and news, debuting February 25.

Multi-Platform Social Growth
Expanding reach across Instagram, LinkedIn, BlueSky, and YouTube, sharing metrics and case studies of heritage-led sustainability.

PAGUS in the UN Social Summit Process and International Debate

Over the past year, the PAGUS Initiative – Program for Alternative Governance of Urban Settlements – has consolidated its international visibility and advocacy role on urban–rural territorial rebalance. The Manifesto, coordinated by Mr Paolo Motta, has been presented and discussed within the ICOMOS Sustainable Development Goals Working Group (SDGWG), several National and International Scientific Committees of ICOMOS, and at the Bandung 70 Conference in Indonesia. These exchanges have contributed to strengthening a critical reflection on prevailing urbanisation models and their environmental, social and cultural impacts.

A major milestone was reached on 1 July 2025 in Rome during the Scientific Conference organised by the National Research Council of Italy and EURISPES, preparatory to the Second United Nations World Social Summit (Doha, 4–6 November 2025). Within the official Report presented as Italy’s contribution to the Summit, the PAGUS Manifesto was included as Annex No. 2, thus entering the documentation of a major global policy event.

PAGUS was also referenced during a virtual side event organised by Istituto IDI and approved by the Commission for Social Development, entitled “The Social Quality Approach: A Holistic Framework for Fair Development” (6 February).

These recognitions confirm the growing international interest in addressing structural imbalances between urban and rural territories and in rethinking development paradigms in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Members and partners are warmly invited to visit www.pagusinitiative.net, circulate the annexed presentation, and actively contribute comments and proposals through the PAGUS blog to further strengthen this collective awareness campaign.



**A Shared Future requires
a Human Scale.**

We must choose: a future of alienating megacities or a future of interconnected communities that protect the planet.

 **PAGUS**

Support the PAGUS Manifesto at the UN Summit 2025

Report to the UN World Social Summit and the Role of PAGUS

Dr Paolo Motta- SDGWG-ICOMOSIASQ Italy

The document Towards the UN “World Social Summit” – Italy’s Contribution, presented in Rome on 1 July 2025, represents a significant step in connecting scientific research, policy dialogue and international cooperation on sustainable territorial development. Developed within the framework of the conference organised by the National Research Council of Italy and EURISPES, the Report was officially transmitted to the Second United Nations World Social Summit held in Doha from 4 to 6 November 2025.

The Report stresses the acceleration of climate change, the inadequacy of current responses to environmental and social crises, and the structural weaknesses of uncontrolled megacity growth. It highlights the need to revisit dominant assumptions that equate progress with continuous urban concentration, pointing instead to the urgency of integrated, people-oriented development strategies.

Particular emphasis is placed on the concept of balanced and sustainable territorial development, advocating for the reduction of urban–rural disparities and the revitalisation of smaller towns and settlements. The inclusion of the PAGUS Manifesto as Annexe No. 2 underlines the relevance of its proposals within this broader policy framework. Supported by a wide international scientific network, PAGUS calls for a paradigm shift capable of mitigating climate impacts, reducing migration pressures toward megacities, and fostering resilient, socially cohesive and environmentally responsible territories.

This contribution positions the ICOMOS-related debate on heritage, settlements and sustainable development within a global agenda that increasingly recognises the need for territorial rebalance as a key component of future policies.



Reported by:
Dr Paolo Motta
ICOMOS SDGWG. ICOMOS Italy



Scientific Conference
Towards UN “World Social Summit”
(Qatar – 4-6 November 2025)
Italy’s contribution
REPORT
(English Version)
Roma, July 1. 2025

ANNEX N. 2 – PAGUS MANIFESTO
Program Alternative Governance Urban Settlements
PAGUS INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC NETWORK
THE U.N. PACT FOR THE FUTURE

We, academics, experts, researchers from all parts of the world, invite authorities and organizations to stimulate and support at the U.N. Summit of September 2024 initiatives aimed at presenting empirically based profound theoretical understanding at the U.N. summit of September 2025 focused to address the severe impacts of increasing climate change and face the challenges for improving the overall living conditions on our planet and mankind

Considering that:

- There is no doubt that we are witnessing an acceleration of climate change with increasingly evident negative impacts on life conditions of mankind and threats for future generations. It is therefore essential to define operational strategies and launch shared initiatives as soon as possible to ensure a global and resilient development aimed to protect the environment and enhance collective wellbeing.
- UN, UNDP, UNHABITAT and many other agencies warn that the current uncurbed growth of megacities and huge urban areas cities is not responding to the climate change impacts and the sustainability challenges. The AGENDA 2030 seventeen SDG’s (Sustainable Development Goals) miss at this stage a responsible theoretical foundation concerning a people-oriented urbanization as well the integrated development of urban and rural areas;
- The impacts of climate change in many parts of the world, especially in Africa, South-East Asia, Pacific and Latin America are already dramatic. The inadequate international response to climate change related natural disasters,

From Global Goals to Local Action: ICOMOS Nigeria’s Roadmap for Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction in Sukur

In the Sukur Cultural Landscape of northern Nigeria, a UNESCO World Heritage site, female education is the cornerstone of sustainable development. The ICOMOS Sustainable Development Goals Working Group (SDGWG) provides the global policy framework for this transformation, emphasising that heritage is not just a relic of the past but a driver for SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 1 (No Poverty).

ICOMOS SDGWG Objectives and the Nigerian Context

The ICOMOS SDGWG aims to localise the UN 2030 Agenda by integrating heritage conservation with socio-economic empowerment. In Nigeria, these objectives focus on "People" and "Prosperity", ensuring that heritage sites serve as engines for community resilience. By advocating for Policy Guidance on Heritage and the SDGs, the working group encourages a shift where cultural preservation includes the intellectual and economic empowerment of the women who are the primary custodians of intangible heritage.

Contributions of ICOMOS Nigeria

ICOMOS Nigeria plays a pivotal role in translating these international objectives into grassroots impact. Through strategic partnerships, such as the recent U.S. Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) grant, ICOMOS Nigeria has moved beyond physical documentation to holistic community development.

Poverty Eradication (SDG 1): ICOMOS Nigeria facilitates "indigenous knowledge transfer" and vocational training. By documenting and teaching traditional architectural and agricultural techniques to women, they transform domestic skills into marketable expertise within the burgeoning ecotourism and conservation sectors.

Gender Equality (SDG 5): The committee actively works to dismantle patriarchal barriers in Sukur. By involving women in site management and decision-making processes, ICOMOS Nigeria ensures that female voices influence the preservation of the Hidi (traditional) governance system. This inclusion directly counters cultural norms that previously restricted girls' access to education and leadership. Through these actions, ICOMOS Nigeria demonstrates that protecting the "Outstanding Universal Value" of Sukur is inseparable from educating its daughters. Education provides the agency required for women to lead their communities out of poverty, ensuring that Sukur remains a living, flourishing cultural landscape.



Watch the full video in our Youtube Channel:

From Global Goals to Local Action



Reported by:
Dr Kenneth Aidelojie,
ICOMOS Nigeria

ICOMOS SDG WG at the 2026 ECOSOC Partnership Forum



The 2026 Partnership Forum of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was held on 27 January 2026 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York under the theme “Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for a sustainable future for all.” The Forum placed particular emphasis on the Sustainable Development Goals under in-depth review at the 2026 High-Level Political Forum, notably SDGs 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

In line with UN General Assembly resolution 75/290A, the Forum fostered forward-looking dialogue among governments and stakeholders, encouraging innovative partnerships to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

On 27 January, ICOMOS, through its International Scientific Committee on Water (ISC Water) and in collaboration with the ICOMOS SDG Working Group, contributed to the “SDG Action Segment for Goal 6.” ISC Water President Meisha Hunter highlighted how traditional water systems—such as pre-Incan canals in Peru and Oman’s Aflaj, combined with modern infrastructure can strengthen water security, sustain livelihoods and demonstrate that investment in heritage stewardship and partnerships delivers tangible results for both people and planet.

Click Here to watch the Session:
<https://buff.ly/mGeBg7j>



Reported by:
Dr Meisha Hunter
ISC Water President

ICOMOS SDG WG Task Teams Update- TT3: National Liaisons & SDGs Localising

Since December 2025, the ICOMOS SDGWG Task Team 3 – National Liaisons and Localising Heritage and the SDGs (TT3) has resumed its work with a focus on strengthening the technical and operational grounding of heritage contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at national and local levels. The first official TT3 meeting took place online on 22 January 2026, marking the formal start of coordinated activities for the 2026 work cycle.

At this meeting, TT3 members reviewed and accepted the Task Team’s conceptual documents as well as the TT3 Annual Activity Plan for 2026, confirming shared priorities, planned deliverables, and modalities of cooperation within the SDGWG. Particular emphasis was placed on coordination with the ICOMOS SDGWG Task Team 2 – UN HLPF and the Culture2030Goal (TT2) and with Task Team 6 – Evaluation Criteria (TT6), ensuring complementarity between technical work, indicators, and global advocacy efforts.

A central focus of TT3’s activities since January has been the development of a simple mapping template, provisionally titled “How to map heritage contributions to the SDGs.” The template is primarily intended for ICOMOS National Committees (NCs), International Scientific Committees (ISCs), and Working Groups (WGs), while remaining adaptable for potential dissemination to other heritage actors in the future.

The necessity of this template responds to a widely recognised gap: while heritage actors are increasingly encouraged to demonstrate their contribution to the SDGs, they often lack a practical, comparable, and resource-efficient instrument to document and structure heritage activities in relation to specific SDGs and targets. Existing frameworks are frequently indicator-heavy, policy-driven, or insufficiently adapted to the realities of heritage activities implemented by different actors.

Alongside the drafting process, TT3 has undertaken a structured analysis of the advantages and limitations of different technical approaches, comparing online tools (such as Google Forms) and single-file solutions (such as Word forms) in terms of accessibility, data collection, aggregation, analysis, and long-term usability. Internal testing of the draft template by TT3 members is currently ongoing. Pilot testing with selected National Committees is provisionally planned for late February–March 2026, to refine the tool based on practical feedback before broader rollout.

In parallel, TT3 has initiated and strengthened cooperation with TT2 on SDG localisation and the structure of heritage-related inputs to Voluntary National Reports (VNRs), as well as with TT6 on the identification and use of relevant indicators within the mapping template. This cooperation seeks to ensure methodological coherence, clarity and alignment with UN reporting language.

Additional supporting activities are also underway. TT3 is currently preparing an “Introductory Note” on heritage and SDG localisation, which explains why SDG localisation is important for heritage actors, why the systematic collection, analysis, and dissemination of related information matter, and subsequently introduces the mapping template as a practical tool within this framework. Furthermore, initial work—coordinated by TT3 in close collaboration with TT2—has started on defining a possible structure for a heritage chapter within VNRs. A first draft developed by TT3 has been shared with TT2 for review, to translate bottom-up heritage evidence into formats compatible with national and international SDG reporting processes.

Together, these activities position TT3 as a key integrative contributor within the SDGWG, focused on equipping ICOMOS NCs, ISCs, and WGs with practical tools and guidance to make heritage contributions to sustainable development more visible, comparable, and actionable.



Reported by:
Dr Andris Kairiss
SDGWG Task Team 3 Coordinator

ICOMOS SDG WG Task Teams Update- TT3: National Liaisons & SDGs Localising Draft first page of the Mapping Template

ICOMOS Sustainable Development Goals Working Group



Mapping heritage contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals FILLABLE TEMPLATE DRAFT v.3. (WORK IN PROGRESS)

Measuring how heritage-based actions¹ contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is necessary to make these contributions visible, credible, and comparable across contexts. Without systematic documentation, heritage's social, environmental, and economic impacts often remain implicit or undervalued in development and policy discussions.

Clear measurement helps demonstrate how heritage practice supports specific SDGs and targets, strengthens evidence-based advocacy, and enables learning and exchange among practitioners. It also facilitates dialogue with society—particularly local inhabitants and communities—by making goals, actions, and outcomes more transparent, while supporting accountability, improving project design over time, and enabling constructive engagement with public authorities, donors, and international organizations through a shared development language. In addition, the structured information generated through this template can support culture-related contributions to Voluntary National Reviews and Voluntary Local Reviews—national and local reports presented within the UN framework to demonstrate progress on SDG implementation—by providing concrete, evidence-based examples of heritage actions, their SDG alignment, and their measurable outputs and outcomes for use in reporting processes.

This template is designed to map the aforementioned contribution in a simple, practical, and comparable way. It has been developed by the ICOMOS Sustainable Development Goals Working Group.

Please note the following guidance when completing the template:

- Complete one template per heritage action.
- Do not create separate templates for each SDG.
- Focus on what was done and what changed, rather than on SDG theory or general principles.

A. Basic Information

1. Please indicate the type of heritage actor completing this template (please mark only one option)

- ICOMOS National Committee
 ICOMOS International Committee
 ICOMOS Working Group
 Other heritage actor

2. Please indicate name of ICOMOS National/ International Committee, Working Group or other heritage actor completing the template (a heritage actor may refer to any entity beyond ICOMOS)

3. Please provide the name, role, and contact information of the contact person representing the heritage actor completing this template (contact information may include, for example, an email address)

B. Heritage Action Overview

4. Title of heritage action (please provide the official title of the action. If no official title exists, please indicate a descriptive title characterizing the action (e.g. "Revitalization of Traditional Stone Masonry Skills")

¹ A heritage action may consist of a single intervention (e.g., a restoration project), a series of similar actions (e.g., a cycle of workshops), or a set of related actions carried out to achieve one clear objective (e.g., documentation, training, and community meetings to safeguard a specific heritage practice). It does not include broad or umbrella heritage programmes (e.g., an annual municipal cultural heritage programme, a national heritage strategy, or a regional multi-sector cultural plan), which should be divided into separate heritage actions for mapping purposes.

Celebrating International Women's Day: Empowering the Frontlines of Cultural Stewardship

The **ICOMOS Sustainable Development Goals Working Group (SDGWG)** invites you to an extraordinary **International Women's Day webinar** as we explore the vital role women play in protecting the world's most vulnerable cultural and natural landscapes. From the rapidly melting poles to the heart of the African continent, and from the intricate embroidery of Palestine to the migration paths of West Bengal and the sacred lands of the Amazon and Australia, women are at the forefront of "Living Heritage."

This session is anchored in Phase 2 of the ICOMOS Triennial Scientific Plan (TSP) 2024–2027, which focuses on Response. As we navigate a global landscape of increasing disaster and conflict, we turn our attention to how women serve as the primary responders, leveraging traditional knowledge, strategic advocacy, and community resilience to safeguard our shared history.

Our Panel of Experts will discuss:

- **African Stewardship & the SDGs:** Highlighting women's leadership in African heritage as a strategic driver for climate action, economic empowerment, and peacebuilding. We call for gender-responsive governance to position cultural heritage as a pillar of inclusive development globally.
- **Environmental Response in the Polar Regions:** Addressing the urgent climate transition and heritage protection challenges facing the Arctic and Antarctic.
- **The Art of Resistance and Continuity:** The revival of Palestinian festive Thobes as a model of living heritage, identity, and economic sustainability through the Rosette Workshop model.
- **Strengthening Indigenous Voices:** Targeted capacity-building in the Amazon (Brazil) and the Pilbara (Western Australia), empowering First Nations women to lead change for their people, Country, and cultural continuity.
- **The Textures of Migration:** Exploring "uneven resilience" in West Bengal, India, and the complex narratives of working women navigating risk, belonging, and future-making.

Join the SDGWG to discover how these diverse voices are shaping the **"Response"** phase of the TSP. Together, we will celebrate the women who are not just witnessing history but are actively ensuring that cultural heritage remains a resilient, inclusive, and strategic force for a sustainable future. To register for the webinar, please scan the QR code:



Date & time: 7th of March 2026

13:00 CET



Place: Online- Zoom

Use **this link** or scan this QR code



Climate Change and Heritage: Memory of the Orchard that Disappears

Climate change is one of the most urgent threats to cultural and natural heritage. This was stated at the 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), to reaffirm its commitment to climate action within heritage conservation practices. As an advisory body to UNESCO, ICOMOS leads the integration of culture into global climate policies.*

In Valencia (Spain), the impact of climate change manifested directly and disrupted daily life on 29 October 2024. An isolated high-level depression (DANA), with the inflow of very warm and humid air from the Mediterranean Sea, triggered intense rainfall: up to 720 l/m² in less than 12 hours.

Key factors that shaped the disaster include the warming of the Mediterranean Sea, a prolonged period without rain followed by extreme precipitation within a few hours, and, particularly seriously, poor recent urban planning in historically orchard areas. This urban development process has dismantled traditional agricultural lands over recent decades, whose irrigation system, acequias, introduced in the 8th century, channelled water toward cultivation and drained it through natural ravines to the sea. Replacing sustainable agriculture with uncontrolled urbanisation.

Urban expansion and communication infrastructures that failed to respect natural watercourses worsened the disaster, affecting an area of more than 571 km², impacting 75 municipalities, causing losses exceeding 17.8 billion euros, and resulting in 230 deaths. It is also important to note that in the natural park of l'Albufera (a candidate for Biosphere Reserve World Heritage Sites), large quantities of waste and sediments accumulated, severely altering the ecosystem, along with a massive influx of freshwater that disrupted the wetland's hydrological balance.

In addition, more than 4,600 buildings were damaged, including around 70 protected heritage properties (with varying degrees of impact). Among them, the farmhouse called Alquería Nova (18th century) collapsed under the force of the torrent, whose flow was intensified by the territorial funnel effect created by new transport links serving the expanded industrial estate that has gradually occupied its surrounding lands in recent years. The farmhouse was left confined to a narrow strip beside the service road of a high-capacity route connecting new residential developments.

The storm events of 2026 leave a landscape that is not much more encouraging in terms of safeguarding our built heritage. The beginning of 2026 recorded historic milestones such as a tropical night in February and a sequence of 9 consecutive extreme storms (the longest continuous period of wind since 1981), outlining a worrying scenario. On this occasion, less than 5 km from the previous case, the Alquería del Volante (18th century) suffered the consequences, with its roofs and walls collapsing under strong wind gusts.

These are two clear examples of the direct consequences of climate change on our cultural heritage. Consequently, in the areas affected by the DANA, an Urban Reconstruction Agenda is being planned, a strategic plan with concrete actions to improve citizens' quality of life and adapt municipalities and their territorial policies to environmental challenges, all aligned with the principles of sustainability, social cohesion, and climate adaptation.

* <https://www.icomos.org/actualite/cop30-highlights/>



Prepared by:
Angela López Sabater

Climate Change and Heritage: Memory of the Orchard that Disappears

By Angela López Sabater



Figure 1. Alquería del Volante (Las Provincias newspaper, February 2026)

for More information and recent works of Angela, check the link below:



ARAE
PATRIMONIO Y RESTAURACIÓN

ARAE patrimonio y restauración
Restauración y gestión del patrimonio

 ARAE patrimonio y restauración

Bridging Heritage, Climate, and Sustainable Development Andrew Potts (former ICOMOS SDG WG Focal Point)

From 2014 to 2016, Andrew Potts served as the first Focal Point of the ICOMOS Sustainable Development Goals Working Group (SDGWG), helping to position cultural heritage within the emerging global SDG framework. At a pivotal moment, when the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda, he played a key role in ensuring that heritage perspectives were recognised within international discussions on climate action, resilience and sustainable development.

A lawyer by training and a climate heritage policy expert by vocation, Andrew has spent over two decades working at the intersection of conservation, public policy and sustainable finance.



Since 2015, he has focused on the relationship between culture and climate change, advocating for recognition of heritage as both vulnerable to climate impacts and essential to climate solutions.

Andrew is a partner in the Tax Credit Finance & Syndication practice at Nixon Peabody LLP, where he structures and closes financing for historic preservation and community-based development projects. By combining federal and state Historic Tax Credits, New Markets Tax Credits, HUD programmes, grants and conventional finance, he demonstrates how financial mechanisms can support sustainable urban regeneration and social equity. This practical experience informed his SDG work, reinforcing the idea that heritage must be embedded within broader development systems.

In 2015–2016, Andrew took a sabbatical to serve as Executive Director of US/ICOMOS, leading implementation of its KnowledgeExchange strategic plan. The initiative strengthened links between US preservation professionals and the international heritage community, with a focus on climate change, disaster risk reduction and sustainable development—priorities closely aligned with his SDG leadership.

Beyond ICOMOS, Andrew helped found and coordinate the Climate Heritage Network (2018–2023), building a global coalition committed to mobilising culture for climate action. In 2024, he led the launch of the “Imagining Low Carbon, Just, Climate Resilient Futures” initiative. He currently serves as Community of Practice Director for the Preserving Legacies project, funded by the National Geographic Society, and as Heritage and Climate Action Adviser to Europa Nostra.

Previously Associate General Counsel at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Andrew is a recipient of the John H. Chafee Trustees’ Award for Outstanding Achievement in Public Policy and continues to advise ICOMOS and other international bodies.

As the first ICOMOS SDG Focal Point, Andrew Potts helped establish a framework for integrating heritage within global sustainable development policy. This approach continues to shape climate and heritage practice worldwide.

Call for Abstracts:

International Conference on Heritage, Care and People In a Resilient World: Heritage Networks as a Strategy for Sustainability

ICOrganised by Universidad Complutense Madrid,
May 26-27, 2026; Madrid, Spain



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

HERITAGE, CARE AND PEOPLE

in a Resilient World: Heritage
Networks as a Strategy for
Sustainability

MAY 27- 29 / 2026
MADRID



CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS – DEADLINES

Deadline for the submission of **open special session proposals**:
30 January 2026

Deadline for the submission of discussion **panels, papers, posters, audiovisual contributions and workshops proposals**:
20 February 2026

*Exceptionally, proposals for **special closed group sessions** will be accepted until **20 february 2026**.



ORGANIZES



PID2021-127248GB-I00



[Register Here](#)

Call for Abstracts:

ICOMOS GA 2026- Sustainable Development Goals Working Group Session

ICOMOS Sustainable Development Goals Working Group is delighted to invite you to submit your abstracts for the ICOMOSGA 2026 Conference, titled 'Redefining Emergency Response Through Community Leadership'.

Organised by ICOMOS, the SDGs working group will discuss the papers dedicated to the 'Local First Responders: Community and Indigenous Leadership in Heritage Response for the SDGs' in its session. Working on the four Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5, 10, 11, and 16), this session will focus on discussion around how local communities act when the official systems fail to respond in a crisis.

Deadline to Submit Abstracts: 30th April 2026.

More information:

<https://icomossdgwg.com/call-for-abstracts-icomos-ga2026-redefining-emergency-response-through-community-leadership/>

17-24 October 2026

SAVE *the* DATE

ICOMOS
GA 2026
KUCHING, SARAWAK MALAYSIA

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www.icomosga2026.org.my

Upcoming Events:

1. ICOMOS TheoPhilos ISC Conference

The Protection of Archaeological Heritage: Theory Meets Practice

Florence (Italy), 12–13 March 2026

The conference aims to facilitate a comprehensive discussion of the problems of protection, development and interpretation of archaeological monuments, including accessibility, inclusivity, technical services, climate change and illicit trafficking. The international discussion will concern the theoretical foundations and practical experience related to the protection of these monuments, and will draw on experiences from different countries, regions and cultures.

The conference will address the following themes:

1. Theoretical foundations of the protection of archaeological monuments
2. Methodology for the protection of archaeological monuments
3. Problems and challenges in the protection of archaeological monuments
4. Examples of best practice in the protection of archaeological monuments

[Click Here for More information about the Conference](#)



Careers in Heritage and SDG:

1. Postdoctoral researcher, ERC project URBAN-DELTA

KU Leuven, Belgium

The Department of Architecture (Faculty of Engineering Sciences, Heverlee Campus, KU Leuven) has vacancies for two postdoctoral researchers (36 months) for the ERC-funded project: URBAN-DELTA: Metropolises in the Mud. Innovation in Delta Building Technology in Europe and China before 1800, directed by Prof. dr. Merlijn Hurx (PI). We are looking for internationally oriented candidates with an excellent research file.

The candidates will work in a stimulating research environment within an internationally renowned centre of expertise in architecture, urbanism & spatial planning, architectural theory and history. You will become a member of the research group PADP (Perspectives on Architecture of the Distant Past, belonging to the research section History, Theory and Criticism. This group consists of leading researchers studying architecture from the late Middle Ages to the Interwar period from different perspectives.

Deadline for Application: 16/03/2026 23:59 CET

Click Here for Application:

<https://www.kuleuven.be/personeel/jobsite/jobs/60620925?lang>

2. Faculty Positions in Department of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture (Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Instructor)

Bilkent University, Turkey

The Department of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture (LAUD) at Bilkent University invites applications for full-time appointments at the rank of all levels (Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Instructor). We seek to hire for research and practice-based positions. These positions are open until they are filled.

Bilkent University is an equal opportunity employer with an international body of faculty and students. The medium of education is English. The faculty comprises academic staff from around 40 different countries. Most of them were working in prominent universities in North America and Europe when they received offers from Bilkent University. According to ISI Citation Indexes, Bilkent ranks high in Turkey and internationally in the number of published papers per faculty member. To know more about criteria and application documents, please follow the link below.

Deadline for Application: Undefined

Click Here for Application:

<https://stars.bilkent.edu.tr/staffapp/LAUD2026>

Contribute

We are especially interested to hear from you about your works, events and opportunities. Acceptable contributions are in the format of short reviews of conferences, seminars, interviews, publications, exhibitions, or other events that you feel are essential to be published on Cultural Heritage and SDGs.

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✉ icomos.sdgs@gmail.com

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



This Newsletter is generously produced with the kind support of **The University of Hong Kong**, Faculty of Architecture and Landscape and **MSc Conservation Programme at the Division of Landscape Architecture**.



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