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UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Background Guide 2025

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2025 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce to you our committee, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Your committee's work is facilitated by volunteer staffers. This year's committee staff are: Director Jessie Luévano and Assistant Director Sabrina Lambrechts (Conference A), and Director Kaytlyn Marcotte and Assistant Director Synne Iversen Kverndal (Conference B). Jessie Luévano graduated from Hamline University as a double major, earning a BA in Political Science and Global Studies. She is based in Minneapolis, Minnesota and works at a think tank focused on state politics as a policy analyst leading on health care and child care policy. Sabrina Lambrechts is a senior studying political science at the Wilkes Honors College of Florida Atlantic University. Her prior research examined the relationship between climate change and immigration, while currently she researches political violence and transitional justice. Kaytlyn holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Political Economy from the College of Idaho. She currently works as a Customer Success Manager with Actus Nutrition. Synne I. Kverndal holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies and Peace and Justice Studies. She is currently pursuing a M.S in Global Conflict, Security and Cyber Crime at New York University. The preparation of these materials was supported by Under-Secretaries-General Anthony Bassey (Conference A) and Johanna Günkel (Conference B) with contributions by Under-Secretary-General for Conference Management Paola Chávez (Conference A).

The topics on the agenda for this committee are:

1. Protecting UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Conflict Areas
2. Water Resources Management and Sustainable Development

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the conference, each delegation should submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. ET on 1 March 2025 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers website](#).

Two resources, available to download from the NMUN website, serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions:

- The [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#), which explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions.
- The [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#), which includes the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for this committee, please contact the Deputy Secretaries-General at dsg.ny@nmun.org.

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Jessie Luévano, Director
Sabrina Lambrechts, Assistant Director
Conference A

Kaytlyn Marcotte, Director
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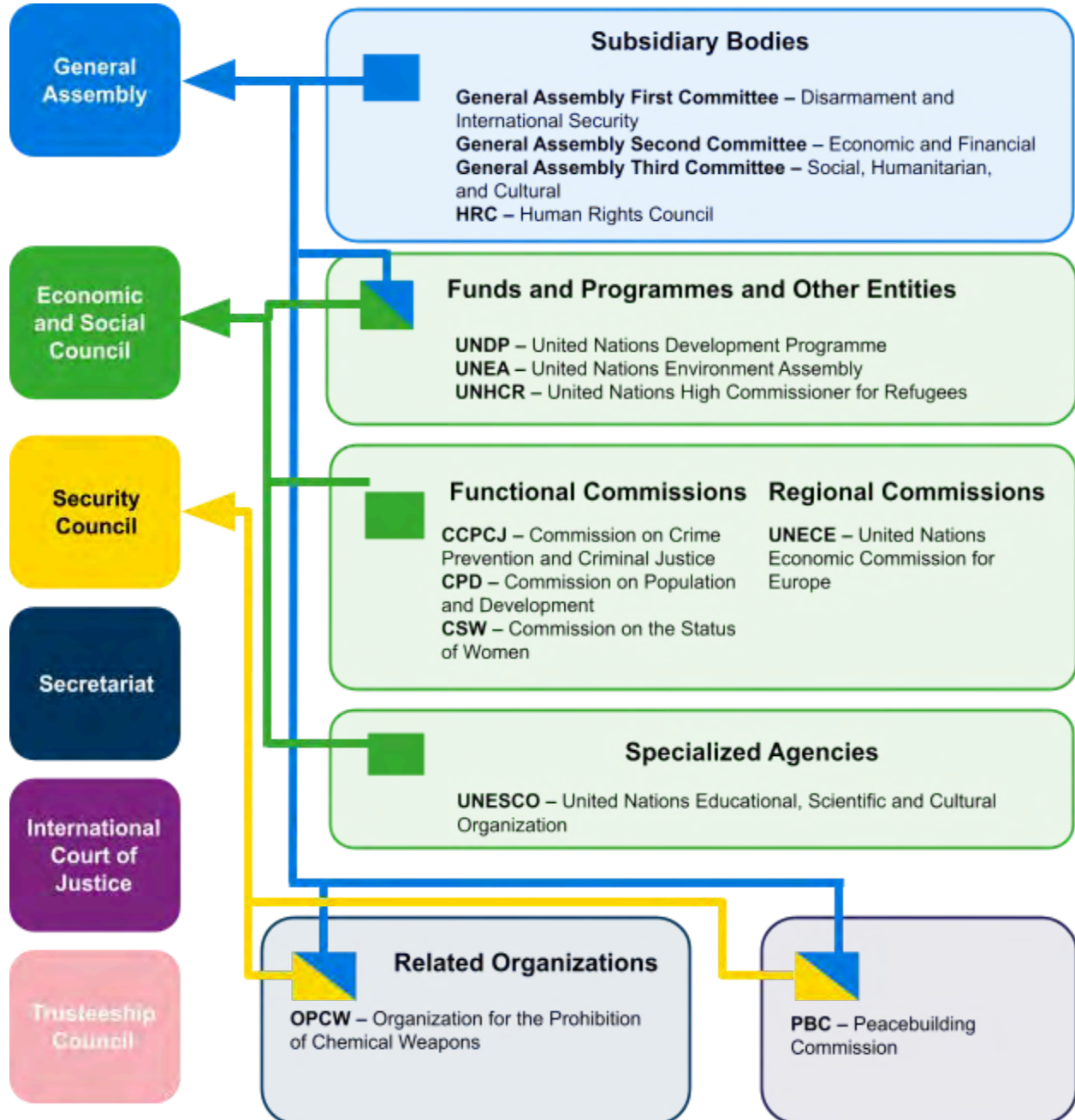
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United Nations System at NMUN·NY

This diagram illustrates the United Nations system simulated at NMUN·NY. It shows where each committee “sits” within the system to demonstrate the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee’s position, purpose, and powers within the United Nations system.





Committee Overview

Introduction

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency that coordinates with the United Nations through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).¹ Although it is financially and structurally independent from the United Nations, UNESCO works closely with several United Nations entities to promote common goals, including peace and security and social and economic development.² Per its mandate, UNESCO has coordinated and produced several international standards for the promotion of peace through collaboration in the fields of education, intercultural dialogue, and communication and information.³ Among these are the *Convention Against Discrimination in Education* (1960), the *Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice* (1978), the *ICT Competency Framework for Teachers* (2018), the *Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education* (2019), and the *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence* (2022).⁴

Mandate, Functions, and Powers

UNESCO's mandate is derived from Article 1, paragraph 3 of the *Charter of the United Nations* (1945), and is fully defined by the *UNESCO Constitution* (1945).⁵ UNESCO is tasked to promote collaboration among Member States in the fields of education, science, and culture to develop and maintain peace, the rule of law, and mutual respect.⁶ Additionally, UNESCO is responsible for coordinating and supporting the development of knowledge and culture for "economic stability, political security, and general well-being of the peoples of the world."⁷ UNESCO plays a significant role in coordinating international conventions and setting standards in the areas of education, culture, and science.⁸

Whilst the following list is not exhaustive, the mandate of UNESCO can be summarized as:

- UNESCO **will generally**: make policy recommendations to other bodies and Member States in the fields within its mandate; hold international conferences to deliberate issues and set standards; provide expert research and consultation to the primary organs of the United Nations system and synergize its work with other United Nations bodies through ECOSOC; work with other entities and organizations to implement programs in matters related to education, science, culture, communication, and

¹ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2024-25*. 2024.

² United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. art. 63.

³ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Basic Texts: 2016 edition*. 2016.

⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO (ERI/2010/WS/2)*. 2010. p. 37; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*. 2022; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Global Convention of Higher Education*. N.d.

⁵ United Nations Conference on International Organization. *Charter of the United Nations*. 1945. Art. 1; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. 1945. p. 5.

⁶ *ibid.* Art. V, Art. I, para. 1.

⁷ Conference of Allied Ministers of Education. *Conference for the Establishment of UNESCO (ECO/CONF./29)*. 1945. p. 1.

⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Implementation of standard-setting instruments*. 2015.



information; maintain international standards and records of cultural, natural, and intangible heritage; provide support to Member States in protecting items of cultural significance, improving their education systems, and collaborating in scientific fields.⁹

- UNESCO **will not generally**: set norms and standards in fields other than education, science, and culture; demand action from Member States and other entities on policy development and implementation, typically encouraging and helping facilitate partnerships with organizations instead; request specific action from Member States and other entities on the promotion of access to education, cultural heritage, and scientific programs but instead provide frameworks and policy recommendations.¹⁰

Outlined in its *Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029*, UNESCO further serves as: an international forum for ideas, innovation, and policy advice in education, science, culture, and communication and information; a global center for policy analysis, monitoring, benchmarking, and the development and analysis of data and statistics; a standard-setter that supports their implementation; a facilitator and catalyst for international and regional cooperation.¹¹ UNESCO also plays a significant strategic oversight role with respect to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education) of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.¹²

Governance, Funding, and Structure

UNESCO is a legally independent agency that entered a relationship with the United Nations in 1945.¹³ UNESCO is governed by its own set of rules, membership independent from that of the United Nations, organizational structure, and budget.¹⁴ UNESCO currently has 194 Member States and 12 Associate Members.¹⁵ Two major bodies, the General Conference and Executive Board, govern the work of UNESCO.¹⁶

The General Conference, consisting of all UNESCO Member States, meets every two years.¹⁷ The General Conference is primarily responsible for: electing the 58 members of the Executive Board, who serve four-year terms; deliberating on and approving recommendations from the Executive Board; summoning international conferences; considering reports from Member States; and advising United Nations organizations on matters of education, science, and culture.¹⁸ The General Conference may also establish special and technical committees, create subsidiary organs, and invite observers on the recommendation of the Executive Board.¹⁹ Every two years, the Executive Board: prepares the biennial

⁹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO (ERI/2010/WS/2)*. 2010. p. 32.

¹⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO in brief*. N.d.

¹¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 (41 C/4)*. 2022.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ United Nations, General Assembly. *Agreements with Specialized Agencies (A/RES/50(I))*. 1945.

¹⁴ *Idid.*

¹⁵ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Member States*. N.d.

¹⁶ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2023-24*. 2023.

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. 1945. Arts. III-VI.

¹⁹ *ibid.* Arts. III-VI.



agenda for, submits policy recommendations to, and implements decisions adopted by the General Conference; recommends the admission of new Members; nominates the Director-General; and reviews the budget.²⁰ Additionally, the Executive Board may advise the primary organs of the United Nations on issues relevant to its mandate, consult with representatives of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and independent experts, and request advisory opinions from the International Court of Justice.²¹ At its 2021 session, UNESCO reaffirmed its commitment to addressing global issues in accordance with the 2030 Agenda by renewing its *Medium-Term Strategy* for the time period 2022-2029.²²

²⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. 1945. Art. V; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Executive Board in Brief*. N.d.

²¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. 1945. Art. V.

²² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *General Conference: 41st Session - 9-24 November 2021*. 2021.



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New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. *United Nations Handbook 2024-25*. 2024. Retrieved 20 October 2024 from: mfat.govt.nz/assets/Peace-Rights-and-Security/Our-work-with-the-UN/UN-Handbook-2024-25.pdf

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United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *General Conference: 41st Session - 9-24 November 2021*. 2021. Retrieved 20 October 2023 from: <https://en.unesco.org/generalconference/41>



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Member States*. N.d. Retrieved 20 October 2023 from: <https://www.unesco.org/en/countries>

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 (41 C/4)*. 2022. Retrieved 20 October 2023 from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378083>

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*. 2022. Retrieved 20 October 2023 from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381137>

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United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO snapshots*. 2022. Retrieved 20 October 2023 from: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381065/PDF/381065eng.pdf.multi>

United Nations, General Assembly. *Agreements with Specialized Agencies (A/RES/50(I))*. 1945. Retrieved 20 October 2023 from: [https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/50\(I\)](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/50(I))



1. Protecting UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Conflict Areas

*“There is no need to choose between saving lives and preserving cultural heritage. The two are inseparable”.*²³

Introduction

World Heritage Sites are important for preserving cultural heritage, but they are being attacked, and there is not yet an adequate solution to protecting them.²⁴ The *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972), adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) general conference, states World Heritage Sites are properties that have outstanding value in terms of cultural heritage and natural heritage.²⁵ Cultural Heritage is defined as monuments, groups of buildings, and sites that have pervasive and global value from a historical, aesthetic, ethnological, or anthropological perspective.²⁶ Natural heritage is defined as physical, biological, geological, and physiographic formations and natural areas that have pervasive and global value from an aesthetic, scientific, or conservationist point of view.²⁷ The World Heritage Mission is a goal of UNESCO that includes protecting culture and heritage, encouraging international cooperation, and building an infrastructure that provides resources to help Member States.²⁸ Despite the importance of World Heritage Sites, non-state armed groups are increasingly targeting and damaging them.²⁹ Non-state armed groups, frequently terrorists, loot the sites and participate in the illicit trade of cultural property.³⁰ In 2020 alone, 854,742 cultural property objects were seized globally, and there was an increase in illegal excavations.³¹ Placement on the World Heritage list may provoke non-state actors and make these places targets.³² Damage done to cultural sites means recovery and reconstruction are necessary.³³ When done correctly, recovery can benefit and empower local communities.³⁴ Non-state armed groups that ignore norms and legal obligations pose the most danger to WHS in conflict areas, and there are not yet adequate solutions to handling them.³⁵

²³ Bokova. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. *Mass Atrocities, the Responsibility to Protect and Cultural Heritage*. 2019.

²⁴ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *World Heritage sites and museums: A pact for sustainable development*. 2024; Schorlemer. Getty Museum. *Fighting Terrorist Attacks against World Heritage and Global Cultural Heritage Governance*. 2022.

²⁵ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, General Conference. *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. 1972. p. 2.

²⁶ *ibid.* p. 2.

²⁷ *ibid.* p. 2.

²⁸ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *World Heritage*. 2024.

²⁹ Schorlemer. Getty Museum. *Fighting Terrorist Attacks against World Heritage and Global Cultural Heritage Governance*. 2022.

³⁰ Council of the European Union. *Council Conclusions on EU External Action on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism*. 2020. p. 8.

³¹ International Criminal Police Organization. *Cultural property crime thrives throughout pandemic says new INTERPOL survey*. 2021.

³² Schorlemer. Getty Museum. *Fighting Terrorist Attacks against World Heritage and Global Cultural Heritage Governance*. 2022.

³³ World Heritage Centre. United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *n°86 - World Heritage and Reconstruction*. 2018. pp. 5, 16.

³⁴ World Heritage Centre. United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Reconstruction of the destroyed mausoleums of Timbuktu (Mali)*. 2021.

³⁵ Schorlemer. Getty Museum. *Fighting Terrorist Attacks against World Heritage and Global Cultural Heritage Governance*. 2022.



UNESCO World Heritage adds new sites nearly every year and continues to grow as more Member States see the importance of highlighting specific places of cultural importance.³⁶ In 1978, UNESCO created the World Heritage Site program and designated Ecuador's Galápagos Islands as one of the first 12 sites.³⁷ In 2023, the World Heritage Committee (WHC) added 42 new sites to UNESCO's World Heritage List.³⁸ With these additions, there are 1,199 World Heritage Sites across 168 countries.³⁹ World Heritage Sites act as hubs for education because they tend to have close ties to museums.⁴⁰ For example, the Historic City of Melaka, Malaysia, is known for its museums, art galleries, festivals, and buildings influenced by various religions and cultural blends.⁴¹ World Heritage Sites act as a reflection of humanity's ancestral history and are a connection to the past that is important for future development.⁴²

Cultural heritage should be protected because of its importance for local communities, especially amidst conflict when it is most vulnerable.⁴³ While there is no universal definition of conflict areas, the Geneva Academy on International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights is developing criteria to identify conflict areas.⁴⁴ Criteria include "the presence of an international or non-international armed conflict, the transition from an armed conflict to peace, widespread or serious human rights violations, political and social instability or repression, or institutional weakness or collapse of state infrastructure."⁴⁵ Cultural property is especially at risk in areas of armed conflict and occupation.⁴⁶ Terrorist groups target them to gain media attention and erase cultural diversity.⁴⁷ Loss and damage of such property is harmful to the host country as they rebuild post-conflict and seek to reestablish links to cultural heritage.⁴⁸ Local communities often experience psychological distress from the destruction of cultural property in this way.⁴⁹ Transformed landscapes from physical damage can be disorienting, and people can feel a profound sense of loss from losing the connection to their past.⁵⁰ The war against Ukraine has led to the placement of 3 of its 8 World Heritage Sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger because of physical damage or being at high risk

³⁶ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *World Heritage List*. 2024.

³⁷ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *The World Heritage Convention*. 2024.

³⁸ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO World Heritage: 42 new sites inscribed*. 2023.

³⁹ *ibid*.

⁴⁰ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *World Heritage sites and museums: A pact for sustainable development*. 2024.

⁴¹ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Melaka and George Town, Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca*. 2024.

⁴² United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *World Heritage sites and museums: A pact for sustainable development*. 2024.

⁴³ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Frequently asked questions on Armed Conflict and Heritage*. N.d.

⁴⁴ The Geneva Academy on International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. *Due Diligence: Defining 'Conflict-Affected' and 'High-Risk Areas'*. 2013. p. 1.

⁴⁵ *ibid*. p. 1.

⁴⁶ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Frequently asked questions on Armed Conflict and Heritage*. N.d.

⁴⁷ Schorlemer. Getty Museum. *Fighting Terrorist Attacks against World Heritage and Global Cultural Heritage Governance*. 2022.

⁴⁸ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Frequently asked questions on Armed Conflict and Heritage*. N.d.

⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch. *Destroying Cultural Heritage*. 2024.

⁵⁰ *ibid*.



of damage.⁵¹ Placement on this list allows for financial and technical assistance from UNESCO and reminds the international community of their responsibility to aid and protect these sites.⁵² UNESCO has verified that 438 cultural sites in Ukraine have been damaged since February 2022.⁵³ In the Gaza Strip, close to 200 sites of cultural and archaeological significance have been physically damaged because of the ongoing conflict.⁵⁴

International and Regional Framework

Military forces have obligations to protect cultural heritage, yet these obligations can be ineffective because they are often not adhered to.⁵⁵ The *Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention* (1954) contains recommendations for protecting cultural property in times of armed conflict.⁵⁶ The convention was created in response to the severe damage done to cultural property in the wake of the second World War.⁵⁷ It protects cultural objects against theft, vandalism, and pillaging.⁵⁸ During military occupation, the occupying power should work with the occupied power to protect cultural heritage.⁵⁹ Occupying forces are forbidden from targeting cultural property.⁶⁰ Despite these obligations, World Heritage Sites are still being attacked and destroyed by military personnel and non-state actors who ignore these obligations.⁶¹

Individual states have guidance and obligations to set up their internal structure to protect cultural heritage from theft and trafficking amidst conflict under international humanitarian law.⁶² In 1970, the *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property* (The 1970 Convention) stated that the theft, looting, and illicit trafficking of cultural property is a crime that strips people of their culture and history.⁶³ State parties to the convention

⁵¹ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *List of World Heritage in Danger*. 2024.

⁵² United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Ukraine: UNESCO sites of Kyiv and L'viv are inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger*. 2023.

⁵³ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Damaged cultural sites in Ukraine verified by UNESCO*. 2024.

⁵⁴ International Peace Institute Global Observatory. *When Protectors Become Perpetrators: The Complexity of State Destruction of Cultural Heritage*. 2024.

⁵⁵ Schorlemer. Getty Museum. *Fighting Terrorist Attacks against World Heritage and Global Cultural Heritage Governance*. 2022.

⁵⁶ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention*. 1954.

⁵⁷ Blue Shield, Austria. *The 1954 Hague Convention*. N.d.

⁵⁸ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention*. 1954.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ Schorlemer. Getty Museum. *Fighting Terrorist Attacks against World Heritage and Global Cultural Heritage Governance*. 2022.

⁶² United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Frequently asked questions on Armed Conflict and Heritage*. N.d.

⁶³ United Nations, Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Fight Illicit Trafficking (1970 Convention)*. 2024.



established a checklist of steps to take after theft.⁶⁴ The checklist gives states steps to take to cooperate in returning stolen artifacts.⁶⁵ Article 5 of the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (1972) outlines how states should set up infrastructure to protect cultural heritage.⁶⁶ States are recommended to set up and staff services for the protection and preservation of natural heritage, conduct and use research so they can counteract dangers to cultural heritage, and develop national or regional hubs to train people in the protection of cultural heritage.⁶⁷ The International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT) is an independent intergovernmental Organization that works to modernize, harmonize, and coordinate private and commercial law amongst states and regions.⁶⁸ UNIDROIT, at the behest of UNESCO, facilitated the *UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects* (1995).⁶⁹ This convention calls for stolen and illegally exported goods to be returned and supplements the 1970 Convention by establishing legal rules about the return of stolen goods.⁷⁰ The convention established that if a cultural object is stolen, it must be returned, and compensation to the country the object came from may be warranted.⁷¹

The *UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage* (2003) encourages cooperation between Member States and UNESCO to prevent intentional destruction of cultural heritage.⁷² Guidance includes establishing sanctions against those who intentionally destroy cultural heritage and sharing information with other states if there is an impending threat to cultural property.⁷³ In 2015, WHC adopted the *Bonn Declaration on World Heritage*.⁷⁴ Stakeholders gathered to work towards preventing damage to cultural heritage, specifically in Iraq and the region of the Middle East in the wake of the damage to the Hatra World Heritage Site in Iraq.⁷⁵

Role of the International System

UNESCO and its partners give tangible assistance to Member States designed to prevent damage to cultural heritage and help Member States recover once the damage is done.⁷⁶ WHC is made up of representatives from 21 State parties to the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*.⁷⁷ The committee is responsible for supporting World Heritage Sites through the use

⁶⁴ United Nations, Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Fight Illicit Trafficking (1970 Convention)*. 2024.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, General Conference. *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. 1972. pp. 3-4.

⁶⁷ *ibid.* pp. 3-4.

⁶⁸ International Institute for the Unification of Private Law. *About UNIDROIT*. 2021.

⁶⁹ International Institute for the Unification of Private Law. *1995 Convention*. 1995.

⁷⁰ International Institute for the Unification of Private Law. *Overview*. 2021.

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage*. 2003. p. 3.

⁷³ *ibid.* p. 3.

⁷⁴ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Launch of global Unite for Heritage Coalition in Bonn*. 2015.

⁷⁵ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. 1972.

⁷⁶ International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property. *Celebrating 50 years of the World Heritage Convention*. 2022.

⁷⁷ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *The World Heritage Committee*. 2024.



of the World Heritage Fund and allocation of financial assistance to Member States.⁷⁸ WHC distributes The Fund for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, which gives monetary and technical resources for Member States.⁷⁹ This fund has no hard limit, but requests are typically between \$15,000 and \$50,000.⁸⁰ The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) is an advisory body for the World Heritage Convention with a focus on capacity-building activities for the conservation and management of World Heritage Sites.⁸¹ The assistance is important for Member States because it aids with the reconstruction of World Heritage Sites.⁸² UNESCO has emphasized the increasing importance of protecting cultural heritage through preventative action.⁸³

The United Nations system at large guides Member States, but this guidance alone is not enough to prevent the destruction of cultural heritage, and additional partnerships are needed.⁸⁴

The Security Council often partners with UNESCO on theft and trafficking of cultural heritage because of its connection to funding terrorist organizations.⁸⁵ In Security Council resolution 2437 (2017) on “maintenance of international peace and security”, Member States are encouraged to take action against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al-Qaida, and associated individuals and groups involved in the illicit trade in cultural property.⁸⁶ Member States are encouraged to establish law enforcement and judicial infrastructure to prevent and deal with the trafficking of cultural property.⁸⁷ General Assembly resolution 76/214 on “culture and sustainable development” reaffirms the importance of cultural heritage to development.⁸⁸ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) works with UNESCO, the International Council of Museums, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law, the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to improve national legal frameworks, law enforcement response, and judicial practices regarding the safeguarding of cultural items and sites.⁸⁹ Guidance to Member States is important, and additional partnerships are necessary to support the protection of cultural heritage in conflict.⁹⁰

Civil Society and non-governmental organizations support efforts to protect World Heritage Sites through on-the-ground efforts.⁹¹ Blue Shield is a non-governmental advisory body to UNESCO on the protection of

⁷⁸ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *The World Heritage Committee*. 2024.

⁷⁹ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Fund for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict*. 2024.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property. *Celebrating 50 years of the World Heritage Convention*. 2022.

⁸² World Heritage Centre. United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *n°86 - World Heritage and Reconstruction*. 2018. p. 7.

⁸³ Schorlemer. Getty Museum. *Fighting Terrorist Attacks against World Heritage and Global Cultural Heritage Governance*. 2022.

⁸⁴ Daniels. Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. *Protecting Cultural Heritage during Conflict*. 2022.

⁸⁵ United Nations, Security Council. *Maintenance of international peace and security (S/RES/2347) (2017)*. 2017. pp. 1-2.

⁸⁶ *ibid.* pp. 1-2.

⁸⁷ *ibid.* p. 2.

⁸⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Culture and sustainable development (A/RES/76/214)*. 2021. p. 3.

⁸⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Cooperation with partners*. N.d.

⁹⁰ Daniels. Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. *Protecting Cultural Heritage during Conflict*. 2022.

⁹¹ *ibid.*



cultural property in the event of armed conflict.⁹² Blue Shield works to protect cultural heritage during conflict, raise awareness, promote and provide relevant training, and respond to damage to cultural property.⁹³ They facilitate agreements with partners such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the United Nations peacekeeping force in Lebanon to achieve these goals.⁹⁴ Civil society is important for identifying damage to cultural property in conflict areas.⁹⁵ ICCROM helps Member States protect their cultural heritage.⁹⁶ ICCROMs programme for Latin America and the Caribbean focuses specifically on the Latin American region.⁹⁷ They offered a virtual conference to discuss risk prevention to cultural heritage in the region.⁹⁸ In 2014, UNESCO established an Internet platform, “Observatory of Syrian Cultural Heritage,” an information-sharing platform that relied on contributions from professionals to monitor the state of cultural heritage in Syria amidst armed conflict.⁹⁹ This information was used as a starting point for reconstruction and restoration efforts.¹⁰⁰

Inefficient coordination between actors remains a prominent barrier to protecting cultural heritage.¹⁰¹ Regulations and frameworks are adhered to with varying degrees of success, often dependent on how well actors can collaborate.¹⁰² In 2011, in Libya, the protection of cultural heritage was primarily successful because of collaboration with NATO and cultural experts in Libya.¹⁰³ NATO created a list of cultural properties that should not be attacked by military efforts.¹⁰⁴ In this case, it was successful, but commonly, adherence to this list has mixed results.¹⁰⁵ Lists that specify what cultural property should be protected are ineffective when uncoordinated or completed too late.¹⁰⁶ Lists that are too long are likely to be ignored by military forces.¹⁰⁷ WHC highlighted coordinating parties necessary for the protection of cultural heritage as a challenge.¹⁰⁸ These parties include police, customs officials, museums, Member States, civil society, and the media.¹⁰⁹ Occupying forces in armed conflict often attack cultural heritage to decrease morale and

⁹² International Council on Archives. *Blue Shield*. N.d.

⁹³ *ibid.*

⁹⁴ Stone. Getty Museum. *Protecting Cultural Property in Armed Conflict: The Necessity for Dialogue and Action Integrating the Heritage, Military, and Humanitarian Sectors*. 2022.

⁹⁵ Daniels. Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. *Protecting Cultural Heritage during Conflict*. 2022.

⁹⁶ International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property. *What is ICCROM*. 2024.

⁹⁷ International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property. *Congress on experiences in risk management for cultural heritage in Ibero-America*. 2021.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁹⁹ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO reiterates call for unity and coordination to protect Syrian Cultural Heritage*. 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Daniels. Georgetown Journal of International Affairs. *Protecting Cultural Heritage during Conflict*. 2022.

¹⁰¹ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Launch of global Unite for Heritage Coalition in Bonn*. 2015.

¹⁰² Stone. Getty Museum. *Protecting Cultural Property in Armed Conflict: The Necessity for Dialogue and Action Integrating the Heritage, Military, and Humanitarian Sectors*. 2022.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *Launch of global Unite for Heritage Coalition in Bonn*. 2015.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*



destroy history.¹¹⁰ ISIL attacks within Syria were designed to erase cultural heritage that did not align with ISIL's belief system.¹¹¹ These attacks partially damaged or destroyed all of Syria's UNESCO World Heritage Sites.¹¹²

Addressing the Sale of Stolen Artifacts

Museums and law enforcement agencies are making efforts to keep track of at risk and stolen cultural items.¹¹³ UNESCO World Heritage Sites in conflict areas are often vulnerable to theft because of a lack of law enforcement resources, civil unrest, and poor economic circumstances.¹¹⁴ These circumstances mean opportunity for looting and illicit trafficking of cultural property.¹¹⁵ The International Council of Museums publishes yearly Red Lists that identify cultural objects vulnerable to trafficking.¹¹⁶ UNESCO partners with INTERPOL to keep a Global Database of cultural items suspected to be stolen, and it currently has more than 400 items from 30 different countries listed.¹¹⁷ The data is collected from museums and educational institutions that provide descriptions of the cultural items in the event of a theft.¹¹⁸ The Red List and INTERPOL database are both measures for prevention and reaction in case of theft.¹¹⁹ When an identified item is stolen, INTERPOL predicts what type of market it could be sold in and alerts sales venues of the stolen property to encourage reporting to prevent illegal sales.¹²⁰

Looting of archeological sites and trafficking of cultural objects is a major source of financing for criminal and terrorist organizations, and it requires a global effort to solve.¹²¹ Transnational organized crime is often connected to the trafficking of cultural property because items are frequently transported through the same routes that transport drugs, illicit arms, and human beings.¹²² Trafficking of cultural property is also a source for laundering money acquired through other criminal activity.¹²³ A challenge of intervening in the sale of stolen artifacts is that legal sale is often mixed with illegal sale, and stolen objects can be sold through legitimate channels such as auctions or internet marketplaces.¹²⁴ UNODC divides trafficking into

¹¹⁰ Corti. Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units. *Cultural Heritage Protection in Armed Conflicts*. 2022.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ International Council of Museums. *The ICOM Red Lists of Cultural Objects at Risk are practical tools to curb the illegal traffic of cultural objects*. N.d.

¹¹⁴ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *The 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*. 1970.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ International Council of Museums. *The ICOM Red Lists of Cultural Objects at Risk are practical tools to curb the illegal traffic of cultural objects*. N.d.

¹¹⁷ United Nations, Academic Impact. *Countering destruction of and trafficking in cultural property: from lessons learned to implementation*. N.d.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Combating Transnational Organized Crime Against Cultural Property*. N.d.

¹²² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Trafficking in cultural property: organized crime and the theft of our past*. 2012.

¹²³ *ibid.*

¹²⁴ *ibid.*



three stages: origin, transit, and transfer or destruction.¹²⁵ The origin stage is the site from which the cultural object could be stolen.¹²⁶ During this stage, states should have security measures to prevent theft.¹²⁷ After an item is stolen from the origin site, it enters the transit stage, and this stage is often the last chance for law enforcement to intercept it before recovery becomes too difficult.¹²⁸ In the final stage, transfer or destruction, the object has left the origin country, and recovery is unlikely.¹²⁹ The Container Control Programme, established in 2003 by UNODC in coordination with WCO, is a successful program for the recovery of stolen cultural property.¹³⁰ The program intercepts drug shipments and identifies illegal movement of goods by checking that overseas transport containers are carrying goods in line with what they have declared.¹³¹ Recently, UNODC intercepted a container that was falsely declared as containing scrap metal but held two seventeenth- and eighteenth-century canons that had been stolen from the Fort of San Lorenzo, a World Heritage Site in Panama.¹³²

The international community has been advised to prioritize the return of stolen artifacts to their countries of origin.¹³³ A 1978 appeal titled “A Plea for the Restitution of an Irreplaceable Cultural Heritage to those who Created it,” by former Director-General of UNESCO Amadou-Mahtar M’Bow, called upon Member States to engage in bilateral agreements to return cultural property to their countries of origin.¹³⁴ Measures to return goods can include long-term loans, deposits, sales, and donations between institutions like national museums or libraries that may have come into possession of the artifacts.¹³⁵ A successful example of stolen property being returned is half of a soapstone bird statue from the UNESCO World Heritage Site Great Zimbabwe.¹³⁶ Great Zimbabwe is the location of stone ruins of a city dating back to 1100 A.D..¹³⁷ After being outside of Zimbabwe for over 100 years, the bottom half of a soapstone bird statue that had been split in two was reunified with its upper half in Zimbabwe in 2000.¹³⁸ Its return from a museum in Germany shows how restitution efforts can be restorative to national identity since soapstone birds are culturally significant symbols of Zimbabwe’s heritage and are traditionally viewed as sacred representations of the unity of the state and the guardian spirits.¹³⁹

¹²⁵ United Nations, Academic Impact. *Countering destruction of and trafficking in cultural property: from lessons learned to implementation*. N.d.

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Trafficking in cultural property: organized crime and the theft of our past*. 2012.

¹³¹ *ibid.*

¹³² *ibid.*

¹³³ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. “Return & Restitution” *Intergovernmental Committee*. 2024.

¹³⁴ M’Bow. United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *A Plea for the restitution of an irreplaceable cultural heritage to those who created it*. 1978. p. 3.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ Simpson. United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Museum International. *The reunification of a national symbol*. 2009. pp. 13,155.

¹³⁷ *ibid.* pp. 13,155.

¹³⁸ *ibid.* pp. 13,155.

¹³⁹ *ibid.* pp. 13,155.



Facilitating the Recovery and Reconstruction of World Heritage Sites

Restoration and reconstruction of World Heritage Sites is complex and unique in every case.¹⁴⁰ Sites in Syria and the Buddhas in the Bamiyan Valley of Afghanistan were intentionally and irreparably damaged by the Taliban.¹⁴¹ Religious tensions lead Salafist extremists to attack schools, mosques, and other holy places of the Sufi in Libya.¹⁴² Damage means recovery and reconstruction are necessary, but restoring damaged sites can be complex because restoration efforts need to be mindful of the history and sensitive to the socioeconomic needs of local communities.¹⁴³ The aforementioned cultural landscape of Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan has been inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger since 2003.¹⁴⁴ Conservation efforts in this region are uniquely difficult because of military activity and dynamite explosions that make parts of the site completely inaccessible.¹⁴⁵

Innovative technologies are being used to help assess damage to World Heritage Sites and create restoration plans.¹⁴⁶ The ancient city of Aleppo, which dates back to the 2nd millennium B.C., was added to the UNESCO List of World Heritage in Danger in 2013 due to the instability of the region and conflict being predicted to escalate.¹⁴⁷ Located in the Syrian Arab Republic, Aleppo fell into conflict in July of 2012 and suffered major destruction because of bombardments, underground bombs, shelling, fires, and street combats.¹⁴⁸ By the time the fighting ended in December 2016, more than 10% of historic buildings had been destroyed.¹⁴⁹ In 2018, UNESCO and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research published the first comprehensive report on the impacts of these years of conflict.¹⁵⁰ For this project, the researchers used satellite images to visualize damage done to the city and brought in historians, architects, and archaeologists to draw on their expertise in the assessment process.¹⁵¹ This application of remote assessment allowed them to see otherwise inaccessible areas and was used to create a report

¹⁴⁰ World Heritage Centre. United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *n°86 - World Heritage and Reconstruction*. 2018. p. 5.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.* p. 5.

¹⁴² Human Rights Watch. *Libya: New Wave of Attacks Against Sufi Sites*. 2017.

¹⁴³ World Heritage Centre. United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *n°86 - World Heritage and Reconstruction*. 2018. pp. 5-6, 14, 17.

¹⁴⁴ World Heritage Centre. United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *World Heritage in Danger*. 2024.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and United Nations Institute for Training and Research. *Five Years of Conflict: the state of cultural heritage in the Ancient City of Aleppo; A comprehensive multi-temporal satellite imagery-based damage analysis for the Ancient City of Aleppo*. 2018. p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ World Heritage Convention. United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Five years of Conflict - The State of Cultural Heritage in the Ancient City of Aleppo*. 2018.

¹⁴⁸ United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization and United Nations Institute for Training and Research. *Five Years of Conflict: the state of cultural heritage in the Ancient City of Aleppo; A comprehensive multi-temporal satellite imagery-based damage analysis for the Ancient City of Aleppo*. 2018. p. 16.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.* p. 135.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 4.

¹⁵¹ World Heritage Convention. United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Five years of Conflict - The State of Cultural Heritage in the Ancient City of Aleppo*. 2018.



that included 518 buildings.¹⁵² The data collected provided an important technical basis for the restoration plans of Aleppo in the future.¹⁵³

The reconstruction of destroyed World Heritage sites heals local communities, leads to economic benefits, and furthers cultural identity.¹⁵⁴ UNESCO is working with the World Bank to prepare a framework to highlight how culture and heritage can be used as a key resource during reconstructive efforts by promoting community ownership, social inclusion, and economic recovery.¹⁵⁵ UNESCO's Guidebook for Action on the List of World Heritage in Danger highlights the destruction of several historical mausoleums of Timbuktu as one of the first examples where destruction of cultural heritage was successfully prosecuted as a war crime.¹⁵⁶ Reconstruction of physical places also helps communities overcome the traumatic experiences of conflict.¹⁵⁷ Restoration of the Timbuktu mausoleums in Mali shows that restoring damaged cultural sites benefits local communities because its reconstruction was completed in collaboration with the surrounding community.¹⁵⁸ The local cooperation of traditional masons was used to ensure the authenticity of construction practices.¹⁵⁹ During the project, cultural heritage was strengthened because 40 young masons were trained in traditional construction techniques, ensuring knowledge of those construction techniques continues into the future.¹⁶⁰

Conclusion

UNESCO World Heritage Sites are critical to cultural identity, and sites in conflict areas need to be protected.¹⁶¹ Although some individual states have measures in place to protect cultural heritage within their borders, there is a lack of effective international coordination.¹⁶² UNESCO is taking measures to provide Member States facing threats to their cultural heritage due to conflict with support, but these efforts are not always enough to prevent the destruction of cultural sites and objects.¹⁶³ Current methods in place for the protection of cultural artifacts from theft and trafficking are lacking in some areas, and

¹⁵² World Heritage Convention. United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Five years of Conflict - The State of Cultural Heritage in the Ancient City of Aleppo*. 2018.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ World Heritage Centre. United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Reconstruction of the destroyed mausoleums of Timbuktu (Mali)*. 2021.

¹⁵⁵ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO and the World Bank place culture at the core of city reconstruction and recovery processes at the 9th World Urban Forum in Malaysia*. 2023.

¹⁵⁶ World Heritage Centre. United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Reconstruction of the destroyed mausoleums of Timbuktu (Mali)*. 2021.

¹⁵⁷ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO and the World Bank place culture at the core of city reconstruction and recovery processes at the 9th World Urban Forum in Malaysia*. 2023.

¹⁵⁸ World Heritage Centre. United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Reconstruction of the destroyed mausoleums of Timbuktu (Mali)*. 2021.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *World Heritage sites and museums: A pact for sustainable development*. 2024; Schorlemer. Getty Museum. *Fighting Terrorist Attacks against World Heritage and Global Cultural Heritage Governance*. 2022.

¹⁶² United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage*. 2003.

¹⁶³ International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property. *Celebrating 50 years of the World Heritage Convention*. 2022.



destruction caused by armed non-state actors requires more effort to be effectively addressed.¹⁶⁴ Destruction of cultural heritage weakens the foundations of communities and threatens prospects of lasting peace and reconciliation.¹⁶⁵ Reconstruction of damaged World Heritage Sites poses challenges, and finding ways to mitigate these problems is important to provide benefits and closure to the impacted communities.¹⁶⁶

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research and consider how to address this topic, they should consider: What additional actions can UNESCO take to assist Member States in protecting World Heritage Sites within their borders? What more can be done to restrict the sale and movement of stolen artifacts? Can additional technologies be utilized to protect or restore World Heritage Sites? What additional action can be taken to prevent occupying military forces from damaging cultural property? What can UNESCO do to stop armed non-state actors from targeting and destroying cultural heritage?

¹⁶⁴ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *The 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*. 1970.

¹⁶⁵ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention*. 1954.

¹⁶⁶ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO and the World Bank place culture at the core of city reconstruction and recovery processes at the 9th World Urban Forum in Malaysia*. 2023.



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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Trafficking in cultural property: organized crime and the theft of our past*. 2012. Retrieved 1 August 2024 from: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2012/October/trafficking-in-cultural-property--organized-crime-and-the-theft-of-our-past.html>

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World Heritage Convention. United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Five years of Conflict - The State of Cultural Heritage in the Ancient City of Aleppo*. 2018. Retrieved 7 September 2024 from: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/946/>

World Heritage Centre. United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Reconstruction of the destroyed mausoleums of Timbuktu (Mali)*. 2021. Retrieved 1 August 2024 from: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/canopy/timbuktu>

World Heritage Centre. United Nations, Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *World Heritage in Danger*. 2024. Retrieved 1 August 2024 from: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/danger/>



2. Water Resources Management and Sustainable Development

*We must act swiftly not only to safeguard water resources but also to enhance regional and global cooperation in this area.*¹⁶⁷

Introduction

More than 40% of the global population is affected by water scarcity.¹⁶⁸ Water scarcity and lack of sanitation practices cause more widespread illnesses and deaths than natural disasters.¹⁶⁹ Women and girls are more susceptible to waterborne illnesses, particularly during times of menstruation and childbirth.¹⁷⁰ Presently, 26% of the global population, or 2 billion people, have limited or no access to safe drinking water, and 46%, or 3.6 billion people, do not have access to safely managed sanitation.¹⁷¹ This shows that water is a valuable but limited resource that is vital to achieving sustainable development.¹⁷² The global urban population experiencing water scarcity is expected to increase to 1.7 to 2.4 billion people by 2050.¹⁷³

Water resources must be used equitably and effectively to promote the protection of water and related ecosystems.¹⁷⁴ The conditions, in which water is managed, supplied, and used, can change at a rapid pace.¹⁷⁵ Conditions affecting water resources management include armed conflicts and disease outbreaks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷⁶ Water resources management is a practice where water and land resources are utilized equitably to protect the environment and foster social and economic welfare.¹⁷⁷ Controlling water resources and their movement minimizes damage to life and property.¹⁷⁸ Integrated water resources management (IWRM) describes a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to the development and use of water resources.¹⁷⁹

Building scientific knowledge is important to ensure water resources management and sustainable development go hand in hand.¹⁸⁰ The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) promotes water resources management as part of its work on building scientific knowledge

¹⁶⁷ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Water crises threaten world peace (report)*. 2024.

¹⁶⁸ World Bank Group. *Water Resources Management*. 2022.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO in action for gender equality: 2022-2023*. 2023.

¹⁷¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Imminent risk of a global water crisis, warns the UN World Water Development Report 2023*. 2024.

¹⁷² United Nations Water Conference. *Report of the United Nations Water Conference: Mar del Plata (E/CONF.70/29)*. 1977. p. 9.

¹⁷³ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Imminent risk of a global water crisis, warns the UN World Water Development Report 2023*. 2023.

¹⁷⁴ United Nations Water Conference. *Report of the United Nations Water Conference: Mar del Plata, 14-25 March 1977 (E/CONF.70/29)*. 1977. p. 9.

¹⁷⁵ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: Water for Prosperity and Peace*. 2024.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ United Nations Environment Programme. *Water resources management*. 2024.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ United Nations Environment Programme. *What is Integrated Water Resources Management?*. 2024.

¹⁸⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Water security*. N.d.



while supporting sustainable development.¹⁸¹ An integrated approach to water resources management can foster sustainable development in various areas, including sustainable agriculture and gender equality.¹⁸² Agriculture utilizes methods of water resources management when supplying water to ensure the growth of crops.¹⁸³ Globally, water usage for agricultural practices utilizes over 70% of freshwater, which is predicted to increase alongside production.¹⁸⁴ IWRM can help with agricultural management by addressing the influence of climate change and poor water governance.¹⁸⁵ IWRM also empowers women and girls through enhancing livelihoods and food security, facilitating equitable water access, promoting gender equality, and recognizing women's needs.¹⁸⁶

International and Regional Framework

The right to water and sanitation is a fundamental human right that has developed and gained importance over time.¹⁸⁷ In 1948, the General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), establishing a standard for all Member States to achieve through establishing universal human rights.¹⁸⁸ The UDHR provides the basis for various international human rights treaties, such as the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) (1966) and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) (1979).¹⁸⁹ Article 11 of the ICESCR addresses living standards and highlights the right to food, while Article 12 focuses on the right to healthcare and access to safe drinking water and sanitation.¹⁹⁰ Article 14 (2) of CEDAW focuses on the rights of rural women, emphasizing the need for States parties to ensure social security and adequate healthcare.¹⁹¹ CEDAW ensures the equal opportunities of women and men through appropriate measures, such as legislation and capacity building, to ensure women enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.¹⁹² The ICESCR established the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which recognized the right to water as a separate human right in its General Comment No. 15

¹⁸¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Water security*. N.d.

¹⁸² Global Water Partnership et al. *Advancing Towards Gender Mainstreaming in Water Resources Management*. 2021; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Integrated Water Resources Management For Food Security and Climate Resilience (CL 171/6)*. 2022.

¹⁸³ Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. *World Agriculture: Towards 2015/2030: an FAO Perspective*. 2003.

¹⁸⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: Water for Prosperity and Peace*. 2024. p. 28.

¹⁸⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *Integrated Water Resources Management For Food Security and Climate Resilience (CL 171/6)*. 2022.

¹⁸⁶ Njie et al. *Women and Agricultural Water Resource Management*. 2013.

¹⁸⁷ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Substantive Issues Arising on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 15 (2002). The right to water (arts. 11 and 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) (E/C.12/2002/11)*. 2003.

¹⁸⁸ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948.

¹⁸⁹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*. 1948; United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

¹⁹⁰ United Nations, General Assembly. *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (A/RES/2200 (XXI))*. 1966.

¹⁹¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180)*. 1979.

¹⁹² *ibid.*



(2002).¹⁹³ The UDHR was expanded in 2010 through General Assembly resolution 64/292 on “The Human Right to Water and Sanitation.”¹⁹⁴ The expansion of the UDHR ensures that humans can be legally entitled to having access to water , providing empowerment of marginalized groups and decreasing inequalities.¹⁹⁵

The *Mar del Plata Action Plan* (1977) was one of the first milestones in connecting water resources management to social and economic development.¹⁹⁶ The concept of IWRM was developed and emerged through the creation of the *Mar del Plata Action Plan*.¹⁹⁷ While addressing issues surrounding IWRM, the action plan provides recommendations on infrastructural development like scientific infrastructure for water assessment.¹⁹⁸ The *Mar del Plata Action Plan* additionally focuses on how to utilize water equitably and effectively to protect water as a resource and water-related ecosystems through assessment methods, like hydrological data series.¹⁹⁹

IWRM holds importance to gender equality through the need for an equal presence in decision-making to enhance community resilience.²⁰⁰ The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*, which was adopted during the Fourth Conference on Women in 1995, addresses the advancement of equality, development, and peace for women tied to diversity and roles in society.²⁰¹ The main objective of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* is to empower all women through improving access to economic opportunities and healthcare.²⁰² The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* shows that gender equality is important to water resources management by emphasizing the connections between sustainable development and gender equality.²⁰³

Water is a key aspect of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015) and is directly connected to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).²⁰⁴ SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) is not only revolving around drinking water, hygiene, and sanitation but also the sustainability and quality of water resources.²⁰⁵ Water resources management creates impacts on other SDGs, such as SDG 5

¹⁹³ United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Substantive Issues Arising on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 15 (2002). The right to water (arts. 11 and 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) (E/C.12/2002/11)*. 2003.

¹⁹⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *The human right to water and sanitation (A/RES/64/292)*. 2010.

¹⁹⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. . *The Human Right to Water and Sanitation: Media Brief*. N.d.

¹⁹⁶ United Nations Water Conference. *Report of the United Nations Water Conference: Mar del Plata, 14-25 March 1977 (E/CONF.70/29)*. 1977.

¹⁹⁷ Smith et al. World Water Council. *Integrated Water Resource Management: A New Way Forward*. N.d.

¹⁹⁸ United Nations Water Conference. *Report of the United Nations Water Conference: Mar del Plata, 14-25 March 1977 (E/CONF.70/29)*. 1977. pp. 5, 7, 63.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 9.

²⁰⁰ Njie et al. *Women and Agricultural Water Resource Management*. 2013.

²⁰¹ United Nations, General Assembly. *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1)*. 1995.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ United Nations, General Assembly. *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*. 2015.

²⁰⁵ United Nations Environment Programme. *Why do the Sustainable Development Goals Matter? Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation*. 2024.



(gender equality) for example through the division of domestic work between genders and the influence of water resources on gender equality.²⁰⁶

Role of the International System

UNESCO provides support to Member States in water resources management through the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme (IHP) and the World Water Assessment Programme.²⁰⁷ IHP was founded in 1975 and is the only intergovernmental program within the United Nations system addressing water research and management.²⁰⁸ IHP uses science and evidence to build capacity in water resources management for Member States.²⁰⁹ It utilizes the IHP Water Information Network System to enhance global cooperation for sustainable water resources management.²¹⁰ Moreover, UNESCO created the World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP), which provides information and recommendations for achieving the water-related goals of the 2030 Agenda through the annual publication of the World Water Development Reports.²¹¹ Through the World Water Development Report series, WWAP supports science-policy dialogues, develops case studies, and informs policy and decision-making processes.²¹²

Over 30 United Nations agencies have programs addressing water or sanitation, but there is no exclusive fund, agency, or program dedicated to water issues alone.²¹³ United Nations Water (UN-Water) is the coordinating mechanism between all United Nations agencies related to water resources management.²¹⁴ UN-Water was established in 2003 by the United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination.²¹⁵ Besides UNESCO, another member of UN-Water is the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which focuses on environmental aspects related to water resources management and sustainable development.²¹⁶ Additionally, UNEP and UNESCO collaborate through UNESCO's International Centre for Water Resources and Global Change and UNEP's program Global Environment Monitoring System for Freshwater (GEMS/Water).²¹⁷ GEMS/Water develops trainings and guidance based on national and regional levels through data generation on water quality.²¹⁸

The integration of various stakeholders alongside United Nations programs and Member States is critical to promoting and coordinating sustainable efforts for water resources management.²¹⁹ The 2023 United Nations Water Conference, convened by the General Assembly pursuant to resolution 75/212 on the

²⁰⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls: Progress and info*. 2024.

²⁰⁷ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Water security*. N.d.

²⁰⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *About the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme*. 2023.

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*

²¹⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *The IHP Information Network System (IHP-WINS)*. N.d.

²¹¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *World Water Assessment Programme. About the World Water Assessment Programme*. 2024.

²¹² *ibid.*

²¹³ United Nations Water. *About UN-Water*. N.d.

²¹⁴ United Nations Systems Chief Executives Board for Coordination. *UN-Water*. N.d.

²¹⁵ *ibid.*

²¹⁶ United Nations Water. *United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)*. N.d.

²¹⁷ United Nations Environment Programme. *Managing water data*. 2024.

²¹⁸ United Nations Environment Programme. *Developing Monitoring Capacity*. 2024; United Nations Environment Programme. *Managing water data*. 2024.

²¹⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Water Action Agenda*. 2023.



“United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objective of the International Decade for Action, Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028.”²²⁰ The 2023 United Nations Water Conference focused on unity among Member States, professionals, and stakeholders including women, children, and Indigenous people, in commitment towards achieving SDG 6.²²¹ The 2023 United Nations Water Conference focused on the coordination and promotion of measures for sustainable water resources management, such as mobilizing financial resources and technological investments.²²²

Equitable access to water security and resources management is interrelated with peace and prosperity.²²³ The 10th World Water Forum, co-hosted by the World Water Council and the government of Indonesia, was held in May 2024 to discuss WWAP’s *United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: Water for Prosperity and Peace*.²²⁴ Discussions at the 10th World Water Forum highlighted how equitable access to water and water security through resources management ensures peace and prosperity.²²⁵ The 10th World Water Forum also addressed the connection between climate change and water management by promoting improved knowledge, increased cooperation, and strengthened awareness of water-related issues as overarching objectives.²²⁶ During the 10th World Water Forum, key issues, such as the global change in water security and transboundary cooperation, were addressed through establishing financial and policy-based initiatives, plans for funding, and capacity building within water management.²²⁷ At the Forum, UNESCO also organized an exhibition that presented research and information on water resources management.²²⁸ UNESCO further facilitated workshops to promote knowledge, cooperation, and awareness of water-related issues.²²⁹

International collaboration allows for countries to develop integrated water resources management for transboundary waters.²³⁰ Water sources shared by two or more countries, such as river basins, lakes, and aquifers, are considered transboundary waters, accounting for 60% of the world’s freshwater flow.²³¹ UNESCO maintains collaborations with regional organizations, such as the Organisation of American States and Sahara and Sahel Observatory, through the Internationally Shared Aquifer Resources

²²⁰ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Water Action Agenda*. 2023.

²²¹ *ibid.*

²²² United Nations, General Assembly. *United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018-2028 (A/RES/75/212)*. 2020.

²²³ United Nations Water. *Water for Peace: World Water Day 2024 Factsheet*. 2023.

²²⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO’s contribution to the 10th World Water Forum, 2024*. 2024.

²²⁵ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: Water for Prosperity and Peace*. 2024; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO’s contribution to the 10th World Water Forum, 2024*. 2024.

²²⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO’s contribution to the 10th World Water Forum, 2024*. 2024.

²²⁷ World Bank Group. *Water Security is critical for poverty reduction, but billions will remain without water access unless urgent action is taken*. 2024.

²²⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO’s contribution to the 10th World Water Forum, 2024*. 2024.

²²⁹ *ibid.*

²³⁰ United Nations Water. *Transboundary Waters*. N.d.

²³¹ *ibid.*



Management (ISARM) programme launched in 2000.²³² ISARM collaborates with regional organizations to provide social and economic growth to improve the management and conservation of groundwater resources and their sustainability.²³³ Additionally, the work of the organization revolves around transboundary aquifers, through improving the understanding of legal and socioeconomic issues revolving around shared water resources such as rivers and lakes.²³⁴

Private sector companies have participated in addressing water scarcity and water resources management, ensuring positive water cycles through various initiatives.²³⁵ The United Nations Global Compact is the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative working on aligning universal principles revolving around human rights and the environment through corporate strategies and operations.²³⁶ The United Nations Global Compact is committed to working with companies to achieve the SDGs through collaboration and innovation.²³⁷ Together with the Pacific Institute, the United Nations Global Compact created the CEO Water Mandate in 2007, seeking to work with business leaders on addressing global water challenges through cooperation with governments, civil society, and the United Nations.²³⁸ The CEO Water Mandate aims at businesses providing contributions around water security and the SDGs through pillars such as resilience and innovation.²³⁹ The Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) is a global partnership that consists of private sector stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, and public sector representatives.²⁴⁰ Bringing together stakeholders from different sectors, it promotes a universal framework of sustainability and water resources management.²⁴¹ AWS aims to enable people, businesses, and cultures to ensure a prosperous nature in the present and future by encouraging major water users, such as governments and cities, to collaborate on sustainable water resources management and water security.²⁴²

Enhancing Sustainable Agriculture and Food Production through Water Resources Management

The use of sustainable water practices in the agriculture sector is critical to ensuring food security and nutrition for all and transforming food systems.²⁴³ Globally, the agriculture sector uses over 72% of the

²³² United Nations, International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre. *Internationally Shared Aquifer Resources Management*. N.d.; Organization of American States, Department of Sustainable Development. *UNESCO/OAS ISARM Americas Programme. Transboundary Aquifers of the Americas*. 2010.

²³³ Organization of American States, Department of Sustainable Development. *UNESCO/OAS ISARM Americas Programme Transboundary Aquifers of the Americas*. 2010.

²³⁴ United Nations, International Groundwater Resources Assessment Centre. *Internationally Shared Aquifer Resources Management*. N.d.

²³⁵ Nestlé. *Taking a Holistic Approach to Water Management*. 2024.

²³⁶ United Nations Global Compact. *Who we are*. N.d.

²³⁷ United Nations Global Compact. *Our Ambition*. N.d.

²³⁸ United Nations Global Compact, Pacific Institute. *CEO Water Mandate. What is the Mandate?*. N.d.

²³⁹ *ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Alliance for Water Stewardship. *About the Alliance for Water Stewardship*. 2023.

²⁴¹ *ibid.*

²⁴² *ibid.*

²⁴³ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Feeding the Future; Sustainable and Water-Efficient Food Production*. N.d.



freshwater supplies.²⁴⁴ The use of sustainable water resources management for agriculture and food production has been the focus of UNESCO since 2020.²⁴⁵ This is crucial as the international community faces the adverse effects of climate change, such as increased annual temperatures.²⁴⁶ Drought-prone Member States often experience more food insecurity as the effects of climate change continue to increase and impact their agricultural environment through limited crop yields and general destruction.²⁴⁷ The World Water Development Report series consistently highlights the challenges of climate change, local resource management, groundwater reliance, and regional cooperation in addressing water needs for agriculture.²⁴⁸ In 2020, WWAP published the *Water and Climate Change Coursebook*, which illustrates various capacity-building methods that Member States can implement, such as agroforestry, rainwater collection for irrigation storage, and other methods.²⁴⁹

Cooperation and collaboration on transboundary water resources management and regulation are crucial for the international community, especially to ensure sustainable and water-efficient agriculture.²⁵⁰ Transboundary waters span across multiple Member States' borders, thus limiting the ability to regulate usage, limit pollution, and ensure equal access.²⁵¹ In 2022, UNESCO published a compilation of studies and essays, titled *Transboundary Aquifers: challenges and the way forward*, which examine the current status of transboundary water sources.²⁵² The challenges identified in the 2024 World Water Development Report include the difficulties in managing transboundary water sources and ensuring access to unpolluted water for cleaning, cooking, and agriculture.²⁵³ One key example of the difficulties in implementing regional governance for water resources management, recognized by WWAP, for both transboundary and groundwater resources, is that of the Medjerda River basin between Tunisia and Algeria.²⁵⁴ Both states have attempted to utilize the river for a variety of development pursuits but have struggled with cooperation to utilize the resources fairly.²⁵⁵ While UNESCO's IHP acknowledges that governance to manage transboundary waters has been a significant challenge in previous phases, its current strategic plan aims to increase research and education on the benefits of conserving these water sources.²⁵⁶

²⁴⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: Water for Prosperity and Peace*. 2024. p. 28.

²⁴⁵ *ibid.*

²⁴⁶ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Feeding the Future; Sustainable and Water-Efficient Food Production*. N.d.

²⁴⁷ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: Water for Prosperity and Peace*. 2024. p. 32.

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*

²⁴⁹ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Water and Climate Change Coursebook*. 2020. pp. 19-21.

²⁵⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: Water for Prosperity and Peace*. 2024.

²⁵¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Transboundary Aquifers: Challenges and the way forward*. 2022.

²⁵² *ibid.*

²⁵³ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: Water for Prosperity and Peace*. 2024.

²⁵⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Water and Climate Change Coursebook*. 2020. p. 30.

²⁵⁵ *ibid.* p. 30.

²⁵⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *IHP-IX Strategic Plan of the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme: Science for a Water Secure World in a Changing Environment, ninth phase 2022-2029*. 2022. pp. 5-10.



There is a need for more transformative methods of growing practices through sustainable water resources management, such as the adoption of sustainable farming practices that utilize water more efficiently.²⁵⁷ One of the benefits of adopting sustainable farming practices is the increased use of more biodiverse crops.²⁵⁸ Such crops, including greens, beans, and potatoes, can reduce the amount of water needed to grow as regionally native crops have adapted to survive in local climates.²⁵⁹ These practices and other efforts for sustainable agriculture are imperative for more sustainable food systems and have been encouraged by water user associations, consisting of farmers, public and private sector representatives, and civil society, among others.²⁶⁰ These associations also provide capacity building for farmers on methods, such as water recycling, efficient irrigation, and use of water non-intensive crops.²⁶¹

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), face a unique challenge in water resources management for sustainable agriculture.²⁶² SIDS and LLDCs are susceptible to water resource constraints due to a lack of clean potable water, infrastructure to recycle wastewater, and the sustainable management of irrigation systems.²⁶³ The 2024 World Water Development Report underlined that one of the biggest factors in the use and management of water resources for agriculture is water governance and the recognition of this governance in formal law.²⁶⁴ This issue is of particular importance for rural agriculture communities, particularly in SIDS and LLDCs, as most farmers do not own the land they cultivate, meaning that they often cannot control the volume or quality of water they are allotted to use.²⁶⁵ In its current strategic plan, IHP identified that one of the most significant impacts to ensure that SIDS and LLDCs are capable of advancing and utilizing sustainable water practices is through the use of shared methodologies and streamlining scientific practices.²⁶⁶

Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Water Resources Management

Limited access to safe and clean water threatens the lives of over 800,000 women and girls annually.²⁶⁷ Women and girls are more severely impacted by the adverse effects of climate change, as they make up 80% or more of displaced person populations in times of climate-induced migrations.²⁶⁸ Women and girls are often burdened as the primary unpaid domestic workforce in their communities, responsible for tasks,

²⁵⁷ United Nations Environment Programme. *Rethinking Food Systems*. 2021.

²⁵⁸ United Nations Environment Programme. *Agroecology - a contribution to food security?*. 2020.

²⁵⁹ *ibid.*

²⁶⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Partnerships and cooperation for food and agriculture*. 2023.

²⁶¹ *ibid.*

²⁶² World Bank Group. *A National Framework for Integrated Urban Water Management in Indonesia*. 2021.

²⁶³ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2023: Partnerships and cooperation for water*. 2023.

²⁶⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Food security, a key driver of peace and security*. 2024.

²⁶⁵ *ibid.*

²⁶⁶ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *IHP-IX Strategic Plan of the Intergovernmental Hydrological Programme: Science for a Water Secure World in a Changing Environment, ninth phase 2022-2029*. 2022.

²⁶⁷ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO in action for gender equality: 2022-2023*. 2023.

²⁶⁸ *ibid.* pp. 32-33.



such as caretaking, farming, cleaning, childcare, collecting water, and more.²⁶⁹ These responsibilities usually take hours to complete and limit women and girls' abilities to pursue education and work outside of these domestic duties.²⁷⁰ In low-income and rural areas, less than 15% of women and girls working in agriculture own their land, though globally 64% of the agricultural workforce are women and girls.²⁷¹ The most recent report of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, titled *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot*, acknowledged that in 2023, approximately only 27% of countries had successfully implemented local frameworks on water resources management and promoting gender equality measures within this scope.²⁷²

Women and girls are the first victims of water scarcity.²⁷³ *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: Water for Prosperity and Peace* illustrates the current status of water resource management across the international community.²⁷⁴ Gender inequality in water resources management remains high, causing wider implications for sustainable development.²⁷⁵ In times of drought, natural disasters, or conflicts, women and girls are often the first to experience the effects of water scarcity.²⁷⁶ As the primary water collectors, women are the first to experience the adverse effects of unclean water from harmful pollution, waterborne illnesses, and unsanitary water used during times of menstruation and childbirth.²⁷⁷ To accelerate progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women in water resources management, WWAP promotes the collection of gender-disaggregated data to investigate and highlight gender inequalities related to water resources.²⁷⁸ In this context, WWAP provides training to various stakeholders from academia, public and private sectors, and civil society to improve data collection.²⁷⁹ In addition, WWAP offers practical guidance on gender integration in water resource management.²⁸⁰

IWRM ensures access to menstrual hygiene.²⁸¹ UNESCO's 2021 report *Taking Stock of progress towards gender equality in the Water Domain: Where Do We Stand 25 Years After the Beijing Declaration?* addresses the impact of water resources management on gender equality and the importance of strong

²⁶⁹ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO in action for gender equality: 2022-2023*. 2023. pp. 32-33.

²⁷⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: Water for Prosperity and Peace*. 2024.

²⁷¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO in action for gender equality: 2022-2023*. 2023. pp. 32-33.

²⁷² United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women et al. *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024*. 2024. p. 14.

²⁷³ *ibid.* p. 14.

²⁷⁴ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: Water for Prosperity and Peace*. 2024.

²⁷⁵ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Water crises threaten world peace (report)*. 2024.

²⁷⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷⁷ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2024: Water for Prosperity and Peace*. 2024.

²⁷⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *World Water Assessment Programme. Addressing gender inequality in the water sector*. 2023.

²⁷⁹ *ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *ibid.*

²⁸¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Water crises threaten world peace (report)*. 2024.



water management practices to achieve the SDGs.²⁸² The report also recognizes many of the current and emerging challenges women and girls face regarding water resources management and sanitation, including safeguards to clean water, access to affordable water, and education for water quality levels, particularly in rural areas.²⁸³ A consistent challenge women and girls face is access to clean water during times of menstruation and giving birth.²⁸⁴ The 2021 report acknowledges that 500 million women and girls do not have access to safe and clean water facilities for menstrual hygiene, which leads to an increased number of infections and potential health risks.²⁸⁵ These infections and potential health risks include urinary tract infections, an increased likelihood of having preterm births, and sepsis risks.²⁸⁶ Accordingly, women and girls who have education on and access to education on clean water during times of menstruation and childbirth are less likely to contract waterborne illnesses.²⁸⁷ Against this background, UNESCO has urged for increased menstrual and pre- and post-natal health education and has called for more equitable access to menstrual supplies and clean water.²⁸⁸

Conclusion

Water resources management is important for sustainable development, particularly in the face of climate change and water scarcity.²⁸⁹ Sustainable water resources management requires stronger international cooperation, gender equality, and a commitment to accelerating progress towards SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) and other SDGs.²⁹⁰ The lack of a dedicated United Nations agency for water highlights the need for greater coordination among various United Nations bodies and global stakeholders to address water-related challenges effectively.²⁹¹ Collaborative efforts between international organizations, private industry, and governments are essential to ensure sustainable water resource management and advance progress towards SDG 6.²⁹² Addressing these challenges is crucial for advancing gender equality, improving health outcomes, and ensuring sustainable development in vulnerable communities.²⁹³

Further Research

As delegates conduct further research into this topic, they should consider: What efforts have been made by UNESCO to further advancements for gender equality in the context of water resources management? What impacts can current practices on water resources management have in the future? How can Member States implement regional efforts to ensure proper water resources management? Are there additional methods that UNESCO can promote to safeguard water resources management? How do

²⁸² United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Taking Stock of Progress Towards Gender Equality in the Water Domain: Where do we stand 25 years after the Beijing declaration?*. 2021.

²⁸³ *ibid.* pp. 11-14.

²⁸⁴ *ibid.* pp. 14-16.

²⁸⁵ *ibid.* pp. 14-16.

²⁸⁶ *ibid.* p. 23.

²⁸⁷ *ibid.* p. 23.

²⁸⁸ *ibid.* pp. 26-27.

²⁸⁹ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Water crises threaten world peace (report)*. 2024.

²⁹⁰ *ibid.*

²⁹¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *UNESCO's contribution to the United Nations 2023 Water Conference*. 2023.

²⁹² United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. *Water crises threaten world peace (report)*. 2024.

²⁹³ *ibid.*



science-policy interfaces affect the efforts made in water resources management? What other tools and programs does UNESCO provide to support Member States? How can UNESCO engage with the private sector to work on water resources management? What efforts can Member States make to ensure more equitable access and use of transboundary aquifers and groundwater?



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