



Accelerating Climate Action through the Power of Arts, Culture and Heritage

A Manifesto on Keeping 1.5° Alive COP26

We, the undersigned, declare that people, their cultures, and the natural and cultural heritage of the earth are profoundly at risk from human-caused climate change and the climate inaction that is deepening the unfolding climate crisis even while we reaffirm the immense power of arts, culture, and heritage to inspire climate action and enable a just transition to low carbon, climate resilient futures.

Climate change is already impacting people and planet, with long-lasting and irreversible effects. Avoiding the worst of these requires limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels. Yet the world is failing to meet even the Paris Agreement's 2 degrees temperature goal, with current Green House Gas (GHG) concentrations now the highest ever recorded.

The present COVID-19 pandemic, and the suffering it has caused, have made the response to climate change even more difficult while also revealing essential lessons, including the imperative of heeding science, the consequences of the separation between humans and nature, the importance of centring the needs of the most vulnerable, and the fact that rapid and far-reaching social and economic change is possible when society, working together, wills it.

Building back better, tackling the climate and biodiversity crises, and achieving sustainable development requires ambitious, transformative action at scale, including deep GHG emissions reductions in all sectors, a wide portfolio of mitigation and adaptation options and a significant upscaling of investments in those options. Centring equity and justice should be at the heart of all actions so that widening economic and health disparities can be reversed. Culture and the arts reflect and influence consumption patterns, mediating our awareness of nature and the planet and our relationship to the environment.

Culture anchors people to places and to each other. It can create cohesion in ways that enable community-building and collective action. Artists and cultural voices



drive public awareness and action; their work can be a powerful tool for climate mobilization. Through public accessibility and trust, cultural institutions like museums and libraries provide platforms for listening to communities and hubs of multicultural and inter-generational exchange, capacity building, and knowledge-sharing.

Integrating natural and cultural values highlights linkages between the ecological and social functions of landscapes in ways that promote lifestyles in harmony with nature. This historic environment embodies past carbon investments, now stewarded by the owners and users of landscapes and buildings. Cultural heritage holds peoples' stories and the knowledge of local communities (what the Paris Agreement calls 'endogenous technologies'). The archaeological record illustrates the causes of, and adaptation to, past changes.

Yet, the talents of many arts, culture and heritage actors, operators and advocates have still not been mobilised for climate action. They include artists, anthropologists, archaeologists, architects, landscape architects, administrators, archivists, crafts persons, conservators, curators, engineers, geographers, historians, librarians, musicians, museologists, writers, performers, urban planners, and site managers, as well as scientists, researchers, teachers, and scholars, and carriers of Indigenous knowledge, whose unique insights have not yet been adequately applied to climate change or accounted for in climate science.

We represent institutions and organisations committed to shifting this paradigm and unlocking the potential of arts, culture, and heritage to achieve the ambitions of the Paris Agreement. We recognize this must include transformation within the culture sector too, embracing sustainable practices and stewardship; lifting up the voices of underserved communities and prioritising solidarity with frontline communities, as well as preserving, recording and making culture and heritage available in inclusive ways, including through traditional and innovative artistic forms as well as new technologies.

This paradigm and mindset shift also require the cultural dimensions of climate action be prioritised in science, policy, planning and fiscal frameworks for climate mitigation and adaption, disaster risk reduction and in planning for losses and damages. The mainstreaming of cultural considerations must be done at all scales (local regional, national and international) and across all sectors from energy to buildings, from mobility to agriculture.



We recognise the profound connection between cultural rights, cultural survival, and climate action. We also consider this Manifesto to be a contribution to human-centred, rights-based approaches that places culture as an explicit and operational dimension of development and provides cultural actors (civil society and institutional) a seat at the table required to make it happen.

It is time to act. We must close both the emissions and ambition gaps. To achieve a 1.5°Celsius world, more attention must be paid to the cultural dimensions of lifestyles and livelihoods, to the public understanding of climate impacts, the social acceptance of systems changes, to gender-responsive and diverse approaches, and to the wellsprings of climate ambition. In short, we must transcend the divides between culture and science, people and policy, memory and evolving practice.

COP26 must be a turning point for multi-level action to realise the potential of culture to effectively combat the climate crisis. It is our shared responsibility to secure the cultural inheritance and cultural rights of current and future generations; to safeguard a healthy, prosperous, and resilient planet; and to deliver the emissions reductions upon which these outcomes hinge. In all this work, count us in! Count culture in!

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