

Inputs from CLT/WHC to the 2019 HLPF under the theme “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”

- (a) the identification of progress, gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges in achieving the SDGs; and, or in relation to the theme within the area under the purview of your organization;**

The World Heritage Convention aims to support countries, especially the most vulnerable ones, in developing relevant policies and programmes, to facilitate the integration of the sustainable development perspective in the broader framework of heritage management, with a particular focus on the implication of communities in the life and management of World Heritage sites and their long-term aspirations for sustainable development. An important challenge remains finding the right balance between the protection of heritage and the sometimes insensitive development projects which are wrongly understood as contributing to the well-being of the communities, thus compromising the potential for contributing to Sustainable Development.

Unfortunately, the majority of countries have not yet developed policies and programmes to integrate a sustainable development perspective into their heritage management strategies, including with a specific focus on the most vulnerable groups within society. This is particularly the case in many of the least developed countries. At the same time, cultural and natural heritage are increasingly exposed to a variety of threats, including ill-advised development, natural hazards and conflicts, which are progressively eroding this irreplaceable asset and compromising its potential to contribute to sustainable development.

- (b) valuable successful experiences and lessons learned on empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality;**

Respect for and promotion of cultural diversity provides an enabling environment for the enjoyment of cultural rights, which are an integral part of human rights. In that context, the preservation, safeguarding and transmission of cultural expressions deeply rooted in community-life represents a factor of inclusiveness, stability and cohesion.

Experience gained by UNESCO over many years has shown how cultural and natural heritage have played a critical role in empowering the poorest and more vulnerable in developing countries as well as ensuring inclusiveness and equality. Key lessons learnt include the inherent ability of heritage to ensure ownership and participation in development processes, as well as to facilitate dialogue and mutual understanding among diverse groups within society.

Numerous activities in the framework of World Heritage management worldwide have successfully contributed to the involvement of local communities in several properties' management and their long-term aspirations for sustainable development. They further demonstrated the essential link between communities and their heritage, and showcased how the involvement of local communities in the upkeep and restoration of sites can bring about not only significant material benefits, but also a sense of purpose and ownership. At times of crisis, for example, access to and care for heritage may help vulnerable people recover a sense of identity, continuity, dignity and empowerment. In conflict and post-conflict situations, in particular, the acknowledgment and conservation of heritage, based on shared values and

interests, may foster mutual recognition, tolerance and respect among different communities, which is a precondition for a society's peaceful development.

Since 2017 a World Heritage Site Managers' Forum has been organized in the framework of the annual session of the World Heritage Committee. Key responsible stakeholders of the World Heritage Convention, Site Managers from across the globe are invited to participate in this Forum. This aims at empowering them on the international stage and at assisting them through appropriate guidance, to harness the potential of World Heritage properties, and heritage in general, to contribute to sustainable development and increase the effectiveness and relevance of the World Heritage Convention.

(c) emerging issues likely to affect inclusiveness and equality at various levels;

Development pressure, globalization, conflicts and natural disasters represent the main threats to the cultural and natural heritage and can affect its ability to contribute to sustainable development as well as inclusiveness and equality.

Despite the recognition of culture within the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, awareness of the importance of heritage for sustainable development, including at the level of policy and decision-makers, is still relatively low.

(d) an assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” at the global, regional and national levels;

The conservation and wise management of cultural and natural heritage has tremendous potential to address many of the key sustainable development challenges facing the poorest and more vulnerable, including by providing shelter, access to food, water and other means of livelihood as well as stable and decent employment. In addition, well-preserved heritage is an essential component to the dignity and resilience of disadvantaged communities, notably in disasters situations and other complex emergencies. It may also contribute directly to alleviating poverty and inequalities.

World Heritage is also an important asset for economic and regional development. In this regard, the contribution of sustainable tourism to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the positive impact it can have on local communities and the protection of World Heritage properties is recognized. However, negative effects of inadequate visitor management and tourism infrastructure development should be avoided. The implementation of appropriate policies, at national and local levels, that would integrate a sustainable perspective is therefore essential. The World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism Programme is a good example in this regard

(e) areas where political guidance by the high-level political forum is required;

The key area where political guidance by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is required is the integration of a concern for the cultural dimensions of sustainable development when it comes to recognizing the importance of respect for cultural diversity, including cultural heritage, towards the attainment of the SDGs and the importance of integrating such components in sustainable development policies and plans at national and local levels taking into account the explicit reference in Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development to the need to enhance the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage.

(f) policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress in empowering people, ensuring inclusiveness and equality, and achieving SDGs.

To accelerate progress, UNESCO has developed a wide regulatory framework of policy recommendations in the framework of its cultural conventions.

In respect of the World Heritage Convention, a policy for the integration of a sustainable development perspective into the processes of the Convention was adopted by the General Assembly of the States Parties to the World Heritage Convention in 2015. This new policy revolves around the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely environmental sustainability, inclusive social development and inclusive economic development, complemented by the fostering of peace and security. In the context of inclusive social development, the policy invites notably states parties to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls with a view for attaining sustainable development.