

COP28 UAE

All CCS and Cross-sectoral Greening

Global Campaign Puts Creativity at Forefront of Climate Fight

CREATIVESUNITE

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A growing chorus of artists, heritage groups and cultural organizations are banding together behind an ambitious campaign: putting creativity at the forefront of humanity's response to the climate emergency

Launching an open letter ahead of the December COP28 talks in the United Arab Emirates, over 200 signatories stretching from community museums in Africa to epochal institutions like the Louvre are urging governments to recognize culture as the essential missing piece in climate policy.

Their goal? Persuading nations to back a proposal at the U.N. labeled the "Joint Work on Culture and Climate Action." It would spark the world's first major consultation process examining how traditions, performances and handicrafts worldwide could help reboot our relationship with the natural world.

By signing an open letter, they are urging nations to back a "Joint Work on Culture and Climate Action" that would spark a major new consultation process under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

This in turn could lead to a landmark new work programme at COP29 in 2024, guaranteeing culture a permanent role in UN talks and funding streams on climate change mitigation and resilience efforts.

Learning from Indigenous cultures

In a letter of support to the European Heritage Hub Community of Practice Forum in Venice recently, the General Secretary of the United Nations António Guterres recognised the urgent need to harness culture and heritage in the fight against climate change:

“We can learn from Indigenous Peoples’ relationship with the planet, and from their traditional knowledge that can help us to reduce emissions and adapt to extreme weather. We can explore how culture contributes to climate change. And we can direct the power of culture, heritage and the arts towards inspiring social and political change that can help accelerate climate action.”

Campaigners argue culture can shape attitudes and consumer choices, safeguard heritage as a carbon sink, and showcase sustainable alternatives through arts, performance, design and place-based knowledge.

Signatories include major international networks like the Climate Heritage Network and ICOMOS, alongside countless artists, experts, local community groups and even the host country of COP28, the UAE, which is championing the call.

The European Heritage Hub, an EU-funded initiative gathering 21 heritage partners, is a founding backer. “We have been ringing the alarm bell that heritage is in danger because of climate change, but we must be sure to recall heritage is also part of the solution”, stated Sneska Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, Secretary-General of Europa Nostra and Project Leader of the Hub.

Campaigners are now urging arts patrons, green groups, educational institutions and citizens worldwide to add their voices of support ahead of COP28, as they aim to present global decision-makers with an unstoppable wave of cultural advocacy.

If approved, a new UN workstream could supercharge such grassroots cultural climate action, while better safeguarding our shared heritage for future generations in the process. With the planet's future hanging in the balance, this may be culture's most vital role yet.