

Statement on Water, Culture and Heritage

by the participants of the conference on
Water and Heritage: Connecting Past, Present and Future, March 20, 2023,
contributing to the UN 2023 Water Conference in New York

Directed to the UN 2023 Water Conference, UNESCO and the UN system as a whole and its partners; those responsible for high-level water-related international cooperation and events; governments and ministries as well as academia; cultural heritage and water organizations and authorities on all levels around the world; politicians and decision-makers; water education, scientists and technical specialists; civil society, activists, young people, and all other stakeholders.

Vision:

As a basic element of life, our relationship with water is complex, entailing material and spiritual dimensions, and embodied in heritage that is both tangible and intangible. This relationship has always been a source of well-being and inspiration as well as a source of innovation and creativity, leading us to think not only of the present, but also the future and the security of future generations.

Irina Bokova, former Director-General of UNESCO 2015

Mandate:

Recommendations: Initiate multi-stakeholder dialogues jointly by water professionals and heritage experts at local, national, and global levels to raise awareness, deepen mutual understanding, inspire and strengthen the cultural values of water and commit tangible actions on significance of water-related heritages for the sustainable future.

Dr Han, Chair of the UN High-level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disasters,
International Symposium on Water and Culture in Tokyo 2020

The conference brought together a diverse and interdisciplinary group of professionals and academics from the water, culture, and heritage fields with the goal to bridge mandatory, disciplinary and institutional divides, and a wide audience, including heritage and water professionals, researchers, decision makers, public servants, spatial planners, Indigenous people, young professionals, artist and activists, approximately 120 participants from about 20 nations around the world.

Encouraged by the recommendations of the Tokyo symposium we acknowledge that culture and heritage is now on the agenda of the UN 2023 Water Conference. The participants express a deep conviction that culture and heritage are important pillars for sustainable development, inform climate change mitigation and adaptation, and improve current and future water management, planning, practices, awareness and engagement.

Recommendations

Create an international platform on water, culture and heritage to connect knowledge and practices through time and space in a structured way for relevant institutions, professionals, and stakeholders, contributing to mitigation, adaptation and water-related challenges in support of sustainable development.

This water, culture and heritage platform should:

1. Promote research, such as national compendia and international thematic studies on the enduring significance and values of tangible and intangible aspects of water, culture and heritage including as living assets for livelihoods;
2. Develop a shared and comprehensive historical understanding of water systems in political, societal, economic sustainable development;
3. Initiate and carry out cross-sectorial, multi-stakeholder dialogues that connect water and heritage professionals, scientists, decision-makers, local councils, Indigenous people, activists and other organisations at local, national and international levels;
4. Include water-related culture and heritage into the Valuing Water Concept and the Valuing Water Journeys;
5. Document, synthesise and utilise traditional best practices, management systems, knowledge and skills through open access publication;
6. Promote the significance of water-related culture and heritage into the SDG 6 on water and other water-related goals and targets;
7. Introduce living water-related heritage into policies for water management, such as Integrated Water Resources Management, the Valuing Water Concept as well as in relevant heritage concepts;
8. Include the rich history of water, culture and heritage, into capacity building programmes at universities, practical training and other means;
9. Develop educational and public awareness-raising tools and programmes using visual aids and contemporary media.

Appendix:
Programme

Water and Heritage: Connecting Past, Present and Future

A Dialogue among water professionals and culture, heritage professionals

Towards bridging mandatory, disciplinary and institutional divides

Official Side event UN Water Conference

The side event called “Water and Heritage: Connecting Past, Present and Future” brings together a diverse and interdisciplinary group to discuss concepts, methodologies and case studies. We challenge governments, Indigenous peoples and local communities, community-based organizations, environmental and conservation groups, historical and cultural organizations, women’s and gender organizations, youth organizations and groups, and academic and research institutions to voice their knowledge and experience on past and present water management.



Our collective insight into functional, spatial, temporal, material and immaterial dimensions of water set the scene to develop new integrated perspectives on water and living heritage for the future. It provides diverse insights into new concepts, methodologies and international case studies to better understand historical context, governance and culture. And most importantly, it triggers the movement to understand and build on the past together to embed heritage into sustainable development firmly

TIME

20 March 9:30 - 17:30

LOCATION

Harlem Stage, 150 Convent Avenue, New York, NY 10031

Water and Heritage: Connecting Past, Present and Future

A Dialogue among water professionals and culture, heritage professionals
Towards bridging mandatory, disciplinary and institutional divides

Official Side event UN Water Conference

Date: Monday 20 March 2023

Venue: Harlem Stage, 150 Convent Avenue, New York, New York (<https://harlemstage.org/>)

09:30 - 10:00

SESSION 1: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION WATER, CULTURAL HERITAGE INITIATIVE

Moderator: Diederik Six

Creating a Global Movement: connecting disciplines, and institutions, and practices

30 min

- **Ahmed Aboutaleb** (Mayor of Rotterdam)
- **Kenzo Hiroki** (Water Envoy Japan): The Tokyo symposium Water Heritage
- **Pamela Jerome** (Treasurer Icomos Board)
- **Aziza Akhmouch** (OECD) Head of Cities, Urban Policies and Sustainable Development)
- **Abou Amani** (UNESCO IHP) Director of the Division of Water Sciences and Secretary of IHP: Valuing water related cultural heritage

10:00 - 12:00

SESSION 2: CONCEPTUAL AND SCIENTIFIC TRACK

Moderator: Carola Hein

Developing A Shared Discourse: Theories, methodologies, tools and global examples

15 min.

Key speech by UNESCO Chair WPHC Carola Hein (TU Delft): Conceptualizing valuing water, culture and heritage

30 min.

Round table 1 – Connecting Water and Heritage: Conceptual, methodological and case study-based perspectives to living history

- **Eddy Moors** (IHE Delft): Why the past matters for the future
- **Eriberto Eulisse** (Wamunet): Activating the past for sustainable futures – The role and function of water museums
- **Jean-Francois Vereecke** (AGUR): The Water Canvas - a system's approach
- **Ellen Schultz** (Fairmount Water Works): The Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center and the Watershed Alliance (Place-based Education in schools for a sustainable future)
- **Mariette Verhoeven** (Radboud University): Revitalizing Istanbul's Water Heritage: sustainable solutions for increasing knowledge and public engagement

15 min.

Reflection 1

- **Naomi Hogervorst** (UN Habitat)

Perspective from young professionals:

- **Ayman Kassem** (Waternet)
- **Hilde Sennema** (TU Delft/Erasmus University)

Q&A

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30 min

Round table 2 - The role of culture in sustainable water systems past, present and future

- **Sylvia Amann** (Inforelais) The role of cultural quality for water futures
- **Matthias Wantzen** (UNESCO Chair River Culture) Resetting values for mitigate the crisis of riverscapes
- **Nanco Dolman** (Deltares) Opportunities for Blue-Green Infrastructure to enhance natural heritage in urban area
- **Maud van den Beuken** (Artist, Rotterdam): Artistic practices for cultural transformation
- **Iris Bijlsma** (RVO) The Valuing Water Concept

15 min

Reflection 2

- **Katherine Daniell** (Australian National University)

Perspective from young professionals:

- **Loay Alatrash** (Waternet)
- **Queenie Lin** (TU Delft)
- **Carlien Donkor** (TU Delft)

15 min

Concluding remarks and recommendations

- Living History
- The Blue Papers

Q&A

12:00 - 13:15

SESSION 3: Valuing WATER RELATED HERITAGE

Moderator: Henk van Schaik, Vice President ICOMOS ISC Water, Member of ICOMOS SDGWG

Showcasing the Relevance of Water Heritage in the past, today and into the future: Examples of living heritage in diverse hydrological conditions for today and tomorrow

10 min

Introduction: From dying wisdom to living heritage

30 min

3-minute cases:

- **Taha Ansari** (ICOMOS ISC Water Algeria) Qanats and foggara's, serving the livelihoods of many in arid areas into the future
- **Elena Perez-Alvaro** (ICOMOS ICUCH / UNIR, SDGWG) Underwater heritage, significant for the future
- **David Mormout** (MetaMeta) Age old spate irrigation fit for the future
- **Aaron Wolf** (Oregon State University) Inspired dialogues, wisdom of the past fit for the future
- **Nils Ahlberg** (ICOMOS ISC Water / SDGWG / OCD-RBAWG) Small scale hydropower and dams - of great value yesterday, today and tomorrow
- **Dinara Ziganshina** (Director SIC ICWC, Uzbekistan) Traditional water governance, fit for the future. The case of Central Asia

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30 min.

Reflections by Young Professionals

- **Matteo D'Agostino** (TU Delft)
- **Quindi Hadi Toure** (Young Expert alumni), Water Operator Partnership, Mali

Reflections by:

- **Mark Smith** (DG IWMI) The IWMI perspective on water and heritage
- **James Dalton** (IUCN) Perspective on culture, heritage services
- **Diana Morales Irato** (Deltares) Living water related heritage in Valuing Water Journeys

5 min.

Conclusions

1. Should water related heritage be included in the valuing water framework?
Regional/national and hydrological systems
2. Do the presented cases, material, governance and spiritual make sense, and could they be connected?

Recommendations

1. Initiate Assessments under 'Valuing Water Journeys' in different hydrological systems
2. Introduce Water related heritage in IHP programme in collaboration with ICOMOS ISCs and ICOMOS NCs

13:30 -14:30

Lunch

14.30 - 16.00

SESSION 4: DUTCH COMPENDIUM AND OTHER REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Moderator: Maarten Ouboter

Exploring the Dutch Case Study: Reconsidering water and heritage stakeholders, developments, insights and case studies

10 min.

Introduction: Maarten Ouboter

15 min.

Round table 1 - Dutch Compendium

- **Li An Phoa** (Drinkable Rivers) Regional conscience, relating to your environment
- **Willem Ligtoet** (PBL) A retrospective from the Future to the Present and the Past
- **Luzette Kroon** (Unie van Waterschappen) Water stewardship, a true appreciation of the past leads to true value of water
- **Tilly Stroo Wavemakers** (Wetskills) Empowering society, the social voice

10 min.

Reflections by Young Professionals

- **Sannah Peters** (Wetskills)
- **Jakob Olliver de Leth** (Vitens)

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35 min.

Reflections on National and Regional initiatives

Moderator: Maarten Ouboter/Henk van Schaik

- US ICOMOS dba World Heritage USA Water & Heritage Speakers
 - » **Andrew Bernard**
 - » **Christopher Fullerton**
 - » **Meisha Hunter** (ICOMOS ISC Water, U.S.)
 - » **Priyanka Sheth**
- **Sergio Ribeiro** (ICOMOS ISC Water, Brasil)
- **Sinite Yu** (ICOMOS ISC Water)
- **Sukrit Sen** (ICOMOS India)
- **Akifumi Iwabuchi** (ICOMOS Japan / ICOMOS ICUCH / SDGWG)
- **Hasti Tarekat** (Heritage Hands-On and ICOMOS Indonesia)
- **Maximilaan Ooft** (ICOMOS Suriname)

10 min.

Reflections on Water Heritage Case Studies

- **Maarten Ouboter**
- **Henk van Schaik**
- **Jeroen Oomkens**

16.00 -- 16.55

Session 5: Towards a NY policy statement (connecting past with present and future materially, conceptually and spiritually)

Discussion: Henk van Schaik (ICOMOS), Carola Hein (UNESCO Chair WPHC), Maarten Ouboter (Waternet), Diederik Six

16:55 - 17:00

Announcement 3/21 program and introduction to Chamber Music Performance: Meisha Hunter

17:00 - 17:30

Chamber Music performance

- World premiere of commissioned chamber music celebrating the dual themes of water and heritage
- Composed by **Evan Fein** (Juilliard School professor of music)
- Performed by the **United Nations Chamber Music Society**
- (<https://www.unchambermusic.org/press/>)