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# Venice Call to put culture at the heart of climate action

## Discussion Draft

Forum: Reimagining the Anthropocene  
Cultural Heritage and Climate Action  
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EUROPEAN  
CULTURAL HERITAGE  
SUMMIT 2023

Photo: 'Support' by Lorenzo Quinn



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#CultureStocktake4Climate

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO COMMENTS. THE  
DISCUSSION DRAFT IS NOW CLOSED FOR  
COMMENT (8 OCTOBER)

## Discussion Draft

(26 Sept 2023)

# Venice Call to Put Culture and Heritage at the Heart of Climate Action

**A bold, practical path towards unleashing creative solutions for tackling  
the climate crisis.**

*The work to organise this Call to Action campaign was launched on 28 September 2023 in Venice, Italy at the European Heritage Hub Forum “Reimagining the Anthropocene: Putting Culture and Heritage at the Heart of Climate Action.”*

**We ask the national governments who are parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement to adopt a “Joint Work” decision (JWD) on culture and climate action at the COP.**

**This decision would reflect a commitment by the UNFCCC to begin a consultative process to understand the full contribution of arts, culture, and heritage to climate action; where and how culture-led climate solutions are already in place, and by whom; share recommendations for action at future COPs, and ensure that culture-led solutions are at the heart of future COP negotiations.**

###

The power of arts, culture and heritage to capture hearts and minds and to root transformative climate action in shared values must be realised on an unprecedented scale.

For years, decades even, voices from the margins have pleaded that the project of transformative climate action must be a cultural project. 1.5°C pathways require not just change but ‘rapid and far-reaching’ system transitions on a nearly unprecedented scale. Adopting this JWD will play a crucial role in the implementation of change in societies by **recognising that culture, heritage and arts are integral to human life, expression, beliefs and behaviour and therefore integral to embracing the changes needed to create a better future.**

The proposed Joint Work Decision (JWD) would request the UNFCCC Secretariat and its subsidiary bodies to, for the first time, jointly address issues related to the intersections between culture and climate action, including through workshops and expert meetings, in order to make recommendations for consideration and adoption at COP29, due to be held in Eastern Europe in 2024.

Culture-based climate action holds the power to inspire plausible low carbon, just, climate resilient futures. It widens the aperture from individual actions to the cultural values that support regenerative ways of living, and addresses the root causes of climate change.

Culture-based climate action promotes local solutions to universal problems and centres inclusive, rights-based, place-based, demand-side, and people-centred strategies.

Calls to acknowledge the immense potential of culture and heritage have grown louder. Previous manifestos signed by hundreds of cultural voices delivered at a series of past COPs have pleaded the case. Culture is already recognised by climate science as an enabling condition for both 1.5°C pathways and climate resilient sustainable development yet it receives scant attention when compared to other enablers like finance and technology.

Despite an absence of formal recognition in climate policy, artistic and cultural voices have led the work for green transformation: from the Indigenous peoples who deploy their bodies to share cosmologies of Mother Earth to local elders urging traditional wisdom as contemporary climate technology; from symphony orchestras playing to block fossil fuel infrastructure to writers and poets, visual and performance artists, designers and architects.

It is time to unlock this potential at scale.

The world is in the midst of the UNFCCC's 'global stocktake' – a first ever global review process under the Paris Agreement that offers countries and their stakeholders an opportunity to look back at the effectiveness of their climate change policies over the last five years. Previously the design of the global stocktake itself ignored the socio-cultural dimensions of the climate crisis. **It is time for a stocktake of the stocktake.**

Adoption at the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) of a Joint Work Decision on Culture and Climate Action would set in motion a landmark work programme putting culture and heritage at the heart of climate planning and policy. Such a future work programme holds the potential to improve the efficacy of climate planning and action by bolstering attention to socio-cultural enabling conditions. It enables us to speak with one voice. It will also help to mobilise for climate action the vast network of creatives and culture and heritage operators, public bodies, voices, advocates, and institutions by valuing their work in climate change policy and funding frameworks.

In short, it would admit cultural voices to the rooms where climate policy is made. *We the under-signed join the call that delegates to the UN Climate Conference adopt a Joint Work decision that would finally put the world on the path to recognizing culture as an indispensable pillar of climate action.*

\_\_\_\_\_ **[NAME]**

## **VENICE CALL TO PUT CULTURE AT THE HEART OF CLIMATE ACTION**

### **Campaign Background and FAQs**

**This campaign aims to unite culture and heritage voices in order to put pressure on the UN Climate Change agency (UNFCCC) to adopt a Joint Work decision on culture and climate action.**

#### **KEY MESSAGES**

##### **What are we asking for?**

**We are asking the national governments that are parties to the UN Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement to adopt a 'Joint Work' decision (JWD) on culture and climate action at the COP.**

##### **What is that?**

**It is a commitment by the UNFCCC to begin a consultative process to understand the full contribution of culture to climate action; where and how culture-led climate solutions are already in place, and by whom; share recommendations for action at future COPs, and ensure that culture-led solutions are at the heart of future COP negotiations. Once adopted, this Joint Work decision means that the UNFCCC would finally begin a process to comprehensively acknowledge the powerful role that culture can play.**

##### **Why is it important?**

**A Joint Work decision would:**

- **Bolster climate action by beginning to harness social and cultural tools that enable transformative climate action.**
- **Enable culture and heritage-based climate action to scale up around the world**
- **Influence key policies and discussions on adapting to our changing climate, reaching net zero, safeguarding heritage and culture, and more.**
- **Empower the culture sector through coming together to influence decision-making in this area.**

##### **What's the bigger picture?**

**Culture is critical in finding solutions to the climate crisis. It plays a powerful role in our lives. It can inspire change, shift hearts and minds, and imagine and create new ways of living. Adopting this JWD will play a crucial role in the**

**implementation of change in societies by recognising that culture, heritage and arts are integral to human life, expression, beliefs and behaviour and therefore integral to embracing the changes needed to create a better future.**

### **What can you do?**

**If you recognise culture as an indispensable pillar of climate action, sign up to support the campaign, and share it with your networks and communities.**

- **Share the campaign's message with diverse individuals and organisations that have the ability to pass the message to national governments, which are the ones who will take the final decision.**
- **Share the Campaign's message with diverse cultural voices and encourage them to begin thinking now about the contributions they would like to make to a global, UN-level consultative process aimed at understanding the full contribution of culture to climate action; where and how culture-led climate solutions are already in place, and by whom; and making recommendations for incorporating arts, culture and heritage-based strategies into future climate UNFCCC policy and work plans.**

### **Who are the stakeholders and who should sign up to this campaign?**

**Everyone in the global cultural, heritage, arts and entertainment sector, including organisations and individuals, plus environment and climate activists who recognise that addressing the cultural dimensions of the climate crisis are critical to getting the world back on track to meeting Paris Agreement targets. This campaign is for everyone who cares about the importance of the cultural sector in the fight against climate change.**

**The COP27 Presidency is arranging a high-level meeting (planned for 8 December at the COP) where ideas like the JWD can be discussed. The JWD idea also builds on the Kashi Cultural Pathway adopted in August at the G20 Culture Ministers' meeting in India which noted 'growing culture-related concerns raised in the context of the UN Climate Action Summit and the COP, by...building on the opportunities of culture-related practices and knowledge systems, including local and indigenous knowledge and practices, to inform adaptation and mitigation strategies and plans as well as solutions for climate action'**

## **AUDIENCES**

- Cultural organisations and networks, practitioners and non-state actors from across the world (endorsement from relevant sectors, such as local governments and municipal) and across all segments of the culture world including arts, heritage, craft and creative industries
- Environmental and climate organisations and networks
- Authorities; civil society including cultural institutions; creative industries, design industries, artists and craftspeople; universities and research; culture and heritage professionals; and activists and advocates.)
- Government representatives (to help take forward the actions needed in each country to secure a final decision by their COP delegation to support the JWD)
- Recognisable and celebrity names across culture and society. Here is a link to previous supporters of a similar campaign: [tbc](#)
- The general public (to reinforce and clarify the message on the role that culture can play)

## **USEFUL Bullet Points to use in the campaign:**

- Builds on The Sharm El-Sheikh Declaration on Culture-based Climate Action adopted by ministers at COP27 which stressed 'that culture, from arts to heritage, plays a fundamental role in helping people to imagine and realise low carbon, just, climate resilient futures and that culture-based climate action has a fundamental role to play in meeting the objectives of the UNFCCC Convention, including those related to mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage, and in promoting climate-resilient sustainable development.'
- The campaign is supported by the Climate Heritage Network (CHN) which has a vast global network of organisations to reach out to
- This campaign builds on last year's success when CHN and partners had Cultural Heritage recognised last year under the Loss and Damage Framework at COP 27.
- Agriculture achieved a Joint Working Decision 5 years ago and it was transformative.
- It is crucial to scale up culture-based climate action and to put attention to the socio-cultural enabling conditions for transformative action on an equal footing with other such factors, like climate finance and technological innovation.
- This campaign is not specifically only about COP 28 or its participants, it is about ensuring culture is at the centre of climate policymaking going forward.

## **CONTEXT + FAQs**

### **What is COP?**

COP (COP is short for Conference of the Parties) is an international climate meeting held each year by the United Nations. The countries involved are committed to taking actions outlined in an international treaty called the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). COP 28 takes place this December 2023 in Dubai, U.A.E.

### **What happened at COP 27?**

In November 2022, COP 27 delivered exciting news and a historical win for the creative climate movement. For the first time ever, national governments included cultural heritage in statements on both 'loss and damage' and 'adaptation'.

CHN and partners delivered a significant achievement, ensuring that culture is recognised as an asset to be protected from climate impacts and a resource to strengthen communities' transformative change.

### **What is the Context for this Campaign?**

To date, engagement with the cultural dimensions of climate action has been led in many places by civil society and other non-state actors. The JWD would not change that. Rather, the idea is that mainstreaming art, culture, and heritage perspectives into international climate change policy would support local cultural-based climate action by helping to deliver policy and funding frameworks that valorise this work. All of this would in turn help improve the efficacy of climate planning and action.

### **Who is leading the effort at national government level?**

At national government level at COP 28, it is expected that this effort will be led by a new Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action at the UNFCCC (GFCBCA), an informal coalition of UNFCCC Member States that will be launched in support of adoption of the JWD at COP 28.

### **Who else can influence the decision?**

While the ultimate choice to take a decision at the COP will be made by such Member States, there is a critical role for Non-State Actors to play. This includes local governments and municipal authorities; civil society including cultural institutions;

creative industries, design industries, artists and craftspeople; universities and research; culture and heritage professionals; and activists and advocates.

### **If a Joint Work Decision is achieved what will this mean?**

A “Joint Work” decision is a recognised process that national governments meeting at a COP can follow. Some things to keep in mind:

- A JWD can result in new platforms that provide a permanent role for a topic or sector -- like culture – in climate talks and in the work of the UN climate agency (the UNFCCC).
- Through workshops and expert meetings, the process would take into consideration the vulnerabilities of cultural heritage to climate change and approaches to culture and heritage as a driver of climate action.
- The goal of this process would be to make recommendations for consideration and adoption at COP 29 in 2024. Ideally, this would be a comprehensive work plan by the UNFCCC on engaging with the cultural dimensions of transformative climate action.

The initial JWD that we are seeking directs the UNFCCC and its Subsidiary Bodies to jointly commence a one-year consultative process to address issues related to arts, culture, and heritage through workshops and expert meetings, taking into consideration the vulnerabilities of cultural heritage to climate change and approaches to culture and heritage as a driver of climate action. Engagement by Non-State Actors in such a consultative process will be crucial. We expect that this process would include a call for submissions to the UNFCCC of ideas on the intersections of culture and climate action as well as opportunities to intervene as scientific meetings that would be convened to discuss these issues.

Topics that might be discussed as part of the consultation include:

- The power of culture, including artistic practice, creativity, heritage, and traditional knowledge systems, to help people imagine and realise sustainable consumption and production patterns, and low-carbon, climate resilient futures;
- Culture and heritage practices as contemporary climate technology and its role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- The culture and heritage dimensions of enhancing adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and reducing vulnerability to climate change and the consequences of the impacts of climate hazards on culture and heritage on the resilience of people and communities;
- Synergies and tradeoffs between the safeguarding of cultural heritage and transformative climate action;

- Role of culture and heritage in avoiding maladaptation and mal-mitigation;
- Socioeconomic and cultural dimensions of climate resilient sustainable development.

### **What happens next?**

In order for the one-year consultative process that would be launched by the JWD to be successful, we will need robust engagement and co-creation from diverse culture and heritage voices. Everyone's creativity will be needed to share with the UNFCCC visions for how to unlock the power of culture to help people imagine and realise low carbon, just, climate resilient futures. Engaging with the JWD consultative process begins with engaging with the campaign to secure a JWD. Many Non-State Actors can play a key role in encouraging support for the JWD objective from national governments and the time for that work is now.

### **Who are the 10 Founding Signatories:**

*Examples:*

Europa Nostra

CHN

The Climate Heritage Network (CHN) is a voluntary, mutual support network of government agencies, NGOs, universities, businesses, and other organisations committed to tackling climate change and achieving the ambitions of the Paris Agreement. Mobilised in 2018 during the Global Climate Action Summit and launched in 2019, the Climate Heritage Network works to reorient climate policy, planning, and action at all levels to account for dimensions of culture - from arts to heritage.

Julie's Bicycle

Julie's Bicycle is a pioneering not-for-profit organisation mobilising the arts and culture to take action on the climate, nature and justice crisis. Founded in 2007, JB's origins were in the music industry. Now working right across the cultural sector, JB has partnered with over 2000 organisations in the UK and internationally. Combining cultural and environmental expertise, Julie's Bicycle focuses on high-impact programmes and policy change to meet the climate crisis head-on. We exist at the heart of a thriving informal network of people who share our vision, supporting others on their journey, and helping to catalyse new projects at the intersection of culture and climate. [juliesbicycle.com](https://juliesbicycle.com)

## **Suggested Timeline**

28th September - Soft Launch of the Campaign at Venice Forum - a working document

7th October - Fine-tune and Finalise Key Messages

11th October - Design and Finalise Marketing Toolkit and Campaign

16th October - Campaign Launch

16th Oct - 30th Nov - Campaign Running (timetable and content tbc)

30th Nov - 12th Dec - COP 28