

United Nations
Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization

UNESCO

MUNUC 38

Model United Nations of the University of Chicago

CHAIR LETTER

Hello Delegates,

My name is Alexander Puch, and I am a fourth-year biological chemistry and Russian and East European Studies major at the University of Chicago. I will be serving as your chair for UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) at MUNUC 38. In the past, I was involved in MUNUC 36 and MUNUC 37 as a chair in the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and WMO (World Meteorological Organization), respectively, as well as in MUNUC 35 as an assistant chair in the cabinet of Florvil Hippolyte.

This year in UNESCO, we will be discussing two topics, which are the preservation and protection of world heritage sites and the revitalization of culture following natural disasters. World heritage sites are sites of great importance to the world's cultural and natural heritage, ranging from Vatican City to the Great Barrier Reef. Unfortunately, both cultural and natural sites tend to degrade with time due to various factors, including both human-caused, such as war and neglect, and natural, such as earthquakes and storms. In this committee, UNESCO will need to find ways to protect sites from many different threats. Currently, 56 UNESCO World Heritage sites are listed as endangered. The number of endangered sites has remained relatively stable in recent years despite the members of the list changing. This is because, as endangered heritage sites are secured, more sites become endangered. So, it is imperative that this committee not only focus on protecting and restoring endangered sites, but also on preventing new sites from becoming endangered. Further complications could also arise from questions of whether it is a good idea to focus on preserving heritage sites when the events that cause their destruction, such as war or natural disaster, are also threats to the surrounding residents' safety and well-being.

Also, it may be very difficult to protect heritage sites when the regime in power either does not cooperate or desires their destruction.

The second topic, revitalization of culture after natural disasters, comes with its own set of complications. In addition to great loss of lives and productivity, natural disasters often severely damage culture, especially when they strike **indigenous cultures** that are not very widespread. This is primarily because they destroy important cultural sites and displace people from the lands tied to their culture. There are several possible solutions to this problem, but they come with their own sets of downsides. For example, one idea is to return people to their homes as quickly as possible, but many areas are not safe to return to for a long time after natural disasters. Another possibility could be to try to establish displaced cultures in new areas, but that may be difficult for cultures that are strongly tied to their lands. Also, as with the protection of heritage sites, another question will be how to prioritize saving culture when natural disasters also damage the economy, infrastructure, and general well-being of affected areas.

To begin researching these topics, Wikipedia and UNESCO's website are great places to start. The CIA World Factbook is also very helpful for learning about your own country. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at aepuch@uchicago.edu. I greatly look forward to being your chair at MUNUC 38.

Sincerely,

Alexander E. Puch

HISTORY OF THE COMMITTEE

Like many other UN agencies, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) has its roots in the League of Nations. UNESCO's predecessor was the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC), created in 1922. This organization was created primarily to promote collaboration between scientists, along with some cultural collaboration. However, it remained a relatively small organization throughout its entire existence.

The ICIC was replaced with UNESCO in 1945 with the founding of the United Nations, with its constitution being signed by 37 countries. Since then, UNESCO has been involved in many scientific, educational, and cultural efforts, one of the earliest of which was establishing education in developing regions in the years following World War II. Other important developments from UNESCO's early days include its adoption of the universal copyright convention in 1952 and its creation of the European Organization for Nuclear Research in 1954. One of UNESCO's most significant operations was in 1960 when it saved the temples at Abu Simbel from flooding after the Aswan Dam was built on the Nile. This was part of the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia, and it, along with several other campaigns to save heritage sites in danger, would lead UNESCO to create its list of world heritage sites, which are locations of importance to cultural and natural heritage, in 1974. Since 1974, this list has been maintained, with new locations being added and certain sites being listed as endangered.

In addition to its work in cultural heritage, UNESCO has also been involved in science and education. Starting in 1950, UNESCO has published several statements regarding race,

condemning racism as a moral evil. In 1997, UNESCO published the first global ethical instrument in human genomics, the Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights. In 2021, the organization published a recommendation for ethics in artificial intelligence. UNESCO also gives out several awards for scientific achievement. In education, UNESCO has been involved in creating museums, such as the Migration Museums Initiative, and promoting awareness days for various topics, such as International Literacy Day.

Today, UNESCO has 194 member states, and continues its work in educational, scientific, and cultural collaboration. It may be most well-known for its heritage sites, though it continues its work in scientific and educational areas as well. The most recent major development with UNESCO was likely the Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms that it published in 2023, which aimed to ensure free speech and equal representation on digital platforms. While the topics that UNESCO will be discussing at this conference are both essentially cultural, there will be some applications of science and education, such as in protecting heritage sites from natural disasters and using education to revive culture. So, UNESCO will need to leverage all three of its areas to respond to these issues.

TOPIC A: PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF WORLD HERITAGE SITES

Statement of the Problem

UNESCO currently recognizes 1247 world heritage sites, which are places of great importance to the world's natural or cultural heritage.¹ Of these sites, 972 are cultural, 234 are natural, and 41 are mixed.² These sites are not only useful for studying the world's heritage, but many of them receive millions of visitors each year, meaning they are also important for communicating cultural and natural heritage to the world.

However, of the 1247 world heritage sites, 53 are currently listed as endangered.³ While this may not seem like many, there are also many world heritage sites, like the city of Venice in Italy and Kathmandu Valley in Nepal, not listed as endangered that still face major threats. And, one of the main reasons that more are not listed as endangered has been UNESCO's actions for preservation. Furthermore, as all **UNESCO world heritage sites** are important to the world's cultural or natural heritage, the loss of even one deals major damage to the ability to learn about and study the past.

Natural Disasters

There are many different types of threats that heritage sites face, and therefore any action to preserve them must be multifaceted. The first major threat that world heritage sites face is

¹ "UNESCO World Heritage Centre - World Heritage List." UNESCO World Heritage Center. Accessed July 13th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

² Ibid.

³ "List of World Heritage in Danger." UNESCO World Heritage Center. Accessed July 13th, 2025. Accessed July 13th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/danger-list/>

natural disasters. One of the greatest contributors to the natural disasters that threaten these sites is climate change. The Great Barrier Reef is a huge natural UNESCO world heritage site, extending 2000 kilometers around the Queensland coast of Australia,⁴ and in recent years, including 2022, 2024, and 2025, its coral has experienced mass bleaching events due to rising ocean temperatures.⁵ When coral is bleached, it loses its algae, which turns it white, deprives it of a major food source, and makes it more susceptible to disease.⁶ Ocean acidification, which is another consequence of greater carbon dioxide in the air, also contributes to coral bleaching.⁷ Even though it is not officially recognized as an endangered site, climate change is a major threat to the long-term survival of the Great Barrier Reef, and it has been the actions of UNESCO and the Queensland authorities that have mitigated much of the potential damage.⁴ Tackling climate change in general could be a possibility for protecting heritage sites, but this is a very long-term goal, and many sites could be irreversibly damaged if no mitigation is taken before climate change is solved. Furthermore, natural disasters not related to climate change can also deal major damage to UNESCO world heritage sites, such as the 2015 earthquake that devastated the Kathmandu valley in Nepal.⁸ So, mitigation will likely need to be a major part of any resolution aimed at dealing with natural disasters.

⁴ “Great Barrier Reef”. UNESCO World Heritage Center. Accessed July 16th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/154>

⁵ Cantin, Neal and Gilmour, James. “Coral bleaching events.” Australian Institute of Marine Science. Accessed July 16th, 2025.

<https://www.aims.gov.au/research-topics/environmental-issues/coral-bleaching/coral-bleaching-events>.

⁶ “What is coral bleaching?”. National Ocean Service. Accessed July 16th, 2025.

https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/coral_bleach.html.

⁷ Hobson, Melissa. “What causes coral bleaching? Here’s how it threatens ocean and human life.” National Geographic. (2025). Accessed July 16th, 2025.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/coral-bleaching-causes-impacts#:~:text=Ocean%20acidification%20has%20increased%20coral%20bleaching%20around%20the,also%20threatens%20ecosystems%20and%20economies%20around%20the%20world>.

⁸ “State of Conservation (SOC 2015) Kathmandu Valley (Nepal).” UNESCO World Heritage Center. (2015). Accessed July 16th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/3285>.



An image of bleached coral off the coast of Japan.⁹

Threat of War

War is another major danger to world heritage sites, and it can often destroy sites the fastest. In a statement by UNESCO in June 2025, since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, “151 religious sites, 262 buildings of historical and/or artistic interest, 34 museums, 33 monuments, 18 libraries, 1 archive and 2 archaeological sites” in Ukraine have sustained verified damage.¹⁰ This includes the UNESCO world heritage site Saint-Sophia Cathedral, which was declared endangered in 2023.¹¹ Because of how fast war can destroy, as well as how unpredictable it can be, any plan to rescue world heritage sites from war will need to

⁹ Bleached coral near Okinawa, Japan. Image source: “Overview of Coral Bleaching” Coral Reef Alliance. Accessed September 19th, 2025. <https://coral.org/en/coral-bleaching/overview/>

¹⁰ “Damaged cultural sites in Ukraine verified by UNESCO.” UNESCO. (2024). Accessed July 16th, 2025. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/damaged-cultural-sites-ukraine-verified-unesco>.

¹¹ “Kyiv: Sant-Sophia Cathedral and Related Monastic Buildings, Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 16th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/527>.

be quick-acting and implementable in a wide range of scenarios. However, it must also ensure the safety of those responding. Finding ways to prevent world heritage sites from being damaged by war in the first place could also be an option. A particularly tricky situation is when a regime, especially one not recognized by the UN, deliberately destroys world heritage sites. In 2015, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria destroyed the Temple of Bel in Iraq,¹² a UNESCO world heritage site that had stood for almost 2,000 years. Similarly, in 2001, the unrecognized Taliban government in Afghanistan destroyed much of the Bamiyan Buddha statues,¹³ drawing massive international condemnation. When the authorities do not cooperate with UNESCO, it will likely be very difficult to do anything to stop the destruction of world heritage sites.



*Comparing the Temple of Bel before and after its destruction.*¹⁴

¹²Melvin, Don, Elwazer, Schams, and Berlinger, Joshua. "ISIS destroys Temple of Bel in Palmyra, Syria." CNN. (2015). Accessed July 16th, 2025. <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/08/31/middleeast/palmyra-temple-damaged/>.

¹³ Joselow, Gabe and Elbaum, Rachel. "The Taliban destroyed Afghanistan's ancient Buddhas. Now they're welcoming tourists." NBC News. (2021). Accessed July 16th, 2025. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/taliban-destroyed-afghanistans-ancient-buddhas-now-welcoming-tourists-rcna6307>.

¹⁴ An image comparing the Temple of Bel before and after its destruction by ISIS. Image Source: Worley, Will. "Palmyra: Photographer's powerful before and after photos show city's destruction at hands of Isis." The Independent. (2016). Accessed September 19th, 2025.

Overtourism

A third major danger to world heritage sites, and likely one of the most complicated to deal with, is **overtourism**. Tourism is a very good way to expose the public to world heritage sites, thereby increasing knowledge of Earth's cultural and natural heritage, as well as raising awareness for the need to preserve them. However, tourism comes with its own share of downsides. Firstly, the public has been known to vandalize and damage world heritage sites, one of the most recent cases of which happened in June 2024 when Stonehenge, a neolithic monument in England, was sprayed with orange paint by climate protestors.¹⁵ Fortunately, this did not do permanent damage to the site. However, permanent damage was done to Stonehenge in 2008 when two vandals chipped off a piece of one of the megaliths.¹⁶ Secondly, even if tourists do not intend to damage sites, the presence of large amounts of tourists can cause strain on the properties. For example, fluctuations in humidity from tourists' breath caused paint to begin peeling in the tomb of Tutankhamun in Egypt's Valley of the Kings,¹⁷ resulting in the closing of the tomb and a ten-year restoration project.¹⁸ While such restoration projects are great options to preserve heritage sites for the future, they also deprive the world of their opportunity to experience and learn about such sites. However UNESCO decides to respond to overtourism, it must strike a balance that ensures the sites are preserved and that the public is able to engage with them.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/palmyra-syria-photos-new-palmyra-photos-show-devastation-of-artefacts-ruined-by-isis-a6964766.html>.

¹⁵ Boobyer, Leigh and Harcombe, Chloe. "Stonehenge covered in powder paint by Just Stop Oil protestors." BBC News. (2024). <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cw44mdee0zzo>.

¹⁶ "Vandals attack Stonehenge." The Independent. (2008). Accessed July 16th, 2025.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/vandals-attack-stonehenge-832418.html>.

¹⁷ Beach, Alastair. "How tourism cursed tomb of King Tut." The Independent. (2012). Accessed July 16th, 2025. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/how-tourism-cursed-tomb-of-king-tut-8280603.html>.

¹⁸ Neuendorf, Henri. "King Tut's Tomb Just Underwent a 10-Year Restoration. Here's How Experts Repaired the Ravages of Mass Tourism." Artnet. (2019). Accessed July 16th, 2025.

<https://news.artnet.com/art-world/king-tut-conservation-getty-1450801>.



Ongoing restoration in Tutankhamun's tomb.¹⁹

While natural disasters, war, and overtourism are three of the largest dangers to UNESCO world heritage sites, they are far from the only dangers. Other dangers include but are not limited to urban encroachment, **poaching**,²⁰ and **neglect**.²¹ Furthermore, some sites face more than one danger, such as Venice which faces danger both from rising sea levels due to climate change, as well as infrastructure strain and population decline due to overtourism, which almost led to it getting added to the list of endangered world heritage sites.²² However UNESCO decides to protect and preserve its world heritage sites, it must tackle a wide range of dangers.

¹⁹ Restoration in progress in Tutankhamun's tomb in the Valley of the Kings. Image source: "Just Landed: King Tutankhamun's tomb is ready for new visitors following a massive restoration." Escapism Toronto. (2019). Accessed September 19th, 2025. <https://escapism.to/news/king-tutankhamun-tomb-egypt-restoration/>.

²⁰ "World Heritage in Danger". UNESCO World Heritage Center. Accessed July 16th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/danger/#:~:text=Armed%20conflict%20and%20war%2C%20earthquakes%20and%20other%20natural,development%20pose%20major%20problems%20to%20World%20Heritage%20sites.>

²¹ "Nan Madol: Ceremonial Centre of Eastern Micronesia." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 16th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1503>.

²² Parker, Christopher. "UNESCO Recommends Adding Venice to List of World Heritage in Danger." Smithsonian magazine. (2023). Accessed July 16th, 2025. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/venice-unesco-world-heritage-danger-180982640/#:~:text=Officials%20at%20UNESCO%20are%20recommending%20that%20Venice%2C%20Italy%2C,identifies%20vulnerable%20heritage%20sites%20in%20need%20of%20support.>

History of the Problem

Early History

For all of human history, there have been places of great importance to cultural and natural heritage, and people have been making lists of them for a very long time. In the 2nd century BCE, the Greek writer Antipater of Sidon created his famous list that is now known as the seven wonders of the ancient world.²³ However, as long as they have existed, such sites have faced dangers and destruction. Of the seven wonders of the ancient world, only one, the Great Pyramid of Giza, still stands. There have also been many attempts throughout history to preserve and study the great sites of the world, dating back to the Babylonian king Nabonidus in the 6th century BCE,²⁴ who ordered the excavation and reconstruction of several temples that had fallen into disrepair. Though, for most of history places of natural and cultural heritage have been largely neglected, and for this reason many sites were lost.

19th & 20th Centuries

Major efforts to preserve cultural and natural heritage did not truly take off until the 19th century, when both archaeology and environmentalism became mainstream. Archaeology as a means of studying and preserving the past became much more popular after the discovery of the Rosetta Stone in Egypt, which allowed for the translation of the Ancient Egyptian language. In addition, the looting of artifacts during the Napoleonic wars prompted calls for stolen artifacts to

²³“Seven Wonders of the World.” Britannica. (2025). Accessed July 16th, 2025.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Seven-Wonders-of-the-World>

²⁴ Steinmeyer, Nathan. “Nabonidus: The First Archaeologist.” Biblical Archaeology Society. (2024). Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/ancient-near-eastern-world/nabonidus-the-first-archaeologist/>

be returned to their homelands.²⁵ One of the earliest programs to protect places of cultural heritage was the French Monuments Historiques list established in 1840,²⁶ and throughout the rest of the 19th century many other countries followed suit, such as when the United Kingdom passed the Ancient Monuments Protection Act in 1882.²⁷ In 1872, the first national park, Yellowstone National Park, was established in the United States by president Ulysses S. Grant,²⁸ introducing legislation to prevent commercial and urban encroachment. Other countries soon followed suit throughout the rest of the 19th century, with Australia establishing Royal National Park in 1879,²⁹ and Canada establishing Banff in 1885.³⁰

While the protections put in place in the 19th century certainly helped to prevent damage to heritage sites, the world wars of the early 20th century dealt massive and often irreversible damage to them. Many cities and monuments that had stood for hundreds of years were reduced to rubble, such as Warsaw, which saw 80-90% of its buildings destroyed,³¹ and Hiroshima, which was decimated by a nuclear bomb at the war's close. UNESCO was founded in 1946, and in the hope that such destruction of cultural and natural heritage from war would not happen again, the organization made the declaration at its **1954 Hague Convention** that “any damage to cultural property, irrespective of the people it belongs to, is a damage to the cultural heritage of all

²⁵ Nayeri, Farah. “The Masterpieces That Napoleon Stole, and How Some Went Back.” The New York Times. (2021). Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/09/arts/design/napoleon-looted-art.html>

²⁶ Gibson, Victoria. “How the Revolution gave France a head for heritage conservation.” The Connexion. (2022). Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://www.connexionfrance.com/magazine/how-the-revolution-gave-france-a-head-for-heritage-conservation/269397>

²⁷ “Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882.” UK Legislation. (1882). Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/45-46/73/contents/enacted>

²⁸ “Birth of a National Park.” National Park Service. (2025). Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/historyculture/yellowstoneestablishment.htm>

²⁹ “Royal National Park.” NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/royal-national-park>

³⁰ Finkelstein, Maxwell W., Fong, Leanna, and Coschi, Nathan. “Banff National Park.” The Canadian Encyclopedia. (2015). Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/banff-national-park>

³¹ “Warsaw in Ruins: Rare Photos of the Destroyed Post-War Warsaw, 1945-1950.” Rare Historical Photos. Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/warsaw-in-ruins-photos/>

humanity, because every people contributes to the world's culture.”³² This convention made several commitments to preserving places of cultural heritage during times of war, such as planning emergency measures for such events and establishing units to protect them during conflict. Still, war continued to be a major threat to sites even after the Hague convention, which to this date has only been ratified by 138 countries.³³ In addition to protecting sites from war, UNESCO also protected sites from environmental damage during its years before the world heritage site list was established, such as with its international campaign to save the monuments of Nubia, which began in 1960 to save ancient complexes from flooding, and was a major success.³⁴

In 1978, UNESCO established its list of world heritage sites, meaning that natural and cultural treasures could now be identified on a worldwide scale, instead of by individual countries. This also provided standardization in protection and preservation of such sites, ensuring that they could be preserved even in countries in need of assistance. When sites are damaged, UNESCO often provides monetary and other aid to help the sites rebuild and restore.³⁵ In addition, UNESCO creates guidelines for the maintenance of the sites and identifies potential threats.³⁶ When the list was established, there were twelve sites.³⁷ However, over the years this number would rise into the hundreds, and reach 1000 in 2013.³⁸

³² “1954 Convention.” UNESCO. Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-armed-conflicts/1954-convention>

³³ “States Parties.” UNESCO. (2025). Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-armed-conflicts/states-parties>

³⁴ “Monuments of Nubia-International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/172/>

³⁵ “World Heritage Committee.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2025). Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/committee/>

³⁶ “Minaret and Archaeological Remains of Jam.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/211>

³⁷ “The World Heritage Convention.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/>

³⁸ “World Heritage List reaches 1000 sites with inscription of Okavango.” UNESCO. (2014). Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/world-heritage-list-reaches-1000-sites-inscription-okavango-delta-botswana>

Today, there are 1248 UNESCO world heritage sites, spanning 170 countries and six continents.³⁹ UNESCO has undoubtedly made great contributions to the protection and preservation of these sites, but that has not stopped damage to them, be that from war, natural disasters, **vandalism**, or other factors, from continuing to be a problem. In addition, because UNESCO cannot infringe on national sovereignty, the organization has had a hard time preserving its sites when local governments do not cooperate. As old problems persist and new problems arise, UNESCO must continue to find ways to preserve its heritage sites for the future.

³⁹ “World Heritage List.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

Past Actions

As UNESCO world heritage sites have faced a great diversity of threats, past actions to protect them have been very diverse. However, perhaps the most important action taken by UNESCO to protect world heritage sites was recognizing the **world heritage convention** in the first place in 1972.⁴⁰ If any site is to be preserved, there must first be recognition that it is worth preserving. Many important sites have been lost because there was not interest in preserving them, for example the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus in present-day Turkey and the Circus Maximus of Rome were both salvaged for building materials after they fell into disrepair.^{41,42} The Colosseum likely would have suffered a similar fate had it not been for the edict of Pope Benedict XIV in 1749 that consecrated and prohibited further quarrying at the site, a very early example of recognition of an important cultural site.⁴³ So, while the direct method of protecting a site from a threat may vary between scenarios, the first step has always been to recognize that a site is worth preserving. And UNESCO, by its creation of the world heritage site list in the first place, as well as its awareness campaigns such as world heritage day,⁴⁴ has also recognized that this is the first step to preservation and protection.

⁴⁰ “The World Heritage Convention.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 24th, 2025.
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/>.

⁴¹ Cartwright, Mark. “Mausoleum at Halicarnassus.” World History Encyclopedia. (2018). Accessed July 24th, 2025.
https://www.worldhistory.org/Mausoleum_at_Halicarnassus/.

⁴² Athanasiou, Christina. “What was the Circus Maximus and why is there nothing left of it?” Roman Empire Times. (2024). Accessed July 24th, 2025.
<https://romanempiretimes.com/what-was-the-circus-maximus-and-why-there-is-nothing-left-of-it/>

⁴³ “The Medieval Life of the Colosseum.” Medievalists.net. Accessed July 24th, 2025.
<https://www.medievalists.net/2014/06/medieval-life-colosseum/>.

⁴⁴ “Online Celebration of the World Heritage Day (18 April).” UNESCO. (2021).
<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/online-celebration-world-heritage-day-18-april>.

Case Study: International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia (1960-1980)

In 1954, it was decided that the Aswan High Dam be built on the Nile river. While this dam would bring economic prosperity to the region and bring the Nile's annual flooding under control, it would also lead to the creation of a massive artificial lake now known as Lake Nasser.⁴⁵ This lake would cover many important ancient sites such as Abu Simbel and Philae, and could easily lead to their loss if left unchecked. So, in 1959, the governments of Sudan and Egypt requested UNESCO aid to rescue their monuments.⁴⁶ This led to a twenty-year international campaign that not only led to the excavation and recovery of thousands of artifacts, but also the movement of huge structures to higher elevations. Perhaps the most famous and impressive of these was Abu Simbel, a large temple complex dating back to the 13th century BCE.⁴⁷ This process, taking almost five years and led by a large team of specialists, required breaking the temple up into pieces, moving them up sixty meters, and reassembling them, preserving as much of the original layout as possible. Completed in 1968, the relocated temple is very well preserved, and it has been said it is "impossible to tell" that the temple was relocated.⁴⁸ Using a similar process, the Philae temple complex was also relocated to higher ground. In addition to saving the monuments of Nubia, this campaign greatly helped raise awareness of the necessity to preserve heritage sites around the world, and was a major factor in UNESCO's creation of the world heritage list in 1972. The campaign has also been used as a model for protection of other world heritage sites.

⁴⁵ Britannica Editors. "Aswan High Dam." Britannica. Accessed July 24th, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Aswan-High-Dam>.

⁴⁶ "Monuments of Nubia-International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia." World Heritage Center. Accessed July 24th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/172/>.

⁴⁷ Kiniry, Laura. "Egypt's exquisite temples that had to be moved." BBC Travel. (2018). Accessed July 24th, 2025. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/travel/article/20180409-egypts-exquisite-temples-that-had-to-be-moved>.

⁴⁸ Ibid.



A piece of Abu Simbel being moved during a campaign to preserve Nubian monuments.⁴⁹

While the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia in response to the imminent creation of Lake Nasser was not technically in response to a natural disaster, it is a good example of how UNESCO has dealt with the problems created by natural disasters in the past. However, UNESCO has also been involved in responding to other threats since very early in its history. As it was founded in the aftermath of World War II, UNESCO's early years involved responding to the damage done by the war. The most important project on a present-day heritage site immediately after World War II was the 1945-1951 planning of the restoration of Warsaw's historic center, 85% of which had been destroyed during the war.⁵⁰ During this time, the remaining historic buildings, as well as records from the time before the

⁴⁹ A piece of Abu Simbel being moved during the International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia. Image source: Ibid.

⁵⁰ "Historic Centre of Warsaw." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 26th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/30/>.

war, were used to reconstruct the site to be as close to its pre-war appearance as possible. Because the damage was so extensive, it took until the 1984 re-opening of the royal castle for the plans to be completed and the site to be completely restored. This example shows that even if a war destroys a large portion of a site, it is not impossible to restore it, though it will likely cost a lot of time and money. Likely the most important past action of UNESCO responding to war damage to important sites was the 1954 Hague Convention, which provided many protections for cultural sites in times of war,⁵¹ such as establishing special units to protect such sites, making it a violation of international law to intentionally damage such sites, and setting sanctions on states that breached the convention. This convention was strengthened in 1999 when it was officially made a war crime to deliberately destroy cultural heritage during a time of war.⁵²

As overtourism usually happens over a much longer period than natural disasters and war, and vandalism usually does not deal as much damage, it was not until the early 21st century that UNESCO began major efforts to prevent them. In 2017, UNESCO began recommending state parties begin reporting instances of vandalism to their heritage sites,⁵³ and now uses such reports in determining which sites are endangered. UNESCO had also recently published toolkits to help assess impact of development projects that could potentially harm heritage sites.⁵⁴ While there has been little action against overtourism that applies to all heritage sites, it is a consideration in determining whether a site is endangered. For example, overtourism was a major factor in the city of Venice almost being listed as endangered in 2021.⁵⁵ Venice was only

⁵¹ “1954 Convention.” UNESCO. Accessed July 26th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-armed-conflicts/1954-convention>.

⁵² *The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its Two (1954 and 1999) Protocols*. 6. The Hague. UNESCO, 2020.

⁵³ “Decision of the World Heritage Committee 41 COM 7.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2017). Accessed July 26th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/compendium/232..>

⁵⁴ Frank, Laura. “Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 26th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidance-toolkit-impact-assessments>.

⁵⁵ Parker, Christopher. “UNESCO Recommends Adding Venice to List of World Heritage in Danger.” Smithsonian magazine. (2023). Accessed July 26th, 2025.

not added because it responded by prohibiting large cruise ships from passing through the city center.



A crowded bridge over a Venetian canal.⁵⁶

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/venice-unesco-world-heritage-danger-180982640/#:~:text=Officials%20at%20UNESCO%20are%20recommending%20that%20Venice%2C%20Italy%2C,identifies%20vulnerable%20heritage%20sites%20in%20need%20of%20support>.

⁵⁶ An overcrowded bridge in Venice. Image source: Sawe, Benjamin Elisha. “10 Popular Tourist Destinations Fighting Back Overtourism.” WorldAtlas. (2020). Accessed September 19th, 2025. <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/10-popular-tourist-destinations-fighting-back-overtourism.html>.

Possible Solutions

As there are many different types of problems facing world heritage sites, the resolution passed by UNESCO should be equipped to deal with a large range of threats. The body should keep in mind that only UNESCO conventions such as the Hague convention of 1954 are considered legally binding, and only for states that adopt them.⁵⁷ Recommendations and declarations, which are likely what the body will be creating during this session, are not considered legally binding. So, it will be very difficult to force states to do anything unless it can be proved that they violated a convention they previously adopted. Though, UNESCO recommendations and declarations can be used to set a global standard, which can still be useful.

Natural Disasters

The most straightforward threats to heritage sites to deal with are likely natural disasters. While there are many different types of natural disasters, the considerations to be made will likely be similar in each case. If a heritage site is damaged by a natural disaster, it is of course a priority to repair and restore it, but there must be safeguards to make sure it can safely be restored, and that restoration does not greatly interfere with other recovery efforts in affected areas. What may be a more complicated issue is preventing damage from natural disasters and ensuring that each site has a plan for dealing with them. There are currently many sites that don't have clear plans in place to deal with natural disasters,⁵⁸ which can make dealing with them significantly more difficult. Though, applying the Sendai Framework for Action 2015-2030, which was made by a UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015,⁵⁹ to the world

⁵⁷ “UNESCO’s standard-setting. An Overview.” UNESCO. (2024). Accessed August 10th, 2025. <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/standard-setting/overview>.

⁵⁸ “Reducing Disasters Risks at World Heritage Properties.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 11th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/disaster-risk-reduction/>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

heritage sites would likely be a straightforward and standardized way to protect the sites from damage.

Combatting War

War will likely be a much more significant problem for UNESCO to deal with, especially with the emergence of new conflicts in recent years. One of the main reasons UNESCO was founded was the destruction of cultural heritage in World War II, and therefore preventing further damage remains a major priority. The protection and preservation of heritage sites in war falls into two categories, which are rebuilding sites that are damaged and preventing sites from being damaged in the first place. The biggest safeguards that UNESCO has against sites being damaged during war are the 1954 Hague Convention, which has been ratified by 138 countries,⁶⁰ and its second protocol in 1999, which has been ratified by 92 countries. Obligations for states that have ratified the 1954 convention include registering their cultural property on the International Register of Cultural Property under Special Protection, creating units to protect their cultural sites in times of war, and sanctioning other countries that violate the convention.⁶¹ The 1999 second protocol sought to make the earlier convention more operative, creating a twelve-member intergovernmental committee to oversee the implementation of both conventions' measures and making a more specific definition for sanctions to be placed on countries violating the conventions.⁶² What makes conventions like this especially powerful is that they are considered legally binding for countries that ratify them. So, one of the best ways

⁶⁰ "State Parties." UNESCO. (2025). Accessed August 16th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-armed-conflicts/states-parties>.

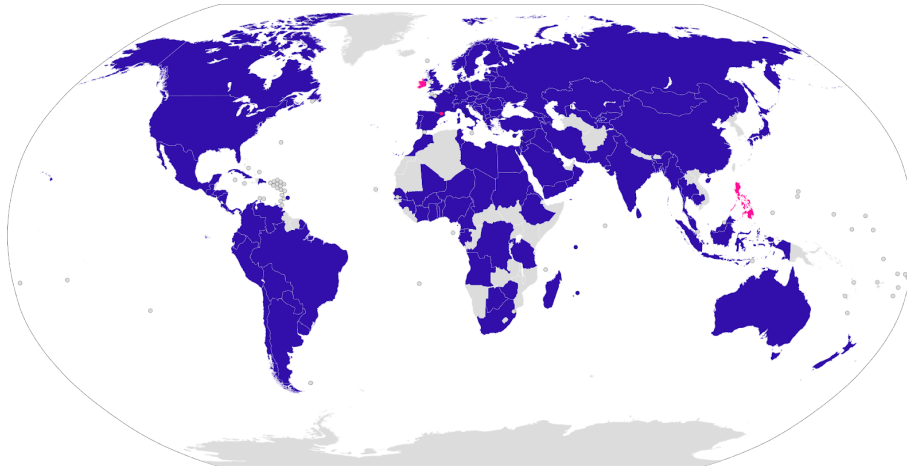
⁶¹ "1954 Convention." UNESCO. Accessed August 16th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-armed-conflicts/1954-convention>

⁶² "Making the Convention more operational: 1999 Second Protocol." UNESCO. (2025). Accessed August 17th, 2025. <https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-armed-conflicts/second-protocol>.

for UNESCO to prevent damage to heritage sites from war is to get more countries to ratify the conventions.

However, UNESCO must also prepare for wars to deal damage to its heritage sites, and therefore have a plan to apply when this happens. Merely having an easily-adaptable plan to respond to war damage to heritage sites will be very useful, especially if UNESCO is able to ensure each country is able to carry it out. Restoration efforts dating back to 1945 may provide a good outline for what to do, but UNESCO must also recognize that every case is different.⁶³ Finally, UNESCO must keep in mind that it will be very difficult to protect world heritage sites if the authorities do not cooperate or directly desire their destruction, especially if the authorities have not ratified the Hague Convention or are not UN-recognized governments.



Map of state parties to the 1954 Hague convention (blue). Those in pink signed but did not ratify the treaty. Those in gray did not sign or ratify the treaty.⁶⁴

⁶³ “Post-Conflict and Post-Disaster Reconstruction and Recovery.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 17th, 2025.
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/reconstruction/#:~:text=UNESCO%20has%20launched%20key%20initiatives%20for%20the%20reconstruction,the%20activities%20undertaken%20by%20UNESCO%20and%20its%20partners.>

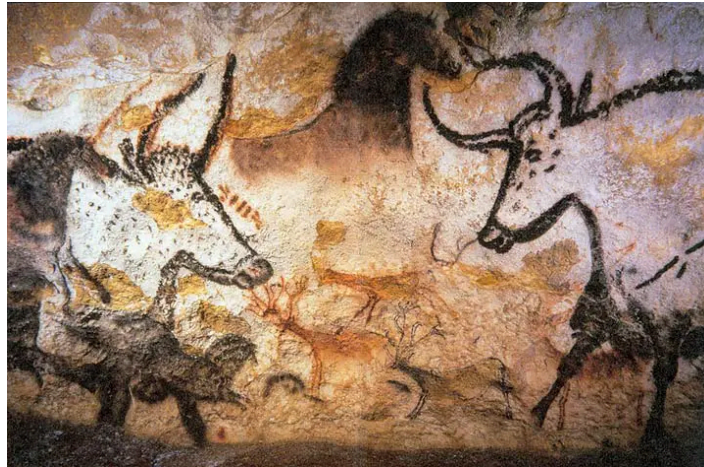
⁶⁴ Image source: Editors of Wikipedia. “Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of an Armed Conflict.” Wikipedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hague_Convention_for_the_Protection_of_Cultural_Property_in_the_Event_of_Armed_Conflict.

Overtourism

Overtourism and other tourist-related problems will likely be very complicated to deal with, as measures that protect heritage sites from these problems will also likely prevent the public from experiencing them fully. There have been cases in the past when UNESCO world heritage sites have been closed to the public to prevent degradation from tourism, such as the Lascaux cave in France. This cave, rediscovered in 1940, is filled with 17,000-19,000-year-old cave paintings and was initially opened to the public in 1948, but was closed down in 1963 after the high number of visitors caused algae and fungus growth on the walls, irreversibly damaging some of the paintings.⁶⁵ In 1983, a replica cave known as Lascaux II was opened to the public. Replicas or museums showcasing artifacts from the original site may be a good option if there is no way for tourists to access the original sites safely, but there still may be a decrease in interest. Neglect is the inverse of overtourism, and if the public is not interested in world heritage sites and keeping them preserved they may fall into disrepair. This has been known to happen, especially in circumstances where money is tight and must be allocated to other causes, or when other projects encroach on the land. For example, construction of modern buildings in the old and new towns of Edinburgh has threatened to remove the city's status as a world heritage site.⁶⁶ Public awareness campaigns such as World Heritage Day may help increase interest in sites to prevent neglect. In order to ensure heritage sites are available for both current and future generations, UNESCO must strike a balance that lets visitors experience the sites fully but also protects the sites from damage.

⁶⁵ Groeneveld, Emma. "Lascaux Cave." World History Encyclopedia. (2016). Accessed August 18th, 2025. https://www.worldhistory.org/Lascaux_Cave/.

⁶⁶ Brocklehurst, Steven. "Is Edinburgh's world heritage status under threat?." BBC. (2015). <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-34256516>.

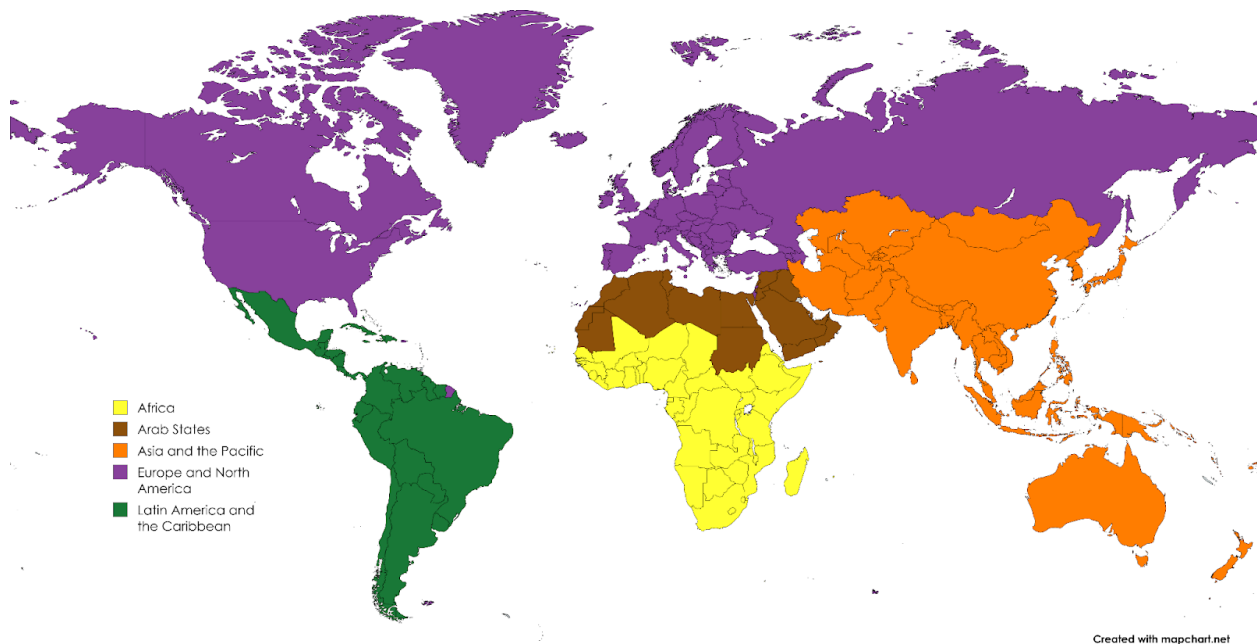


An image of a cave painting in Lascaux Cave.⁶⁷

The mentioned solutions are not nearly an exhaustive list of what can be done to protect and preserve UNESCO's world heritage sites, and natural disasters, war, and overtourism are far from the only problems facing them. In creating its plans, UNESCO must consider a wide range of problems, as well as a wide range of solutions.

⁶⁷ An image of one of the many cave paintings in Lascaux Cave. Image source: Ashworth, William. "Lascaux Cave." Linda Hall Library. (2025). Accessed September 20th, 2025.
<https://www.lindahall.org/about/news/scientist-of-the-day/lascaux-cave/>.

Bloc Positions



Map highlighting different regions of the world.

Africa

Sub-Saharan Africa contains 108 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 61 of which are cultural, 42 of which are natural, and 5 of which are mixed.⁶⁸ Thirteen of those properties are considered endangered. African UNESCO World Heritage Sites face many of the same problems that other heritage sites face, such as war and natural disasters,^{69,70} but they also suffer some problems that are less potent, though not necessarily unheard of, in other regions. One of these problems is poaching, which is especially dangerous in Africa because of the prevalence of

⁶⁸ “Africa.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 18th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/africa>.

⁶⁹ Touati, Charlotte and Chandler de Waal, Matthew. “The Destruction and Looting of Heritage in the Tigray War.” African Arguments. (2024). Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://africanarguments.org/2024/09/the-destruction-and-looting-of-heritage-in-the-tigray-war/>.

⁷⁰ “UNESCO, ICCROM and EPA train African site managers on Disaster Risk Management strategies and Protection Systems.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2024). <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2735>.

natural heritage sites and the valuable nature of products from their animals, such as ivory. The World Wildlife Fund estimates that each year at least 20,000 African elephants are poached for their tusks.⁷¹ Other animals such as rhinos, lions, and gorillas have also been known to be poached as well.⁷² Such species are important both culturally and for the long-term survival of their ecosystems. Therefore, UNESCO countries from Sub-Saharan Africa will favor expansion of protections on natural World Heritage Sites, especially with regards to protecting wildlife. In addition, while this does not apply to all countries in the region, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have a GDP per capita of \$2500 or less,⁷³ meaning that countries in the area will also likely favor resolutions that expand monetary aid to countries for protecting their heritage sites.

Arab States

The Arab States have 96 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 87 of which are cultural, 6 of which are natural, and 3 of which are mixed. 24 of these heritage sites are currently listed as in danger.⁷⁴ Since the beginning of the 21st century, much of the Arab States have been ravaged by war, and in addition to the wars themselves, the political instability they created led to an increase in crimes committed against cultural treasures, such as the 2003 looting of the Iraq Museum in Baghdad after the fall of Saddam Hussein.⁷⁵ Because war and its associated effects have brought great destruction of the heritage sites of the Arab States, UNESCO countries in this region will likely favor measures to protect heritage sites in this region will likely favor countries

⁷¹ “Stopping Elephant Ivory Demand.” World Wide Fund for Nature. Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/stopping-ivory-demand>.

⁷² “Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking in Africa: An Overview.” Congressional Research Service. (2021). Accessed August 19th, 2025. https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/IF/PDF/IF11923/IF11923.1.pdf.

⁷³ “World Economic Outlook (April 2025).” International Monetary Fund. (2025). Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDPC@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD>.

⁷⁴ “Arab States.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/arabstates/>.

⁷⁵ Polk, Milbry and Schuster, Angela M. H.. *The Looting of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad: The Lost Legacy of Ancient Mesopotamia*. Harry N. Abrams. 2005.

to protect their properties from war. Tourism is also a major industry in many areas of the Arab States, occupying 24% of Egypt's economy and 14% of Jordan's economy.^{76,77} So, some countries in the region will likely support measures ensuring tourism is accessible and safely done. Though, war in the area has significantly stifled tourism in other countries,⁷⁸ so the total tourism in the rest of the region is significantly lower.

Asian and Pacific Nations

Asia and the Pacific have 297 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 212 of which are natural, 73 of which are cultural, and 13 of which are mixed. While Asia and the Pacific are extremely diverse in effectively every respect, from culture, to economy, to population size, the region is doing relatively well with protecting its heritage sites, with only six of them listed as in danger. While this is not applicable to all countries, most East Asian and Pacific countries have not experienced major wars since 1979.⁷⁹ However, many Asian countries that are part of the Middle East have experienced conflict since then. One of the most troubling cases of this was the return of the unrecognized Taliban government, which had previously attacked the Baimyan Buddhas, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the country, in 2001,⁸⁰ to power in 2023. Because

⁷⁶ "Tourism sector contributed 24% of Egypt's GDP last year, making an "extraordinary recovery"." Business Today. (2024). Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://www.businesstodayegypt.com/Article/1/4754/Tourism-sector-contributed-24-of-Egypt%E2%80%99s-GDP-last-year-making#:~:text=Egypt%E2%80%99s%20tourism%20sector%20contributed%20around%2024%25%20of%20the,by%20the%20World%20Travel%20and%20Tourism%20Council%20%28W TTC%29.>

⁷⁷ "Tourism Sector of Jordan Faces a Major Setback as Petra Sees Massive Decline in the Arrival of Visitors." Travel And Tour World. (2025). Accessed September 20th, 2025.

[https://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/tourism-sector-of-jordan-faces-a-major-setback-as-petra-sees-massive-decline-in-the-arrival-of-visitors/.](https://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/tourism-sector-of-jordan-faces-a-major-setback-as-petra-sees-massive-decline-in-the-arrival-of-visitors/)

⁷⁸ Coll-Vinent, Alba Suris, Pio, Alex, and Mele, Gianluca. "The Effects of the Middle East conflict on tourism in the MENA region." World Bank Blogs. (2025). Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/arabvoices/the-effects-of-the-middle-east-conflict-on-tourism-in-the-mena-region.>

⁷⁹ He, Kai. "Rethinking East Asian Peace, Over-deterrence, and Minilateralism." Australian Institute of International Affairs. (2025). Accessed August 19th, 2025.

[https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/rethinking-east-asian-peace-over-deterrence-and-minilateralism/.](https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/rethinking-east-asian-peace-over-deterrence-and-minilateralism/)

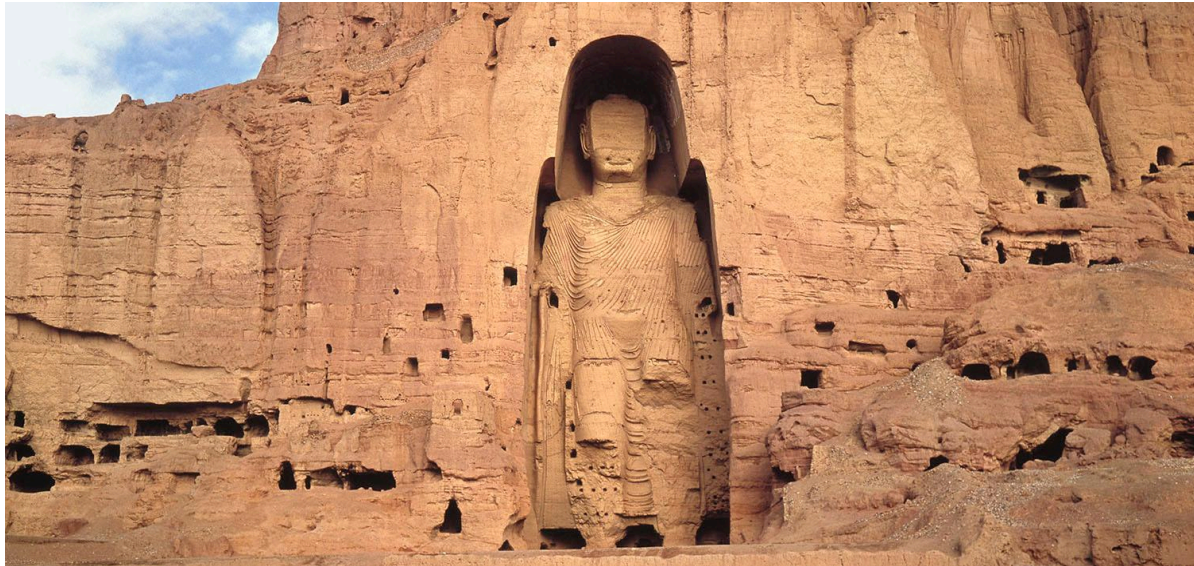
⁸⁰ "Commemorating 20 years since the destruction of two Buddhas of Bamiyan, Afghanistan." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2021). Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2253>.

of war in the area, Middle-Eastern countries will likely consider this a danger of great importance. Sites in the Pacific, which contains many small islands, face danger from rising sea levels caused by climate change, one example being Nan Madol, the ceremonial center of Eastern Micronesia.⁸¹ Even if they are not above water, climate change can still endanger sites due to changes in ocean conditions, such as the bleaching of coral in the Great Barrier Reef off the coast of Australia. The Pacific also of course faces danger from tropical storms. For this reason, natural disasters will be a threat of paramount concern to Pacific nations. The only UNESCO World Heritage Site in Asia outside of the Middle-Eastern and Pacific regions that is listed as in danger is the Historic Centre of Shakhrysbiz in Uzbekistan,⁸² which faces danger from rising ground water level, which threatens the integrity of the structures.⁸³ This is not to say that the rest of Asia should not be concerned about their World Heritage Sites, and such countries will likely support measures to ensure more World Heritage Sites do not become endangered.

⁸¹ “US Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation provides support to the endangered site of Nan Madol.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2018). Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1899/>.

⁸² “World Heritage Interactive Map.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. August 19th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/interactive-map/>.

⁸³ “Historic Centre of Shakhrysbiz.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/885>.



An image of one of the Bamiyan Buddhas prior to its destruction in 2001.⁸⁴

Europe and North America

Europe and North America have 576 World Heritage Sites, 490 of which are cultural, 74 are natural, and 12 of which are mixed.⁸⁵ Like Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America have relatively few endangered sites, with only seven currently listed as in danger. However, these regions greatly care about their World Heritage Sites because they have very high tourism and travel, which represent over ten percent of the European economy as of 2024.⁸⁶ Though, the high number of tourists has put a strain on some of their World Heritage Sites, prompting fears about their long-term survival. While countries in this region will likely support measures to protect sites from overtourism, they will also likely wish to make sure this does not significantly damage their tourism industry. War has also become a more pressing threat to European World

⁸⁴ One of the Bamiyan Buddhas before its destruction in 2001. Image source: “Bamiyan Buddhas.” Harvard University. Accessed September 20th, 2025. <https://whoseculture.hsites.harvard.edu/bamiyan-buddhas>.

⁸⁵ “Europe and North America.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/eur-na>.

⁸⁶ Hinton, Thomas. “Chart: Travel and Tourism Drive More than 10% of the European Economy.” Statista. (2024). Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://www.statista.com/chart/32603/travel-and-tourism-contribution-to-gdp-in-europe/>.

Heritage Sites in recent years thanks to the Russian Invasion of Ukraine, the largest war in Europe since World War II.⁸⁷ Of this region's seven World Heritage Sites in danger, three are located in Ukraine.⁸⁸ So, European countries will also likely seek measures to protect World Heritage Sites from war as well.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin America and the Caribbean have 151 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 104 of which are cultural, 39 of which are natural, and 8 of which are mixed.⁸⁹ Six sites in this region are considered in danger. The Caribbean's most important danger is likely natural disasters, both from storms and rising sea levels. Tourism is also a major industry in the Caribbean. Because the natural landmarks of the area are a major draw for tourists,⁹⁰ the Caribbean will likely most greatly want resolutions on protecting World Heritage sites from natural disasters. Natural disasters also pose threats to countries in Central and South America, such as the burning of the Amazon rainforest.⁹¹ Central and South America have some of the most elaborate ruins in the Americas, and for this reason overtourism has become a problem in some areas as well.⁹² In Central America, the drug trade is very prevalent, and therefore Central America will likely seek

⁸⁷ Nagourney, Eric, Bilefsky, Dan, and Perez-Pena, Richard. "A Year of War in Ukraine: A Guide to the Conflict." The New York Times. (2023). Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://www.nytimes.com/article/russia-ukraine-nato-europe.html>.

⁸⁸ "World Heritage List." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>.

⁸⁹ "Latin America and the Caribbean." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/lac/>.

⁹⁰ Will. "What impact does tourism have on the region of the Caribbean?." In Your Travel. (2025). Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://inyourtravel.com/what-impact-does-tourism-have-on-the-region-of-the-caribbean/>.

⁹¹ Borunda, Alejandra. "Map: See how much of the Amazon forest is burning, how it compares to other years." National Geographic. (2019). Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/amazon-fires-cause-deforestation-graphic-map#:~:text=Thousands%20of%20fires%20are%20burning%20across%20a%20southern,most%20important%20carbon%20storehouses%20left%20on%20the%20planet.>

⁹² Lau, Evelyn. "Peru shuts parts of Machu Picchu from tourists due to erosion." The National. (2023). Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/travel/2023/09/29/peru-machu-picchu-overtourism/>.

measures to prevent it from interfering with World Heritage Sites, either by instituting protective measures or by striking at the drug trade itself. Finally, with only 151 of over 1200 World Heritage Sites in the world, another one of Central and South America's priorities will likely be getting their natural and cultural landmarks recognized as World Heritage Sites to ensure they are given the protections they need.



*Chichen Itza, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Mexico.*⁹³

⁹³ The Kukulcan pyramid at Chichen Itza, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Mexico. Image source: “El Castillo | The Castle | Pyramid of Kukulcan.” Chichen Itza. Accessed September 20th, 2025. <https://www.chichenitza.com/chichen-itza-pyramid>.

Glossary

Hague Convention of 1954 - The first UNESCO convention regarding cultural property in times of war. A second protocol to this convention was created in 1999 that sought to make it more operational.⁹⁴

Neglect - Lack of interest in preserving a natural or cultural site leading to its deterioration.

Overtourism - The amount of tourists at a site growing so high that it strains or damages that site.

Poaching - The illegal killing of wild animals, typically to harvest valuable resources, such as the ivory tusks of elephants.

UNESCO - UNESCO is the acronym of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, which was founded to protect culture and encourage education and scientific dialogue after World War II.

UNESCO World Heritage Site - UNESCO World Heritage Sites are places around the world that have been designated by UNESCO as having special importance to cultural heritage, natural heritage, or both.

⁹⁴ “Making the Convention more operational: 1999 Second Protocol.” UNESCO. (2025). Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-armed-conflicts/second-protocol>.

Vandalism - Deliberate disfigurement of property by someone who is not the owner. This is a threat that World Heritage Sites face from overtourism.

World Heritage Convention of 1972 - The UNESCO convention that established UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It has been ratified by all but one member of UNESCO.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ “States Parties.” UNESCO World Heritage Convention. Accessed August 19th, 2025.
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties>.

Bibliography

“1954 Convention.” UNESCO. Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-armed-conflicts/1954-convention>

“Africa.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 18th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/africa>.

“Ancient Monuments Protection Act 1882.” UK Legislation. (1882). Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Vict/45-46/73/contents/enacted>

“Arab States.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/arabstates/>.

Ashworth, William. “Lascaux Cave.” Linda Hall Library. (2025). Accessed September 20th,

2025. <https://www.lindahall.org/about/news/scientist-of-the-day/lascaux-cave/>.

Athanasiou, Christina. “What was the Circus Maximus and why is there nothing left of it?”

Roman Empire Times. (2024). Accessed July 24th, 2025.

<https://romanempiretimes.com/what-was-the-circus-maximus-and-why-there-is-nothing-left-of-it/>

“Bamiyan Buddhas.” Harvard University. Accessed September 20th, 2025.

<https://whoseculture.hsites.harvard.edu/bamiyan-buddhas>.

Beach, Alastair. “How tourism cursed tomb of King Tut.” The Independent. (2012). Accessed

July 16th, 2025.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/how-tourism-cursed-tomb-of-king-tut-8280603.html>.

“Birth of a National Park.” National Park Service. (2025). Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/historyculture/yellowstoneestablishment.htm>

Boobyer, Leigh and Harcombe, Chloe. “Stonehenge covered in powder paint by Just Stop Oil protestors.” BBC News. (2024). <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cw44mdee0zzo>.

Borunda, Alejandra. “Map: See how much of the Amazon forest is burning, how it compares to other years.” National Geographic. (2019). Accessed August 19th, 2025.
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/amazon-fires-cause-deforestation-graphic-map#:~:text=Thousands%20of%20fires%20are%20burning%20across%20a%20southern,most%20important%20carbon%20storehouses%20left%20on%20the%20planet>.

Britannica Editors. “Aswan High Dam.” Britannica. Accessed July 24th, 2025.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Aswan-High-Dam>.

Brocklehurst, Steven. “Is Edinburgh’s world heritage status under threat?” BBC. (2015).
<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-34256516>.

Cantin, Neal and Gilmour, James. “Coral bleaching events.” Australian Institute of Marine Science. Accessed July 16th, 2025.
<https://www.aims.gov.au/research-topics/environmental-issues/coral-bleaching/coral-bleaching-events>.

Cartwright, Mark. “Mausoleum at Halicarnassus.” World History Encyclopedia. (2018). Accessed July 24th, 2025. https://www.worldhistory.org/Mausoleum_at_Halicarnassus/.

Coll-Vinent, Alba Suris, Pio, Alex, and Mele, Gianluca. “The Effects of the Middle East conflict on tourism in the MENA region.” World Bank Blogs. (2025). Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/arabvoices/the-effects-of-the-middle-east-conflict-on-tourism-in-the-mena-region>.

“Commemorating 20 years since the destruction of two Buddhas of Bamiyan, Afghanistan.”

UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2021). Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2253>.

“Damaged cultural sites in Ukraine verified by UNESCO.” UNESCO. (2024). Accessed July 16th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/damaged-cultural-sites-ukraine-verified-unesco>.

“Decision of the World Heritage Committee 41 COM 7.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

(2017). Accessed July 26th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/compendium/232>.

Editors of Wikipedia. “Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of an Armed Conflict.” Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hague_Convention_for_the_Protection_of_Cultural_Property_in_the_Event_of_Armed_Conflict.

“Europe and North America.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/eur-na>.

Finkelstein, Maxwell W., Fong, Leanna, and Coschi, Nathan. “Banff National Park.” The Canadian Encyclopedia. (2015). Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/banff-national-park>

Frank, Laura. “Guidance and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in a World Heritage Context.”

UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 26th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/guidance-toolkit-impact-assessments>.

- Gibson, Victoria. “How the Revolution gave France a head for heritage conservation.” The Connexion. (2022). Accessed July 17th, 2025.
<https://www.connexionfrance.com/magazine/how-the-revolution-gave-france-a-head-for-heritage-conservation/269397>
- “Great Barrier Reef”. UNESCO World Heritage Center. Accessed July 16th, 2025.
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/154>
- Groeneveld, Emma. “Lascaux Cave.” World History Encyclopedia. (2016). Accessed August 18th, 2025. https://www.worldhistory.org/Lascaux_Cave/.
- He, Kai. “Rethinking East Asian Peace, Over-deterrence, and Minilateralism.” Australian Institute of International Affairs. (2025). Accessed August 19th, 2025.
<https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/rethinking-east-asian-peace-over-deterrence-and-minilateralism/>.
- Hinton, Thomas. “Chart: Travel and Tourism Drive More than 10% of the European Economy.” Statista. (2024). Accessed August 19th, 2025.
<https://www.statista.com/chart/32603/travel-and-tourism-contribution-to-gdp-in-europe/>.
- “Historic Centre of Shakhrysb.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/885>.
- “Historic Centre of Warsaw.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 26th, 2025.
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/30/>.
- Hobson, Melissa. “What causes coral bleaching? Here’s how it threatens ocean and human life.” National Geographic. (2025). Accessed July 16th, 2025.
<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/coral-bleaching-causes-impacts#:~:text=Ocean%20acidification%20has%20increased%20coral%20bleaching%20around>

%20the,also%20threatens%20ecosystems%20and%20economies%20around%20the%20 world.

Joselow, Gabe and Elbaum, Rachel. “The Taliban destroyed Afghanistan’s ancient Buddhas.

Now they’re welcoming tourists.” NBC News. (2021). Accessed July 16th, 2025.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/taliban-destroyed-afghanistans-ancient-buddhas-now-welcoming-tourists-rcna6307>.

“Just Landed: King Tutankhamun’s tomb is ready for new visitors following a massive restoration.” Escapism Toronto. (2019). Accessed September 19th, 2025.

<https://escapism.to/news/king-tutankhamun-tomb-egypt-restoration/>.

Kiniry, Laura. “Egypt’s exquisite temples that had to be moved.” BBC Travel. (2018). Accessed July 24th, 2025.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/travel/article/20180409-egypts-exquisite-temples-that-had-to-be-moved>.

“Kyiv: Sant-Sophia Cathedral and Related Monastic Buildings, Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra.”

UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 16th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/527>.

Lau, Evelyn. “Peru shuts parts of Machu Picchu from tourists due to erosion.” The National.

(2023). Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://www.thenationalnews.com/travel/2023/09/29/peru-machu-picchu-overtourism/>.

“Latin America and the Caribbean.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/lac/>.

“List of World Heritage in Danger.” UNESCO World Heritage Center. Accessed July 13th, 2025. Accessed July 13th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/danger-list/>

“Making the Convention more operational: 1999 Second Protocol.” UNESCO. (2025). Accessed August 17th, 2025. <https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-armed-conflicts/second-protocol>.

Melvin, Don, Elwazer, Schams, and Berlinger, Joshua. “ISIS destroys Temple of Bel in Palmyra, Syria.” CNN. (2015). Accessed July 16th, 2025. <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/08/31/middleeast/palmyra-temple-damaged/>.

“Minaret and Archaeological Remains of Jam.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/211>

“Monuments of Nubia-International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/172/>

Nagourney, Eric, Bilefsky, Dan, and Perez-Pena, Richard. “A Year of War in Ukraine: A Guide to the Conflict.” The New York Times. (2023). Accessed August 19th, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/russia-ukraine-nato-europe.html>.

“Nan Madol: Ceremonial Centre of Eastern Micronesia.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 16th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1503>.

Nayeri, Farah. “The Masterpieces That Napoleon Stole, and How Some Went Back.” The New York Times. (2021). Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/09/arts/design/napoleon-looted-art.html>

Neuendorf, Henri. “King Tut’s Tomb Just Underwent a 10-Year Restoration. Here’s How Experts Repaired the Ravages of Mass Tourism.” Artnet. (2019). Accessed July 16th, 2025. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/king-tut-conservation-getty-1450801>.

“Online Celebration of the World Heritage Day (18 April).” UNESCO. (2021).

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/online-celebration-world-heritage-day-18-april>.

“Overview of Coral Bleaching” Coral Reef Alliance. Accessed September 19th, 2025.

<https://coral.org/en/coral-bleaching/overview/>

Parker, Christopher. “UNESCO Recommends Adding Venice to List of World Heritage in Danger.” Smithsonian magazine. (2023). Accessed July 16th, 2025.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/venice-unesco-world-heritage-danger-180982640/#:~:text=Officials%20at%20UNESCO%20are%20recommending%20that%20Venice%2C%20Italy%2C,identifies%20vulnerable%20heritage%20sites%20in%20need%20of%20support>.

Parker, Christopher. “UNESCO Recommends Adding Venice to List of World Heritage in Danger.” Smithsonian magazine. (2023). Accessed July 26th, 2025.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/venice-unesco-world-heritage-danger-180982640/#:~:text=Officials%20at%20UNESCO%20are%20recommending%20that%20Venice%2C%20Italy%2C,identifies%20vulnerable%20heritage%20sites%20in%20need%20of%20support>.

Polk, Milbry and Schuster, Angela M. H.. The Looting of the Iraq Museum, Baghdad: The Lost Legacy of Ancient Mesopotamia. Harry N. Abrams. 2005.

“Post-Conflict and Post-Disaster Reconstruction and Recovery.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 17th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/reconstruction/#:~:text=UNESCO%20has%20launched%20key%20initiatives%20for%20the%20reconstruction,the%20activities%20undertaken%20by%20UNESCO%20and%20its%20partners>.

“Reducing Disasters Risks at World Heritage Properties.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

Accessed August 11th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/disaster-risk-reduction/>.

“Royal National Park.” NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park/parks/royal-national-park>

Sawe, Benjamin Elisha. “10 Popular Tourist Destinations Fighting Back Overtourism.”

WorldAtlas. (2020). Accessed September 19th, 2025.

<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/10-popular-tourist-destinations-fighting-back-overtourism.html>.

“Seven Wonders of the World.” Britannica. (2025). Accessed July 16th, 2025.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Seven-Wonders-of-the-World>

“State of Conservation (SOC 2015) Kathmandu Valley (Nepal).” UNESCO World Heritage

Center. (2015). Accessed July 16th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/3285>.

“States Parties.” UNESCO. (2025). Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-armed-conflicts/states-parties>

Steinmeyer, Nathan. “Nabonidus: The First Archaeologist.” Biblical Archaeology Society.

(2024). Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/ancient-cultures/ancient-near-eastern-world/nabonidus-the-first-archaeologist/>

“Stopping Elephant Ivory Demand.” World Wide Fund for Nature. Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/stopping-elephant-ivory-demand>.

The 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed

Conflict and its Two (1954 and 1999) Protocols. 6. The Hague. UNESCO, 2020.

The Kukulkan pyramid at Chichen Itza, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Mexico. Image

source: “El Castillo | The Castle | Pyramid of Kukulcan.” Chichen Itza. Accessed

September 20th, 2025. <https://www.chichenitza.com/chichen-itza-pyramid>.

“The Medieval Life of the Colosseum.” Medievalists.net. Accessed July 24th, 2025.

<https://www.medievalists.net/2014/06/medieval-life-colosseum/>.

“The World Heritage Convention.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/>

“The World Heritage Convention.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 24th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/>.

Touati, Charlotte and Chandler de Waal, Matthew. “The Destruction and Looting of Heritage in the Tigray War.” African Arguments. (2024). Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://africanarguments.org/2024/09/the-destruction-and-looting-of-heritage-in-the-tigray-war/>.

“Tourism sector contributed 24% of Egypt’s GDP last year, making an “extraordinary recovery”.” Business Today. (2024). Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://www.businesstodayegypt.com/Article/1/4754/Tourism-sector-contributed-24-of-Egypt%E2%80%99s-GDP-last-year-making#:~:text=Egypt%E2%80%99s%20tourism%20sector%20contributed%20around%2024%25%20of%20the,by%20the%20World%20Travel%20and%20Tourism%20Council%20%28WTTC%29>.

“Tourism Sector of Jordan Faces a Major Setback as Petra Sees Massive Decline in the Arrival of Visitors.” Travel And Tour World. (2025). Accessed September 20th, 2025.

<https://www.travelandtourworld.com/news/article/tourism-sector-of-jordan-faces-a-major-setback-as-petra-sees-massive-decline-in-the-arrival-of-visitors/>.

“UNESCO, ICCROM and EPA train African site managers on Disaster Risk Management strategies and Protection Systems.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2024).

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2735>.

“UNESCO World Heritage Centre - World Heritage List.” UNESCO World Heritage Center.

Accessed July 13th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

“UNESCO’s standard-setting. An Overview.” UNESCO. (2024). Accessed August 10th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/standard-setting/overview>.

“US Ambassador’s Fund for Cultural Preservation provides support to the endangered site of Nan Madol.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2018). Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1899/>.

“Vandals attack Stonehenge.” The Independent. (2008). Accessed July 16th, 2025.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/vandals-attack-stonehenge-832418.html>.

“Warsaw in Ruins: Rare Photos of the Destroyed Post-War Warsaw, 1945-1950.” Rare Historical Photos. Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/warsaw-in-ruins-photos/>

“What is coral bleaching?.” National Ocean Service. Accessed July 16th, 2025.

https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/coral_bleach.html.

Will. “What impact does tourism have on the region of the Caribbean?.” In Your Travel. (2025).

Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://inyourtravel.com/what-impact-does-tourism-have-on-the-region-of-the-caribbean/>.

“Wildlife Poaching and Trafficking in Africa: An Overview.” Congressional Research Service. (2021). Accessed August 19th, 2025.

https://www.congress.gov/crs_external_products/IF/PDF/IF11923/IF11923.1.pdf.

“World Economic Outlook (April 2025).” International Monetary Fund. (2025). Accessed August 19th, 2025.

<https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDPC@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD>.

“World Heritage Committee.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2025). Accessed July 17th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/committee/>

“World Heritage in Danger”. UNESCO World Heritage Center. Accessed July 16th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/danger/#:~:text=Armed%20conflict%20and%20war%2C%20earthquakes%20and%20other%20natural,development%20pose%20major%20problems%20to%20World%20Heritage%20sites>.

“World Heritage Interactive Map.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. August 19th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/interactive-map/>.

“World Heritage List.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

“World Heritage List reaches 1000 sites with inscription of Okavango.” UNESCO. (2014). Accessed July 17th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/world-heritage-list-reaches-1000-sites-inscription-okavango-delta-botswana>

Worley, Will. “Palmyra: Photographer’s powerful before and after photos show city’s destruction at hands of Isis.” The Independent. (2016). Accessed September 19th, 2025.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/palmyra-syria-photos-new-palmyra-photos-show-devastation-of-artefacts-ruined-by-isis-a6964766.html>.

TOPIC B: REVITALIZATION OF CULTURE AFTER NATURAL DISASTERS

Statement of the Problem

Natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes often leave behind more than physical damage in their wake. In many communities, they also threaten **cultural heritage**, disrupting the traditions, symbols, and institutions that shape collective identity. While nations can rebuild their infrastructure and technological bases, destruction of cultural sites and the interruption of traditions present a challenge that can drastically alter the social and emotional fabric of affected populations. The loss of sites such as ancient or historical places of worship, the flooding of a sacred site, or the destruction of historical and monumental archives, disasters can sever the connection between people and their ancestry.

Communities that experience large-scale displacement due to a natural disaster often face even greater cultural disruption. People who are forced to evacuate may not return for months or years, if at all. While away from their homeland, sharing culture becomes more strenuous, particularly when older generations are separated from the younger population. In these situations, traditions that rely on knowledge of historical sites or localized rituals can become difficult to uphold. When daily life no longer includes festivals, songs, or shared ceremonies, cultural identity can erode at a rapid pace. For many indigenous and rural communities where cultural expression is deeply tied to the land on which they live and work, the loss of territory also means the loss of language, stories, and agricultural knowledge passed down through generations.



A 2025 wildfire in South Korea burned 43,330 acres and destroyed a 1,300-year-old Buddhist temple.⁹⁶

Impact on Cultural Practice

The impacts of natural disasters are not limited to monuments, statues, or historic buildings. Cultural practices also exist in intangible forms, including oral storytelling, music, dance, craftsmanship, and communal rituals. These expressions of culture can be fragile, relying on interpersonal transmission as opposed to institutional preservation. In the wake of a natural

⁹⁶ Image Source: “Wildfires ravage South Korea, killing 18 and destroying a 1,300-year-old temple.” NPR. Accessed September 21st, 2025.
<https://www.npr.org/2025/03/26/nx-s1-5341196/south-korea-wildfires-buddhist-temple>.

disaster, these practices are frequently lost or deprioritized, as governments and aid organizations focus on urgent needs of the impacted nations such as shelter, healthcare, and food security, and neglect other, deeply-rooted concerns. While these priorities are understandable, the long-term recovery of a community often depends just as much on the restoration of culture and tradition. These intangible elements help populations to foster a sense of normalcy, unity, and community purpose during periods of recovery after crisis.

Despite increased recognition of the importance of cultural revitalization in disaster recovery over the course of the last twenty years, many nations possess neither the resources nor the infrastructure to protect culture during or directly after natural disasters. In some cases, ministries of culture do not have emergency protocols in place. In others, cultural institutions remain underfunded even during periods of stability. This lack of funding leaves cultures especially vulnerable after a disaster strikes, particularly those that exist outside of the majority culture. Additionally, coordination between cultural authorities and disaster response agencies is often minimal at best. As climate change accelerates and extreme weather events increase in occurrence, these challenges will only become more intense, particularly in regions with fragile governance or significant cultural diversity.

History of the Problem

Early History

Natural disasters have been a threat to culture for a very long time, and there have been instances, especially far in the past, when entire cultures were wiped out by natural disasters. One of the most notable was Minoan civilization, a rich ancient culture on the island of Crete, which was crippled and eventually collapsed after the Santorini eruption around 1600 BCE.⁹⁷ This was such a catastrophic event that it may have inspired Plato's story of Atlantis over one thousand years later.⁹⁸ Another major loss of cultural heritage occurred in 48 BCE when the Library of Alexandria, one of the largest repositories of knowledge in the world at the time, was accidentally set on fire during Roman intervention in an Egyptian civil war.⁹⁹ This resulted in a massive loss of knowledge, and many works are now lost today because of this event.¹⁰⁰



*The ruins of the Minoan palace at Knossos, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.*¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ "Santorini 1600 BC and the End of Minoan Civilization." Penn State Department of Geosciences. Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://courses.ems.psu.edu/earth107/node/1611>.

⁹⁸ "The Fall of the Minoans." PBS. (2011). Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/the-fall-of-the-minoans/61/>.

⁹⁹ El-Abbadi, Mostafa. "Library of Alexandria - Ancient, Burning, Destruction." Britannica. Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Library-of-Alexandria/The-fate-of-the-Library-of-Alexandria>.

¹⁰⁰ "The Lost Library of Alexandria: Knowledge Destroyed." Science News Today. (2025). Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://www.sciencenewstoday.org/the-lost-library-of-alexandria-knowledge-destroyed>.

¹⁰¹ Image Source: "The Palace of Knossos." Visit Greece. Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://www.visitgreece.gr/experiences/culture/archaeological-sites-and-monuments/the-palace-of-knossos/>.

While it is true that a lot of cultural heritage, especially ancient heritage, was lost due to natural disasters, it would be a mistake to say that there were no attempts at revitalization of culture before the modern era. The Library of Alexandria, for example, was rebuilt after its fire and survived for several centuries afterwards. During the Middle Ages, many cities were damaged by natural disasters, yet there were large relief efforts despite technology being less sophisticated than today. In 1333, Florence suffered a major flood, but the local authorities formed a committee that built temporary bridges, gave food relief, and organized repairs.¹⁰² Building back better was also already a concept in the Middle Ages. The Chartres Cathedral in France burned down in 1194, but was rebuilt using new reinforcement techniques such as the flying buttress.¹⁰³ In fact, the rebuilt building was considered so stunning that it inspired the Gothic architecture of the 13th century. It would eventually become a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979.¹⁰⁴ Still, natural disasters continued to wreak great cultural havoc throughout the Middle Ages, and in fact the Middle Ages are often said to end with the Black Death,¹⁰⁵ which while likely not considered a true natural disaster, was an event outside human control.

¹⁰² Shurkin, Joel. "In Middle Ages, Societies Surprisingly Responsive To Natural Disasters." American Institute of Physics. (2013). Accessed September 17th, 2025.

<https://www.aip.org/inside-science/in-middle-ages-societies-surprisingly-responsive-to-natural-disasters>.

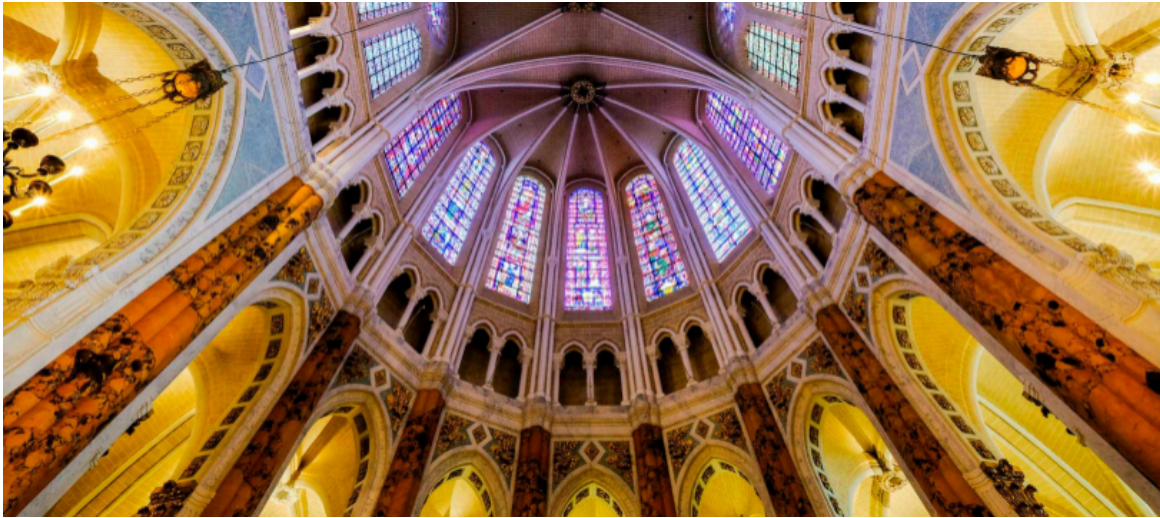
¹⁰³ "The 13th century Cathedral." Cathedrale de Chartres. Accessed September 17th, 2025.

<https://www.cathedrale-chartres.org/en/cathedrale/monument/architecture/the-13th-century-cathedral/>.

¹⁰⁴ "Chartres Cathedral." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed September 17th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/81>.

¹⁰⁵ The Black Death was a Bubonic Plague pandemic that killed significant portions of the population in Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia.



The interior of Chartres Cathedral, reconstructed after a fire in 1194.¹⁰⁶

19th and 20th Centuries

While cultural revitalization was clearly a priority after natural disasters in the Middle Ages, reconstruction was typically quite slow; Chartres cathedral took 26 years to rebuild.⁸ The Industrial Era saw a great improvement in reconstruction efficiency. In 1871, a large fire destroyed a large part of Chicago in a little over a day, killing 300 people and leaving a third of the city's population homeless.¹⁰⁷ This fire was especially bad because Chicago was built primarily of wooden buildings, and the recent seasons had been abnormally dry. However, the production advancements of the industrial revolution allowed the city to be mostly rebuilt during the "Great Reconstruction" from 1872-1879. Not only did this period reconstruct the city, with over 10,000 building permits issued during this period, but it built the city back better, building with fireproof materials like terra-cotta and creating a new style of architecture known as the

¹⁰⁶ Image Source: "Architecture." Cathedrale de Chartres. Accessed September 17th, 2025.
<https://www.cathedrale-chartres.org/en/cathedrale/monument/architecture/>.

¹⁰⁷ McKibben, Ryan. "A Tale of Today: Up From the Ashes Rebuilding Chicago." Driehaus Museum. (2020). Accessed September 18th, 2025.
<https://driehausmuseum.org/blog/view/a-tale-of-today-up-from-the-ashes-rebuilding-chicago>.

Chicago School.¹⁰⁸ Another major natural disaster from the Industrial Era was the 1891 Nobi Earthquake in Japan, which to this day is the largest inland earthquake the country has ever experienced, killing 7,000 and destroying 130,000 homes.¹⁰⁹ It also destroyed many temples and other cultural landmarks.¹¹⁰ In addition to a fast reconstruction as part of the larger modernization of Japan that was going on at the time, the earthquake was examined using field equipment that had been installed a few years prior, leading to a greater understanding of seismology. Since then, understanding the science behind the disaster itself has been a major part of reconstruction, as to prevent damage from similar future events.



*The ruins of the interior of Second Presbyterian Church in Chicago shortly after the great fire of 1871.*¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ “The Chicago Fire of 1871 and the ‘Great Rebuilding.’” National Geographic. (2011). Accessed September 18th, 2025. <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/chicago-fire-1871-and-great-rebuilding/>.

¹⁰⁹ “Today in Earthquake History.” United States Geological Survey. Accessed September 18th, 2025. <https://earthquake.usgs.gov/learn/today/index.php?month=10&day=27>.

¹¹⁰ Lenov, Ilya. “‘Great Nobi Earthquake’ series from the ‘Kusakabe Kimbei Album (6)’: aesthetic perception of a documentary narrative in Japanese souvenir photography.” *Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies* 23, no. 3. (2024).

¹¹¹ Image source: McKibben, Ryan. “A Tale of Today: Up From the Ashes Rebuilding Chicago.” Driehaus Museum. (2020). Accessed September 21st, 2025. <https://driehausmuseum.org/blog/view/a-tale-of-today-up-from-the-ashes-rebuilding-chicago>.

Modern Era

While the Industrial Era greatly improved efficiency in rebuilding after natural disasters, culture could often be displaced during such reconstructions. During the reconstruction of Chicago after its great fire, the new rules about flame-resistant buildings meant that the old building methods would not be used anymore. Of course, this may have been a tradeoff that was necessary to prevent future fires. By far, the event in the early Modern Era that caused the most destruction, though it was not a natural disaster, was World War II, after which the United Nations was founded. Culture was a major part of what was destroyed during World War II, and for that reason UNESCO was founded shortly after the United Nations in 1946.¹¹² Due to the emerging Cold War, most of the building back after the war was handled by the Western Bloc, led by the United States, or the Eastern Bloc, led by the Soviet Union. In the west, likely at least partially to promote the democratic ideals of the bloc, democratization of culture was a major priority, ensuring that everyone had access. This led to the creation of organizations like the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Ministry of Culture in France,^{113,114} which expanded cultural education and built new public cultural venues. Unfortunately, the situation in the east was less than ideal. While there were some moderately-successful efforts to revive culture in Eastern Europe after World War II such as the reconstruction of Warsaw, much of the reconstruction in the East Bloc was designed to force the Soviet ideas on the region. In East Berlin, for example, large portions of the city plan were redesigned, and old monuments such as the palace of Berlin, the residence of the Prussian royal family until the end of World War I, was demolished in

¹¹² “Our History.” UNESCO. Accessed September 18th, 2025. <https://www.unesco.org/en/brief/history>.

¹¹³ *The Arts Council of Great Britain - 2nd Annual Report 1946-1947*. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1947.

¹¹⁴ “Former Ministers of Culture of France.” Cultures. (2025). Accessed September 18th, 2025. <https://cultures.fr/en/post/articles/former-ministers-of-culture-of-france>.

1953.¹¹⁵ This shows the danger of letting an outside power completely control reconstruction, and UNESCO must be careful to make sure something like it doesn't happen again.

Most of UNESCO's cultural revitalization work in the second half of the twentieth century was in recovery after war. It was in the twenty-first century that UNESCO began protecting culture after natural disasters to a large extent, beginning with the Haiti earthquake in 2010. Though, earlier in the century UNESCO had been expanding its focus in cultural revitalization, for example through its 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural heritage.¹¹⁶ UNESCO has had both successes and failures as it has begun responding after natural disasters on a greater scale. Now, the body must look to what has worked in the past if it is to respond to this issue in the future.

¹¹⁵ Bocquet, Denis. "Urban reconstruction as a complex process: reflections on post-1945 Berlin." UNESCO. Accessed August 26th, 2025.

¹¹⁶ "Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage." UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. (2003). <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

Past Actions

UNESCO was founded in the aftermath of World War II, and therefore much of its early actions involved reclaiming the cultural heritage that was lost in the conflict. While this was not a natural disaster, much of the damage, such as the bombings that leveled cities, was similar to natural disasters. For this reason, it may be useful to employ some of the reconstruction techniques used after World War II. However, most of UNESCO's culture recovery efforts in the 20th century were responding to war. It was not until the early 21st century that the organization's efforts to rebuild culture after natural disasters largely began.

Case Study: 2010 Earthquake in Haiti

The first major effort by UNESCO to restore culture after a natural disaster was in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake that devastated the nation of Haiti. This was one of the worst natural disasters in human history, with a death toll of more than 300,000¹¹⁷ and leaving 1.5 million homeless.¹¹⁸ In addition to the massive human toll of the disaster, many historical landmarks, such as the presidential palace,¹¹⁹ were also heavily damaged or destroyed by the earthquake. Many official buildings such as the national assembly were destroyed as well,¹²⁰ which destabilized the government and left much of what cultural heritage did survive vulnerable

¹¹⁷ Pallardy, Richard. "2010 Haiti earthquake." Britannica. (2025). Accessed August 23rd, 2025.

<https://www.britannica.com/event/2010-Haiti-earthquake>.

¹¹⁸ "HAITI: 2010 Haiti Earthquake." Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative. Accessed August 23rd, 2025.

<https://culturalrescue.si.edu/why-it-matters/our-impact/haiti-2010-haiti-earthquake>.

¹¹⁹ Bojarski, Sam. "National Palace Rebuilding Effort in Limbo 10 Years After Earthquake." Pulitzer Center. (2020). Accessed August 23rd, 2025.

<https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/national-palace-rebuilding-effort-limbo-10-years-after-earthquake>.

¹²⁰ Andre, Vania. "Haiti Since the Earthquake: A Decade of Empty Promises." Pulitzer Center. (2020).

<https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/haiti-earthquake-decade-empty-promises>.

to looting and vandalism.¹²¹ International efforts to help Haiti rebuild began quickly, and UNESCO was one of many organizations that traveled to the country to assist in recovery. The initial efforts by UNESCO to revitalize culture included assessing the damage done and protecting sites from looting and vandalism, hoping to also salvage artifacts from museums, rebuild damaged sites, and support local artists and designers for the continuation of culture.¹²² In addition to its cultural goals, UNESCO also planned to assist in rebuilding the education system and studying the earthquake itself to prepare for future similar disasters.

In its attempt to respond to the 2010 Haitian earthquake, UNESCO truly had good intentions and ambitious goals, but the execution of those goals largely did not go according to plan. From the beginning of the crisis, UN agencies like UNESCO had a difficult time operating in Haiti because the UN headquarters in the country, the Christopher Hotel, was destroyed in the earthquake along with several other buildings holding UN offices.¹²³ Then, funding proved very difficult, and many efforts were underfunded. This was made still worse by the fact that only about 10% of the money raised ended up going to the Haitian government, which made it difficult for the authorities to maintain control.¹²⁴ A huge amount of groups, led by the UN, Red Cross, and United States, participated in the recovery,¹²⁵ and they consumed the majority of the recovery funds. However, only 60% of the funding ended up going to Haiti as the other 40% was spent on administrative costs because there were so many groups participating. Furthermore, because there were so many groups, recovery funds were spread thin, and the

¹²¹ “‘A frenzy of looting’ seen in Haiti’s capital.” CNN. (2010). Accessed August 23rd, 2025. <https://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/01/18/haiti.looting.earthquake/index.html>.

¹²² “Report by the Director-General on UNESCO’s post-earthquake response in Haiti.” UNESCO Digital Library. (2010). Accessed August 24th, 2025. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000187527>.

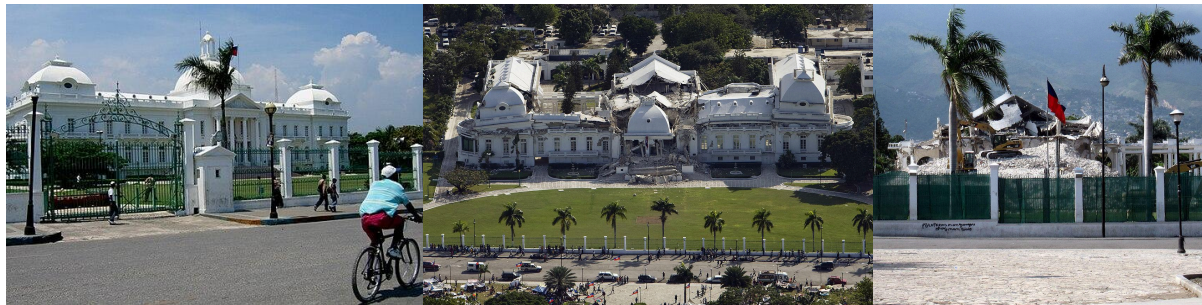
¹²³ “UNESCO chief reaffirms commitment to protect Haiti’s cultural heritage.” UN News. (2010). Accessed August 24th, 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2010/03/332032>.

¹²⁴ Rodgers, Lucy. “Haiti quake: Why isn’t aid money going to Haitians?” BBC. (2013). Accessed August 24th, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-20949624>.

¹²⁵ Estes, Charlie. “How Aid Has Failed Haiti.” Roots of Development. (2022). Accessed August 24th, 2025. <https://rootsofdevelopment.org/how-aid-has-failed-haiti/>.

organizations often got in each other's way due to differing mandates. Then, a lapse in sanitation at a UN peacekeeping facility in Haiti led to the reintroduction of cholera to the country, creating a health crisis which has not been solved to this day.¹²⁶

National Palace of Haiti



2006: Before the Earthquake

2010: After the Earthquake

2012: During Demolition

*Status of the National Palace of Haiti from 2006 to 2012.*¹²⁷

Overall, there was a lot that did not go as planned in the reconstruction of Haiti after its 2010 earthquake, including efforts to revitalize the culture. The national palace damaged in the earthquake was never repaired, and was demolished in 2012.¹²⁸ However, there were still some successes during this time, including ones in which UNESCO was involved. For example, UNESCO was able to raise a moderate amount of funds by partnering with other organizations like the Clinton Global Initiative.¹²⁹ The reconstruction of Jacmel, often known as the cultural epicenter of Haiti, was also somewhat successful, with UNESCO setting up new studios for artists, assessing damage to key buildings, and providing resources so its annual carnival could

¹²⁶ "Hope amid hardship: Battling cholera in Haiti's displacement camps." Pan American Health Organization. (2025). Accessed August 24th, 2025. <https://www.paho.org/en/stories/hope-amid-hardship-battling-cholera-haitis-displacement-camps>.

¹²⁷ Image Source: "National Palace (Haiti)." Wikipedia. (2025). Accessed August 24th, 2025. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Palace_\(Haiti\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Palace_(Haiti)).

¹²⁸ Charles, Jacqueline. "Decision to demolish Haiti National Palace draws strong criticism." Miami Herald. (2012). Accessed August 24th, 2025. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/article1942155.html>.

¹²⁹ "UNESCO's Commitment to Action for the cultural recovery of Jacmel (Haiti) has been accepted by the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI)." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2011). Accessed August 24th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/792/>.

resume in 2011.¹³⁰ While there was a lot that did not go according to plan in the response to the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, UNESCO can learn from what did not go correctly to inform their future decisions, and continue using what did lead to success.



*An image of the carnival in Jacmel, Haiti in 2025. This celebration's revival is considered one of the more successful projects in Haiti's reconstruction after the 2010 earthquake, and is also an example of intangible cultural heritage.*¹³¹

Case Study: 2015 Earthquake in Nepal

While much of the reconstruction efforts in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake did not go according to plan, lessons learned during that time were applied after an earthquake hit Nepal in

¹³⁰ "Haiti: making culture a motor for reconstruction." UNESCO Digital Library. (2011). Accessed August 24th, 2025. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000192374>.

¹³¹ Image Source: Lejustal, Danise Davide. "Jacmel marks 33 years of National Carnival with a spectacular showcase of top-tier performances, music, and dance talent." The Haitian Times. (2025). Accessed September 21st, 2025. <https://haitiantimes.com/2025/02/26/jacmel-carnival-2025/>.

2015.¹³² Nepal's earthquake hit the Kathmandu Valley, killing 9,000 and damaging more than 600,000 structures.¹³³ The immediate death toll from Nepal's earthquake was not nearly as high as Haiti's, possibly because Nepal is less than half as densely populated as Haiti,¹³⁴ and therefore didn't have as many dense urban buildings whose collapse would have been deadly. However, the number left homeless was much higher than in Haiti, at four million.¹³⁵ In addition to the human costs, many important natural and cultural sites, most notably the World Heritage Site of Kathmandu Valley, took considerable damage.¹³⁶



*An image of the destruction of cultural landmarks after the 2015 Nepal earthquake.*¹³⁷

¹³² Bevan, John Rhys. "Drawing lessons from the 2010 Haiti earthquake - Part 1." Nepal Economic Forum. (2015). Accessed August 26th, 2025.

<https://nepaleconomicforum.org/drawing-lessons-from-the-2010-haiti-earthquake-part-1/>.

¹³³ Rafferty, John P. "Nepal Earthquake of 2015 | Nepal earthquake of 2015 | Magnitude, Death Toll, Aftermath, & Facts." Britannica. (2025). Accessed August 26th, 2025.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nepal-earthquake-of-2015>.

¹³⁴ "Countries by Population Density 2025." World Population Review. (2025). Accessed August 26th, 2025.

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-by-density>.

¹³⁵ Cousins, Sophie. "Missing Millions: Nepal's earthquake struck population is still waiting for help." The BMJ. (2017). Accessed August 26th, 2025, <https://www.bmj.com/content/357/bmj.j2479>.

¹³⁶ "UNESCO to assess the impact on Nepal's cultural heritage of the devastating earthquake." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2015). Accessed August 26th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1268>.

¹³⁷ An image of the devastation to cultural landmarks in Nepal after the 2015 earthquake. Image source: Ibid.

Also very shortly after the earthquake, Nepal's government established the National Recovery Authority to oversee reconstruction,¹³⁸ which set the stage for a much more centralized reconstruction. Each external organization was assigned to specific tasks based on its specialization.¹³⁹ UNESCO, along with some other organizations, was responsible for revitalizing culture and education. Of the 745 monuments in and around the Kathmandu Valley, 133 were completely collapsed, 97 were partially collapsed, and 515 were partially damaged.¹⁴⁰ During its restoration of the area, UNESCO primarily worked with the Chinese Hainan Province Cihang Foundation.¹⁴¹ Very shortly after the earthquake struck, UNESCO was mobilized to inspect the damage to the heritage site. This ensured the monuments could be protected from further collapse, and what needed to be repaired could be easily determined. One of the first orders of business was to prevent any further collapses. In the instance of the Radha Krishna temple, after first shoring up and bracing the temple, it was determined that the structure would need to be taken apart and put back together.¹⁴² To ensure that it would be rebuilt properly, documentation had to be made as the structure was taken apart, with each layer of bricks being numbered and put in its original place during reconstruction. Traditional building materials were used for what needed to be replaced. After reconstruction was completed, a ritual to restore the site's divinity was performed on October 22nd, 2020.

¹³⁸ "Nepal Reconstruction Authority Dissolved after Completing Tenure." New Spotlight Magazine. (2021). Accessed August 26th, 2025.

<https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2021/12/24/nepal-reconstruction-authority-dissolved-after-completing-tenure/>.

¹³⁹ "Nepal Earthquake Rehabilitation Builds Back Better Infrastructure." Asian Development Bank. (2022). Accessed August 26th, 2025.

<https://www.adb.org/results/nepal-earthquake-rehabilitation-builds-back-better-infrastructure>.

¹⁴⁰ Shrestha, Sujan et al. "Damage Assessment of Cultural Heritage Structures after the 2015 Gorkha, Nepal, Earthquake: A Case Study of Jagannath Temple." *Earthquake Spectra*. (2017).

¹⁴¹ "Hainan Province Cihang Foundation." UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 26th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/partners/499>.

¹⁴² "Post-Earthquake Recovery of Nepal's Cultural Heritage: Restoration of the Radha Krishna Temple in Kathmandu." UNESCO. (2020). Accessed August 26th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/post-earthquake-recovery-nepals-cultural-heritage-restoration-radha-krishna-temple-kathmandu>.



*Early recovery stages after the 2015 Nepal earthquake.*¹⁴³

In addition to rebuilding and repairing structures, other aspects of culture had to be preserved after the earthquake as well. As was the case in Haiti, cultural objects were in danger of looting after museums were damaged.¹⁴⁴ To protect them, UNESCO set up a storage facility, which kept displaced objects until the museums could reopen.¹⁴⁵ Also, as the Nepalese education system was rebuilt, instruction in cultural heritage was used to preserve the intangible aspects of culture.¹⁴⁶ Another major aspect of recovery of Nepal after the earthquake was “building back better.” Instead of merely restoring to what existed before the earthquake, recovery efforts intended to make Nepal better than before, and prepare for future disasters. During

¹⁴³ Early stages of recovery after the 2015 Gorkha earthquake in Nepal. Image source: Harris, Chris. “How Nepal earthquake devastated Kathmandu’s UNESCO heritage.” Euronews. (2015). Accessed August 26th, 2025. <https://www.euronews.com/2015/04/27/how-nepal-earthquake-devastated-kathmandus-unesco-heritage>.

¹⁴⁴ Wolfson, Elijah. “Theft in Kathmandu: Can Nepal’s Cultural Legacy be Saved?” Newsweek. (2015). Accessed August 26th, 2025. <https://www.newsweek.com/theft-kathmandu-can-nepals-cultural-legacy-be-saved-326684>.

¹⁴⁵ “Nepal’s museums re-opening post-earthquake.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2016). Accessed August 27th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1537/>.

¹⁴⁶ “Bringing living heritage in Nepal’s schools-a new beginning in innovative teaching and learning.” The Annapurna Express. (2021). Accessed August 27th, 2025. <https://theannapurnaexpress.com/story/20167/>.

reconstruction, the Nepalese government raised the required level of seismic resistance in the country's buildings to mitigate future earthquakes.¹⁴⁷ Roads and other infrastructure were also rebuilt to be earthquake-resistant.

In late 2021, with 92% of private housing and government buildings and 85% of archaeological sites and educational buildings completed,²¹ The National Reconstruction Authority in Nepal dissolved. While not everything had been repaired, Nepal had mostly been restored to its previous state, with some improvements in earthquake preparedness by the emphasis on building back better. In 2025, UNESCO held a commemoration event to mark ten years of restoration in Nepal.¹⁴⁸ At this event, Nepal's minister for culture, tourism, and civil aviation emphasized prioritization of "proactive disaster preparedness to minimize future losses", as Nepal is significantly more prone to earthquakes than most other countries.

The response to the 2015 earthquake in Nepal was UNESCO's first major success restoring culture after a natural disaster, and could be used as a framework for responding to future disasters. There were some areas in the response to the earthquake that could have been improved on, like difficulty in accessing rural communities, especially those with no road access.¹⁴⁹ There were also some other factors that made reconstruction in Nepal significantly easier than that in Haiti, for example that Nepal had a more stable government before its earthquake. However, the reconstruction after Nepal's 2015 earthquake is largely seen as an improvement over the reconstruction after Haiti's 2010 earthquake.

¹⁴⁷ "Nepal Earthquake Rehabilitation Builds Back Better Infrastructure." Asian Development Bank. (2022). Accessed August 27th, 2025.

<https://www.adb.org/results/nepal-earthquake-rehabilitation-builds-back-better-infrastructure>.

¹⁴⁸ "Restoring Cultural Heritage after the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake." UNESCO. (2025). Accessed August 28th, 2025. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/restoring-cultural-heritage-after-2015-gorkha-earthquake>.

¹⁴⁹ Lee, Andrew. "The challenges facing the Nepal earthquake disaster response." World Economic Forum. (2015). Accessed August 28th, 2025.

<https://www.weforum.org/stories/2015/04/the-challenges-facing-the-nepal-earthquake-disaster-response/>.

Possible Solutions

Unlike many other issues tackled by UN assemblies, the revitalization of culture after natural disasters is usually not politically controversial, and there will likely be a great deal of agreement among the body that culture is a major component of reconstruction. The majority of debate within the committee will likely be over what the best procedure is for restoring culture and how it should be prioritized relative to other issues in reconstructing after natural disasters. There may be some controversy about how to reconstruct when two or more groups lay claim to a site destroyed and want it restored in their own way. This happened following a 2023 earthquake in Turkey that destroyed the city of Antyaka, formerly known as Antioch, a city which has been inhabited for centuries by different groups of people.¹⁵⁰ There also may be instances when a country wants to leave a monument in ruins, either as a memorial to the disaster itself, as was the case with the Church of St. Dunstan in London after World War II;¹⁵¹ or because it sees the monument as a sign of oppression, as has been the case with many old Soviet monuments in Eastern Europe that have been left to decay.¹⁵² But, in most circumstances reconstruction of culture after natural disasters will likely receive strong support from all or almost all countries in UNESCO.

¹⁵⁰ Amaya-Akkermans, Arie. “Beyond Rubble-Cultural Heritage and Healing After Disaster.” The Markaz Review. (2024). <https://themarkaz.org/beyond-rubble-cultural-heritage-and-healing-after-disaster/>.

¹⁵¹ Barker, Sam. “This Ruined London Church Is Now A Stunning City Park.” Secret London. (2025). Accessed August 30th, 2025. <https://secretldn.com/st-dunstan-ruin-church-garden/>.

¹⁵² “Should Soviet monuments be dismantled or preserved?.” DW. (2023). Accessed August 30th, 2025. <https://www.dw.com/en/should-soviet-monuments-be-dismantled-or-preserved/a-65949228>.



The Church of St. Dunstan in London, which, instead of being rebuilt after World War II, currently serves as a war memorial and city park.¹⁵³

In responding to cultural damage from future natural disasters UNESCO can learn from both successes and failures from earlier projects. Based on the contrast of the recovery after Haiti and Nepal's respective earthquakes, it appears recovery of culture should be relatively centralized, as otherwise it is easy for resources to be spread too thin or for contradictions in the missions of different groups to get in the way of each other. Though, the body should be careful to avoid the reverse of this problem, in which recovery could be so centralized and regulated that it prevents external organizations from contributing. Another major concern that should be addressed immediately after a natural disaster is ensuring the local authorities, and secondarily

¹⁵³ This image is the Church of St. Dunstan in London, which was never rebuilt after World War II, and instead serves as a war memorial and city park. Image source: Barker, Sam. "This Ruined London Church Is Now A Stunning City Park." Secret London. (2025). Accessed August 30th, 2025. <https://secretldn.com/st-dunstan-ruin-church-garden/>.

the UN authorities, are firmly in place, as otherwise internal turmoil can destabilize recovery efforts.

Assuming the administration is properly in place, the next major goal during recovery will likely be funding. This problem will likely be greatest in poorer countries that cannot easily fund their own recovery. UNESCO is mostly funded by its member states,¹⁵⁴ but since UNESCO is usually only one of several organizations responding to a crisis, it may be helpful to draft a resolution to make sure all organizations are well-funded.

Balancing Aspects of Culture

The most difficult issue when dealing with culture specifically will likely be balancing it with other aspects of recovery, especially UNESCO's other pursuits such as education and science. However, making sure both tangible and intangible culture are revitalized after a natural disaster should also be of concern. Tangible culture such as monuments and artifacts usually requires physical resources for restoration, meaning it may be more expensive to restore. However, since intangible cultural heritage, such as language and folklore, cannot be seen, it is easy to forget about it or to not realize it is damaged. So, in any resolution UNESCO passes, cultural revitalization should be balanced with other recovery efforts, and made to include both tangible and intangible culture.

Finally, any solution passed by UNESCO should be written to cover a wide variety of situations, both in terms of specific natural disasters and the conditions in which they occur. As seen in Haiti, natural disasters in urban areas are often the most problematic, as there is much

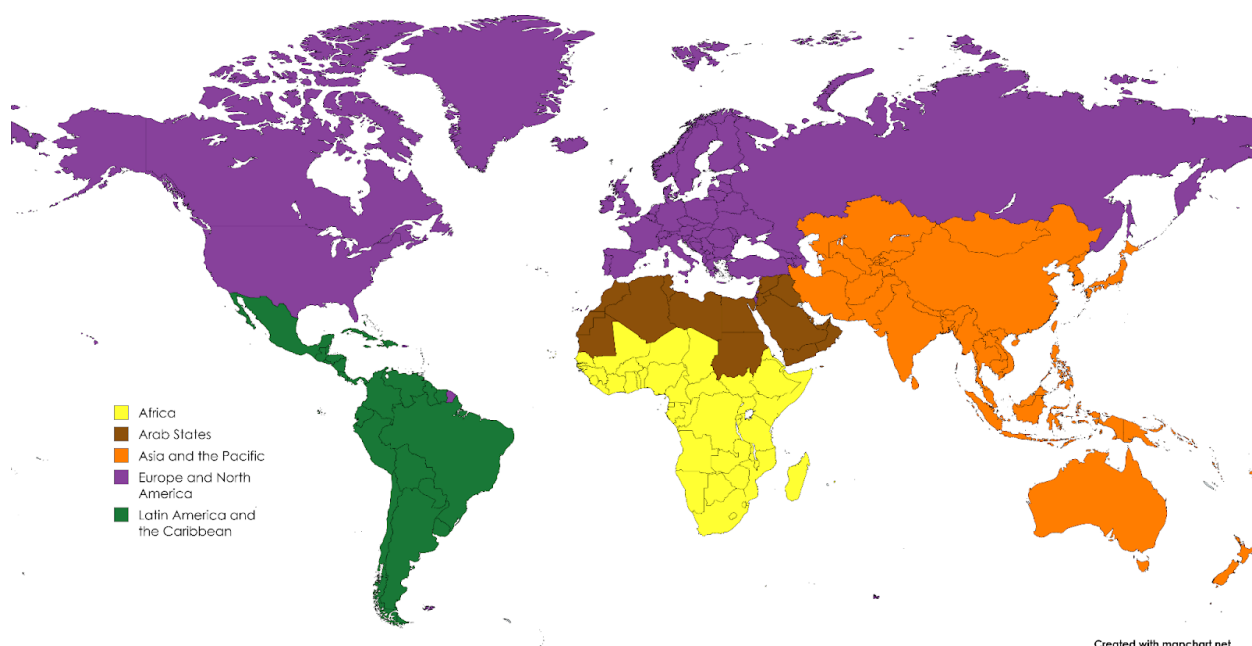
¹⁵⁴ "Sources of Funding." UNESCO Core Data Portal. (2025). Accessed September 1st, 2025. <https://core.unesco.org/en/sources-of-funding>.

more that can be destroyed and destruction impacts many people. In 2018, UNESCO and the World Bank passed a framework for culture in urban disaster recovery known as CURE (Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery),¹⁵⁵ which will likely help with adapting recovery techniques in cities to different situations. However, areas that are not urbanized certainly should not be ignored, especially for indigenous populations that already have endangered cultures.

It is important to note that the problems and solutions mentioned above are not nearly exhaustive for the topic of revitalizing culture after natural disasters. In creating its solution, UNESCO will likely want to consider other solutions, or respond to other issues related to this topic.

¹⁵⁵ “UNESCO and World Bank use culture for building back better after conflict and disasters in cities.” UNESCO. (2018). Accessed September 1st, 2025.
<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-and-world-bank-use-culture-building-back-better-after-conflict-and-disasters-cities>.

Bloc Positions



Map highlighting different regions of the world.

Africa

The most common natural disasters in Africa are water-related, with 60% of natural disasters reported on the continent from 1970-2019 being floods, 17% being storms, and 16% being droughts.¹⁵⁶ So, countries in Africa will likely favor resolutions that respond to water-related disasters. Droughts and other water scarcity are much more long-term than other disasters, but are known to damage culture just like more sudden crises, especially in indigenous communities with small populations.¹⁵⁷ Sub-Saharan Africa is home to many small cultures,

¹⁵⁶ Galal, Saifaddin. "Distribution of reported natural disasters in Africa between 1970 and 2019, by type." Statista. (2024). Accessed September 1st, 2025.

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1270517/distribution-of-reported-natural-disasters-in-africa-by-type/>.

¹⁵⁷ Joco, Valerie. "An Ethical Study of the Impact of Water Insecurity on Identity in Indigenous Communities." Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. (2023). Accessed September 1st, 2025.

with anywhere from 1000-2000 languages being spoken in the region.¹⁵⁸ So, countries in this region will also likely favor proposals protecting small indigenous communities. Finally, while it is lower than it has been in the past, poverty remains high in Sub-Saharan Africa,¹⁵⁹ and therefore countries in the region will likely favor proposals dealing with the funding of recovery efforts.

Arab States

The destruction in the Arab States that has garnered the most attention in recent years has likely been the wars in the region, so even though this topic will be focused on natural disasters, states in this region may want to add proposals that cover manmade disasters. Even though war has likely caused more destruction in recent years, there are of course still natural disasters in the Arab States, with the most common ones being floods, earthquakes, and droughts.¹⁶⁰ With its many ruins, those from Ancient Egypt and Ancient Mesopotamia being the most iconic, this region has a lot of tangible cultural heritage, so states in this region will likely prioritize protection of cultural sites and artifacts. Finally, because the Arab States have had a lot of wars in recent years, they have a lot of experience rebuilding destroyed cultural heritage through

<https://www.scu.edu/environmental-ethics/resources/an-ethical-study-of-the-impact-of-water-insecurity-on-identity-in-indigenous-communities/>.

¹⁵⁸ “Introduction to African Languages.” Harvard University. Accessed September 1st, 2025.

<https://alp.fas.harvard.edu/introduction-african-languages>.

¹⁵⁹ Arriagada, Pablo. “Extreme poverty, though lower in the past, is still very high in Sub-Saharan Africa.” Our World in Data. (2024). Accessed September 1st, 2025.

<https://ourworldindata.org/data-insights/extreme-poverty-though-vastly-reduced-is-still-very-high-in-sub-saharan-africa>.

¹⁶⁰ Zanon, Andrea. “The Threat of Natural Disasters in the Arab Region: How to Weather the Storm.” World Bank Blogs. (2013). Accessed September 1st, 2025.

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/arabvoices/threat-natural-disasters-arab-region-how-weather-storm>.

programs such as Revive the Spirit of Mosul,¹⁶¹ and that knowledge will likely also be applicable to dealing with natural disasters.



The Arab States are known for having a lot of ancient ruins. One example is the above-pictured Petra in Jordan, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.¹⁶²

Asia and the Pacific

In Asia, the most common natural disasters are floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, tropical storms, and landslides,¹⁶³ while in the Pacific, the most common disasters are tropical cyclones,

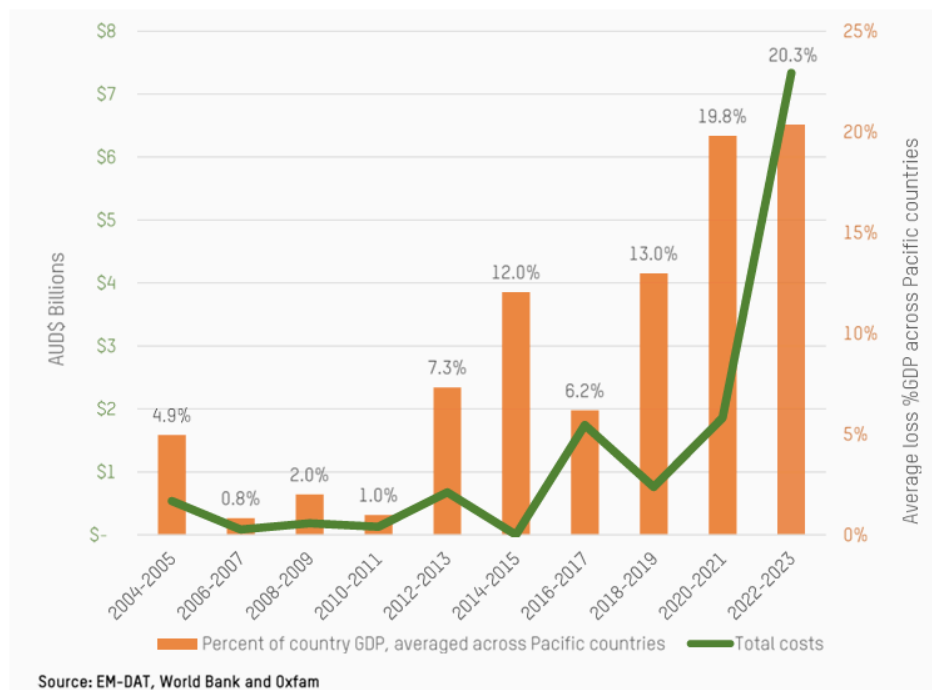
¹⁶¹ “Revive the Spirit of Mosul.” UNESCO. Accessed September 16th, 2025.
<https://www.unesco.org/en/revive-mosul>.

¹⁶² Image Source: “Petra.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed September 21st, 2025.
<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/326/>.

¹⁶³ “Natural Disasters in Asia: Types and Prevention.” TrapBag. Accessed September 16th, 2025.
<https://trapbag.com/blog/natural-disasters-in-asia/#:~:text=Frequently%20occurring%20natural%20disasters%20include%20earthquakes%2C%20tsunamis%2C%20tropical,resulting%20in%20many%20different%20kinds%20of%20natural%20disasters.>

tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and **coastal erosion**.¹⁶⁴ The Pacific, consisting of many island and archipelago nations, has been hit hard by climate change, and has seen a 700% increase in the number of people affected by natural disasters in the past decade.¹⁶⁵ For this reason, the Pacific will likely favor resolutions targeting water related disasters and climate change. In addition, because disasters are becoming much more expensive in the Pacific, countries in the region will likely favor resolutions that include economic aid packages.

FIGURE 1: PACIFIC CLIMATE DISASTER COSTS AND AVERAGE LOSS OF GDP FOR COUNTRIES IMPACTED, AVERAGED ACROSS THE PACIFIC (\$AUD BILLIONS)



*Plot showing the impact of Pacific climate disasters on the GDP of impacted countries.*¹⁶⁶

Asia has also been hit hard by climate change, with the World Meteorological Organization determining it to be the hardest-hit region by climate change and extreme weather

¹⁶⁴ “Preparing for Natural Disasters in the Pacific Islands.” PacificOcean.info. Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://pacificocean.info/2025/02/25/preparing-for-natural-disasters-in-the-pacific-islands/>.

¹⁶⁵ “Escalating Emergencies: 20 Years of Pacific Climate Disasters.” OXFAM Australia. Accessed September 16th, 2025.

https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/FINAL_20241104A_Pacific_climate_disasters_brief.pdf.

¹⁶⁶ Image source: Ibid.

in 2024.¹⁶⁷ Even in the inland regions of Asia, this is a major problem, causing the melting of ice in the Himalayas and droughts. Finally, while **intangible heritage** certainly exists, Asia also has a lot of tangible cultural heritage, so this region will likely favor measures to rebuild structures and recover artifacts.

North America and Europe

The most common natural disasters in Europe are floods, wildfires, and storms,¹⁶⁸ while the most common disasters in North America are floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, and hurricanes.¹⁶⁹ Wildfires are also a major problem in North America, especially in northern North America, due to the high number of forests. While Europe and North America are relatively high-income regions,¹⁷⁰ they are not in any way immune to natural disasters. There have been recent cases of natural disasters damaging cultural heritage in these regions, such as a 2023 wildfire in Greece that damaged a 15th-century monastery and the 2005 Hurricane Katrina that damaged the historic French Quarter of New Orleans.^{171,172} Furthermore, since these regions, especially Europe, have a high amount of tangible cultural heritage, which is most directly in danger from natural disasters, these nations will likely be very concerned with keeping their

¹⁶⁷ “WMO report: Asia hit hardest by climate change and extreme weather.” UN News. (2024). Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/04/1148886>.

¹⁶⁸ “Floods, wildlife, wildfire, and storms: what is the EU’s disaster response?” European Parliament. (2024). Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20241007STO24471/floods-wildfire-and-storms-what-is-the-eu-s-disaster-response>.

¹⁶⁹ “Natural Disasters in North America: Types and Prevention.” TrapBag. Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://trapbag.com/blog/natural-disasters-north-america/>.

¹⁷⁰ “World Bank country classifications by income level for 2024-2025.” World Bank Blogs. Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/opendata/world-bank-country-classifications-by-income-level-for-2024-2025>.

¹⁷¹ Kokkinidis, Tasos. “UNESCO-Designated Monastery Damaged in Greek Wildfire.” Greek Reporter. (2023). Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://greekreporter.com/2023/08/24/unesco-monastery-damaged-wildfire-greece/>.

¹⁷² “French Quarter battered but unbowed.” NBC News. (2005). Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna9121330>.

cultures safe. Since they have so much **tangible heritage**, tangible heritage will likely be the heritage Europe and North America are most concerned with protecting, though intangible heritage should not be ignored either. There are also 574 federally-recognized indigenous tribes in the United States¹⁷³ and 630 First Nations communities in Canada¹⁷⁴, cultures that are more vulnerable to natural disasters due to being small. For this reason, North America will likely favor resolutions that protect the cultures of indigenous communities. Finally, European nations have a lot of experience in international cooperation on natural disasters, having founded the EU solidarity fund in 2002 for disaster recovery,¹⁷⁵ and they may favor similar programs on a global scale. Though, UNESCO already has a similar program known as the Heritage Emergency fund, which was set up in 2015 to protect culture during disasters.¹⁷⁶

Latin America and the Caribbean

The most common natural disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean are floods, storms, and earthquakes.¹⁷⁷ Countries with regions of the Amazon rainforest may be concerned with wildfires as well. Coastal erosion due to climate change is also a major problem in the

¹⁷³ Ortiz, Anna Maria. "DOE Actions Needed to Reduce Barriers for Tribes." US Government Accountability Office. (2025). Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://files.gao.gov/reports/GAO-25-108720/index.html>.

¹⁷⁴ "First Nations." Government of Canada. Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013791/1535470872302>.

¹⁷⁵ "EU Solidarity Fund." European Commission. Accessed September 16th, 2025. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/solidarity-fund_en.

¹⁷⁶ "Heritage Emergency Fund." UNESCO. Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://www.unesco.org/en/culture-emergencies/heritage-emergency-fund>.

¹⁷⁷ "Natural Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2000-2019." UNOCHA. (2020). Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/natural-disasters-latin-america-and-caribbean-2000-2019>.

Caribbean.¹⁷⁸ Therefore, Caribbean nations especially will favor measures mitigating the effects of climate change. Latin America and the Caribbean have a good mix of tangible heritage, such as the ruins of Chichen Itza and Machu Picchu, and intangible heritage, such as the indigenous languages of South America and the Mexican Day of the Dead. For this reason, countries in this region will likely want to protect both tangible and intangible heritage. Finally, as there are 826 indigenous peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean, countries in this region will likely favor measures to protect smaller cultures during times of disaster.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ “Confronting Coastal Erosion in the Caribbean.” Agence Francaise De Developpement. (2022). Accessed September 16th, 2025.
<https://www.afd.fr/en/actualites/confronting-coastal-erosion-caribbean#:~:text=While%20coastal%20erosion%20is%20a%20natural%20phenomenon%2C%20human,shrunk%2C%20narrowing%20by%20as%20much%20as%20120%20meters.>

¹⁷⁹ “Who are the indigenous and tribal peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean?” Food and Agricultural Organization of the United States. Accessed September 17th, 2025.
<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/27b4e6b5-30b2-4e47-aaab-0505afa387d7/content/src/html/who-are-the-indigenous-and-tribal-peoples-of-latin-america-and-the-caribbean.html>.

Glossary

Build Back Better - To rebuild after a disaster so that the area is better than before, whether that be by being more resistant to future disasters, having a stronger culture, or improving in another way.

Coastal Erosion - Coastlines retreating and being replaced with bodies of water, often due to rising sea levels.

Cultural Heritage - Elements of culture that are inherited from previous generations.¹⁸⁰

Indigenous Cultures - Cultures that originated in the land that they currently inhabit. This term is typically used to refer to either small cultures or cultures that have become less pronounced as outside cultures have moved in. Such cultures can be more vulnerable to decline after natural disasters.

Intangible Heritage - Cultural heritage that is not physical. Examples include language, folklore, and music. While it is not as directly damaged by natural disasters as tangible heritage, it can decline if no effort is made to preserve it.

¹⁸⁰ “Cultural Heritage” Wikipedia. Accessed September 17th, 2025. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_heritage.

Tangible Heritage - Cultural heritage that is physical. Examples include ruins and artifacts. Tangible heritage is usually the most directly damaged by natural disasters.

Bibliography

“‘A frenzy of looting’ seen in Haiti’s capital.” CNN. (2010). Accessed August 23rd, 2025.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/americas/01/18/haiti.looting.earthquake/index.htm>

l.

Amaya-Akkermans, Arie. “Beyond Rubble-Cultural Heritage and Healing After Disaster.” The Markaz Review. (2024).

<https://themarkaz.org/beyond-rubble-cultural-heritage-and-healing-after-disaster/>.

Andre, Vania. “Haiti Since the Earthquake: A Decade of Empty Promises.” Pulitzer Center.

(2020). <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/haiti-earthquake-decade-empty-promises>.

“Architecture.” Cathedrale de Chartres. Accessed September 17th, 2025.

<https://www.cathedrale-chartres.org/en/cathedrale/monument/architecture/>.

Arriagada, Pablo. “Extreme poverty, though lower in the past, is still very high in Sub-Saharan Africa.” Our World in Data. (2024). Accessed September 1st, 2025.

<https://ourworldindata.org/data-insights/extreme-poverty-though-vastly-reduced-is-still-very-high-in-sub-saharan-africa>.

Barker, Sam. “This Ruined London Church Is Now A Stunning City Park.” Secret London.

(2025). Accessed August 30th, 2025.

<https://secretldn.com/st-dunstan-ruin-church-garden/>.

Bevan, John Rhys. “Drawing lessons from the 2010 Haiti earthquake - Part 1.” Nepal Economic Forum. (2015). Accessed August 26th, 2025.

<https://nepaleconomicforum.org/drawing-lessons-from-the-2010-haiti-earthquake-part-1/>.

Bocquet, Denis. “Urban reconstruction as a complex process: reflections on post-1945 Berlin.”

UNESCO. Accessed August 26th, 2025.

Bojarski, Sam. “National Palace Rebuilding Effort in Limbo 10 Years After Earthquake.”

Pulitzer Center. (2020). Accessed August 23rd, 2025.

<https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/national-palace-rebuilding-effort-limbo-10-years-after-earthquake>.

“Bringing living heritage in Nepal’s schools-a new beginning in innovative teaching and learning.” The Annapurna Express. (2021). Accessed August 27th, 2025.

<https://theannapurnaexpress.com/story/20167/>.

Charles, Jacqueline. “Decision to demolish Haiti National Palace draws strong criticism.” Miami Herald. (2012). Accessed August 24th, 2025.

<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/article1942155.html>.

“Chartres Cathedral.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed September 17th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/81>.

“Confronting Coastal Erosion in the Caribbean.” Agence Francaise De Developpement. (2022).

Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://www.afd.fr/en/actualites/confronting-coastal-erosion-caribbean#:~:text=While%20coastal%20erosion%20is%20a%20natural%20phenomenon%2C%20human,shrunk%2C%20narrowing%20by%20as%20much%20as%20120%20meters>.

“Countries by Population Density 2025.” World Population Review. (2025). Accessed August 26th, 2025. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-by-density>.

Cousins, Sophie. “Missing Millions: Nepal’s earthquake struck population is still waiting for help.” The BMJ. (2017). Accessed August 26th, 2025,

<https://www.bmj.com/content/357/bmj.j2479>.

“Cultural Heritage” Wikipedia. Accessed September 17th, 2025.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_heritage.

El-Abbadi, Mostafa. “Library of Alexandria - Ancient, Burning, Destruction.” Britannica.

Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Library-of-Alexandria/The-fate-of-the-Library-of-Alexandria>.

“Escalating Emergencies: 20 Years of Pacific Climate Disasters.” OXFAM Australia. Accessed September 16th, 2025.

https://www.oxfam.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/FINAL_20241104A_Pacific_climate_disasters_brief.pdf.

Estes, Charlie. “How Aid Has Failed Haiti.” Roots of Development. (2022). Accessed August 24th, 2025. <https://rootsofdevelopment.org/how-aid-has-failed-haiti/>.

“EU Solidarity Fund.” European Commission. Accessed September 16th, 2025.

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/solidarity-fund_en.

“First Nations.” Government of Canada. Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013791/1535470872302>.

“Floods, wildlife, wildfire, and storms: what is the EU’s disaster response?” European

Parliament. (2024). Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20241007STO24471/floods-wildfire-and-storms-what-is-the-eu-s-disaster-response>.

“Former Ministers of Culture of France.” Cultures. (2025). Accessed September 18th, 2025.

<https://cultures.fr/en/post/articles/former-ministers-of-culture-of-france>.

“French Quarter battered but unbowed.” NBC News. (2005). Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna9121330>.

Galal, Saifaddin. “Distribution of reported natural disasters in Africa between 1970 and 2019, by type.” Statista. (2024). Accessed September 1st, 2025.

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1270517/distribution-of-reported-natural-disasters-in-africa-by-type/>.

“Hainan Province Cihang Foundation.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed August 26th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/partners/499>.

“HAITI: 2010 Haiti Earthquake.” Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative. Accessed August 23rd, 2025.

<https://culturalrescue.si.edu/why-it-matters/our-impact/haiti-2010-haiti-earthquake>.

“Haiti: making culture a motor for reconstruction.” UNESCO Digital Library. (2011). Accessed August 24th, 2025. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000192374>.

Harris, Chris. “How Nepal earthquake devastated Kathmandu’s UNESCO heritage.” Euronews. (2015). Accessed August 26th, 2025.

<https://www.euronews.com/2015/04/27/how-nepal-earthquake-devastated-kathmandus-unesco-heritage>.

“Heritage Emergency Fund.” UNESCO. Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/culture-emergencies/heritage-emergency-fund>.

“Hope amid hardship: Battling cholera in Haiti’s displacement camps.” Pan American Health Organization. (2025). Accessed August 24th, 2025.

<https://www.paho.org/en/stories/hope-amid-hardship-battling-cholera-haitis-displacement-camps>.

“Introduction to African Languages.” Harvard University. Accessed September 1st, 2025.

<https://alp.fas.harvard.edu/introduction-african-languages>.

Joco, Valerie. “An Ethical Study of the Impact of Water Insecurity on Identity in Indigenous Communitéis.” Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. (2023). Accessed September 1st, 2025.

<https://www.scu.edu/environmental-ethics/resources/an-ethical-study-of-the-impact-of-water-insecurity-on-identity-in-indigenous-communities/>.

Kokkinidis, Tasos. “UNESCO-Designated Monastery Damaged in Greek Wildfire.” Greek Reporter. (2023). Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://greekreporter.com/2023/08/24/unesco-monastery-damaged-wildfire-greece/>.

Lee, Andrew. “The challenges facing the Nepal earthquake disaster response.” World Economic Forum. (2015). Accessed August 28th, 2025.

<https://www.weforum.org/stories/2015/04/the-challenges-facing-the-nepal-earthquake-disaster-response/>.

Lejustal, Danise Davide. “Jacmel marks 33 years of National Carnival with a spectacular showcase of top-tier performances, music, and dance talent.” The Haitian Times. (2025). Accessed September 21st, 2025.

<https://haitiantimes.com/2025/02/26/jacmel-carnival-2025/>.

Lenov, Ilya. “‘Great Nobi Earthquake’ series from the ‘Kusakabe Kimbei Album (6)’: aesthetic perception of a documentary narrative in Japanese souvenir photography.” Electronic Journal of Contemporary Japanese Studies 23, no. 3. (2024).

McKibben, Ryan. “A Tale of Today: Up From the Ashes Rebuilding Chicago.” Driehaus Museum. (2020). Accessed September 18th, 2025.

<https://driehausmuseum.org/blog/view/a-tale-of-today-up-from-the-ashes-rebuilding-chicago>.

“National Palace (Haiti).” Wikipedia. (2025). Accessed August 24th, 2025.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Palace_\(Haiti\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Palace_(Haiti)).

“Natural Disasters in Asia: Types and Prevention.” TrapBag. Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://trapbag.com/blog/natural-disasters-in-asia/#:~:text=Frequently%20occurring%20natural%20disasters%20include%20earthquakes%2C%20tsunamis%2C%20tropical,resulting%20in%20many%20different%20kinds%20of%20natural%20disasters.>

“Natural Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2000-2019.” UNOCHA. (2020).

Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/natural-disasters-latin-america-and-caribbean-2000-2019>

“Natural Disasters in North America: Types and Prevention.” TrapBag. Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://trapbag.com/blog/natural-disasters-north-america/>.

“Nepal Earthquake Rehabilitation Builds Back Better Infrastructure.” Asian Development Bank. (2022). Accessed August 26th, 2025.

<https://www.adb.org/results/nepal-earthquake-rehabilitation-builds-back-better-infrastructure>.

“Nepal Earthquake Rehabilitation Builds Back Better Infrastructure.” Asian Development Bank. (2022). Accessed August 27th, 2025.

<https://www.adb.org/results/nepal-earthquake-rehabilitation-builds-back-better-infrastructure>.

“Nepal Reconstruction Authority Dissolved after Completing Tenure.” New Spotlight Magazine. (2021). Accessed August 26th, 2025.

<https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2021/12/24/nepal-reconstruction-authority-dissolved-after-completing-tenure/>.

“Nepal’s museums re-opening post-earthquake.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2016). Accessed August 27th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1537/>.

Ortiz, Anna Maria. “DOE Actions Needed to Reduce Barriers for Tribes.” US Government Accountability Office. (2025). Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://files.gao.gov/reports/GAO-25-108720/index.html>.

“Our History.” UNESCO. Accessed September 18th, 2025. <https://www.unesco.org/en/brief/history>.

Pallardy, Richard. “2010 Haiti earthquake.” Britannica. (2025). Accessed August 23rd, 2025. <https://www.britannica.com/event/2010-Haiti-earthquake>.

“Petra.” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Accessed September 21st, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/326/>.

“Post-Earthquake Recovery of Nepal’s Cultural Heritage: Restoration of the Radha Krishna Temple in Kathmandu.” UNESCO. (2020). Accessed August 26th, 2025. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/post-earthquake-recovery-nepals-cultural-heritage-restoration-radha-krishna-temple-kathmandu>.

“Preparing for Natural Disasters in the Pacific Islands.” PacificOcean.info. Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://pacificocean.info/2025/02/25/preparing-for-natural-disasters-in-the-pacific-islands/>.

Rafferty, John P. “Nepal Earthquake of 2015 | Nepal earthquake of 2015 | Magnitude, Death Toll, Aftermath, & Facts.” Britannica. (2025). Accessed August 26th, 2025.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nepal-earthquake-of-2015>.

“Report by the Director-General on UNESCO’s post-earthquake response in Haiti.” UNESCO Digital Library. (2010). Accessed August 24th, 2025.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000187527>.

“Restoring Cultural Heritage after the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake.” UNESCO. (2025). Accessed August 28th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/restoring-cultural-heritage-after-2015-gorkha-earthquake>.

“Revive the Spirit of Mosul.” UNESCO. Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/revive-mosul>.

Rodgers, Lucy. “Haiti quake: Why isn’t aid money going to Haitians?” BBC. (2013). Accessed August 24th, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-20949624>.

“Santorini 1600 BC and the End of Minoan Civilization.” Penn State Department of Geosciences. Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://courses.ems.psu.edu/earth107/node/1611>.

“Should Soviet monuments be dismantled or preserved?.” DW. (2023). Accessed August 30th, 2025.

<https://www.dw.com/en/should-soviet-monuments-be-dismantled-or-preserved/a-65949228>.

Shrestha, Sujana et al. "Damage Assessment of Cultural Heritage Structures after the 2015

Gorkha, Nepal, Earthquake: A Case Study of Jagannath Temple." *Earthquake Spectra*.

(2017).

Shurkin, Joel. "In Middle Ages, Societies Surprisingly Responsive To Natural Disasters."

American Institute of Physics. (2013). Accessed September 17th, 2025.

<https://www.aip.org/inside-science/in-middle-ages-societies-surprisingly-responsive-to-natural-disasters>.

"Sources of Funding." UNESCO Core Data Portal. (2025). Accessed September 1st, 2025.

<https://core.unesco.org/en/sources-of-funding>.

"Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage." UNESCO

Intangible Cultural Heritage. (2003). <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

"The 13th century Cathedral." Cathedrale de Chartres. Accessed September 17th, 2025.

<https://www.cathedrale-chartres.org/en/cathedrale/monument/architecture/the-13th-century-cathedral/>.

"The Chicago Fire of 1871 and the 'Great Rebuilding.'" National Geographic. (2011). Accessed

September 18th, 2025.

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/chicago-fire-1871-and-great-rebuilding/>.

"The Fall of the Minoans." PBS. (2011). Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/the-fall-of-the-minoans/61/>.

"The Lost Library of Alexandria: Knowledge Destroyed." Science News Today. (2025).

Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://www.sciencenewstoday.org/the-lost-library-of-alexandria-knowledge-destroyed>.

“The Palace of Knossos.” Visit Greece. Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://www.visitgreece.gr/experiences/culture/archaeological-sites-and-monuments/the-palace-of-knossos/>.

“Today in Earthquake History.” United States Geological Survey. Accessed September 18th, 2025. <https://earthquake.usgs.gov/learn/today/index.php?month=10&day=27>.

The Arts Council of Great Britain - 2nd Annual Report 1946-1947. London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1947.

“UNESCO and World Bank use culture for building back better after conflict and disasters in cities.” UNESCO. (2018). Accessed September 1st, 2025.

<https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-and-world-bank-use-culture-building-back-better-after-conflict-and-disasters-cities>.

“UNESCO chief reaffirms commitment to protect Haiti’s cultural heritage.” UN News. (2010). Accessed August 24th, 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2010/03/332032>.

“UNESCO to assess the impact on Nepal’s cultural heritage of the devastating earthquake.”

UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2015). Accessed August 26th, 2025.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/1268>.

“UNESCO’s Commitment to Action for the cultural recovery of Jacmel (Haiti) has been accepted by the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI).” UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (2011). Accessed August 24th, 2025. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/792/>.

“Who are the indigenous and tribal peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean?.” Food and Agricultural Organization of the United States. Accessed September 17th, 2025.

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/27b4e6b5-30b2-4e47-aaab-050>

5afa387d7/content/src/html/who-are-the-indigenous-and-tribal-peoples-of-latin-america-and-the-caribbean.html.

“Wildfires ravage South Korea, killing 18 and destroying a 1,300-year-old temple.” NPR.

Accessed September 21st, 2025.

<https://www.npr.org/2025/03/26/nx-s1-5341196/south-korea-wildfires-buddhist-temple>.

“WMO report: Asia hit hardest by climate change and extreme weather.” UN News. (2024).

Accessed September 16th, 2025. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/04/1148886>.

“World Bank country classifications by income level for 2024-2025.” World Bank Blogs.

Accessed September 16th, 2025.

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/opendata/world-bank-country-classifications-by-income-level-for-2024-2025>.

Wolfson, Elijah. “Theft in Kathmandu: Can Nepal’s Cultural Legacy be Saved?” Newsweek.

(2015). Accessed August 26th, 2025.

<https://www.newsweek.com/theft-kathmandu-can-nepals-cultural-legacy-be-saved-326684>.

Zanon, Andrea. “The Threat of Natural Disasters in the Arab Region: How to Weather the Storm.” World Bank Blogs. (2013). Accessed September 1st, 2025.

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/arabvoices/threat-natural-disasters-arab-region-how-weather-storm>.