

Concept Note
THE WORLD HERITAGE OF WATER;
TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE & CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING
CLIMATE

A Proposed COP22 Side Event

Application Window: 19 July 2016 at 10 a.m. Central European Time (CET) until Friday, 22 July 2016 at 5 p.m. CET

More Information: https://seors.unfccc.int/seors?session_id=COP22

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US/ICOMOS and the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) seek additional partners to participate in, help organize and co-sponsor a side event at the 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 22) to the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change). COP 22 will take place from 7-18 November 2016 in Marrakech, Morocco. Among other deliberations anticipated to occur during COP 22, parties will prepare for entry into force of the Paris Agreement.

The proposed COP22 side event will focus on the Heritage of Water in a Changing Climate. Water is one of the key resources required to sustain life. The need for abundant and reliable sources of potable water has catalyzed the development of significant material culture in the form of urban and agrarian engineered infrastructure, and contributed to cultural landscapes around the world. How to obtain it, how to transport it, how to store it, how to purify it, how to harness its power, how to celebrate it, and how conserve it has motivated human endeavor in myriad ways for millennia. Indeed, the cultural heritage of water, therefore relates not only to the engineered technology and architecture that humankind has developed to manage, utilize and affirm its life giving properties but also to those intangible values that have shaped our beliefs and practices.

These themes are relevant for modern policy makers, engineers, designers, planners and preservationists to understand since the lessons of the past can offer viable and sustainable solutions to today's water access, stewardship, and infrastructure challenges. Ancient water engineers grappled with the same issues that modern water engineers do, e.g., providing abundant and reliable supplies of potable water, water security, water storage, agricultural irrigation, efficient urban distribution, water theft, hygiene, etc. The history of water and irrigation, the development of related technologies, and the sustainability of the old systems provides insight into the factors that have sustained successful outcomes over generations and have great potential for informing and aiding in the development of climate resilience and adaptation strategies.

Maintaining this heritage in the face of rapid climate change will be a major challenge. A recent report from UNESCO, UNEP and UCS identified climate change as the fastest growing threat to World Heritage globally, and emphasized the importance of achieving the Paris Agreement

pledge to try to limit warming to 1.5°C in order to preserve natural and cultural heritage sites worldwide.

The global implications of climate change for water resource were highlighted in the Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and include water scarcity impacting larger percentages of the global population, an increase in flood disasters and more intense and extended droughts. For many regions of the world, the availability and quality of both surface water and groundwater will decline during the 21st century.

The importance of recognizing, understanding and maintaining the heritage of water is underscored by the selection of Marrakech's Menara Gardens Pavilion as the symbol of COP22. The gardens were established in the 12th century with the iconic pavilion being built during the 16th. The pavilion and basin were developed to irrigate the surrounding gardens and orchards using a sophisticated ancient system of underground channels called a *qanat*. The basin is supplied with water thanks to an old hydraulic system which conveys water from the mountains located approximately 30 km away from Marrakech.



In the coming decades, the impact of climate change threatens coastal and riverine areas including low-lying delta cities and regions. Historically established as trade centers at river mouths, many delta cities will experience severe flooding as a result of rising sea levels, worsening storm surges, heavy rainfall and land subsidence. At the same time, drought and desertification will put enormous demands on water management in many of the drier regions of the world. Time-tested solutions from the past can inspire and assist engineers, designers and planners in defining effective strategies for the future. At the same time, new interventions must be sensitive to other elements of human heritage. An integrated, holistic approach is necessary as climate change has consequences for heritage, the economy, infrastructure, as well as social and living conditions.

ICOMOS and UCS are looking for partners and speakers to participate in a COP22 side event on these topics, covering such aspects as:

1. Impacts of climate change on World Heritage sites for which water management is part of their Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and the implications of the 1.5°C target.
2. Integration of traditional water/wastewater management strategies into contemporary, sustainable development, disaster preparedness and climate resilience strategies.
3. Inclusion of policies that recognize that traditional knowledge systems regarding water/wastewater play a key role as important resources essential for achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.
4. Integrating protection of heritage properties and their attendant values into contemporary water and irrigation development.
5. Sustainability of heritage water/wastewater systems for modern uses.

We envisage a one-day workshop that would include the presentation of new case studies on the inter-linkage of water, World Heritage, climate resilience and sustainable development. The workshop would also include panel discussions bringing together scientists, cultural heritage experts, traditional water users and policymakers.

Case studies could include:

- One or two Moroccan sites – to be determined (Marrakech, Mazagan?)
- The *subak* systems and cultural landscapes of Bali, Indonesia
- The rice terraces of the Philippine Cordilleras
- Traditional ownership and wetland use systems of Kakadu National Park, Australia
- The mill network at Kinderdyk-Elshout and the canal ring of Amsterdam, Netherlands
- The Aranjuez Cultural Landscape, Spain
- The Palmerel of Elche, Spain
- The acequias of New Mexico, including, Taos, USA
- Etruscan water heritage in Italy
- Ancient Roman water and wastewater heritage in southern Italy,
- Ancient Roman water heritage in France and Italy; Ancient Incan water heritage of Peru,
- Water and heritage related sites in Israel, Tunisia and Iran,
- Water related industrial heritage sites
- Old Croton Aqueduct in New York

Three types of participation from partners are possible.

- 1. Co-sponsor. Join ICOMOS/UCS as a co-sponsor and provide assistance in planning and organizing the event**
- 2. Provide a speaker or a panel moderator. The proposed participant would need to be able to present in Marrakech. Unfortunately, ICOMOS/UCS cannot provide travel assistance.**
- 3. Promotional sponsors endorse the event in exchange for being listed as a sponsor and agree to promote the event through the organization's customary means.**