DECLARATION ON THE SAFEGUARDING OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR CLIMATE ACTION OF THE ICH NGO FORUM

Following an Extraordinary General Assembly held online on 28 May 2024 and the subsequent online vote, we the members of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Non-Governmental Organization Forum (ICH NGO Forum) adopt the following *Declaration on the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage for Climate Action* in light of the work it has been done on the topic and in support of recent initiatives carried out by different UNESCO entities such as the publication on *Indigenous knowledge for climate change assessment and adaptation* (2018),[1] the publication of the pilot project carried out in East Africa entitled, *Supporting research and documentation of traditional knowledge systems linked to biodiversity conservation, climate change and disaster risk reduction in East Africa* (2021),[2] the final Declaration of the *World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development* (MONDIACULT 2022),[3] the global report on *The impact of climate displacement on the right to education* (2023),[4] the *Policy Document on Climate Action for World Heritage* (2023),[5] the decision of the last Intergovernmental Committee meeting of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) to organize an expert meeting dedicated to exploring the roles of ICH in the context of climate change (2023)[6] and the recent *Call for case studies on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and climate actions from the Asia-Pacific regions* (2024).[7] UNESCO has identified culture as "the ultimate renewable resource to tackle climate change".[8] The Declaration also intends to inform the UNFCCC (UN Climate Agency) of the vital role of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in climate action, given that culture, including "community and indigenous knowledge", has been recognized at COP28[9] and that there has been a call to establish a joint work plan on culture and climate action at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, in 2024.[10]

Background

Founded in 2009, ICH NGO Forum brings together 264 NGOs from 73 different countries accredited by UNESCO under the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, as of June 2024, working across the world and with a myriad of different competencies in the field of safeguarding ICH. Its activities are carried out with the participation of communities and supporting the communities, groups, and individuals who practice, enact, and

[1] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000265504 (Consulted 28 May 2024)
[2] https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-publishes-east-african-case-studies-living-heritage-and-climate-change#:~:text=UNESCO%20has%20prepared%20a%20publication,and%20disaster%20risk%20reduction%20in (Consulted 28 May 2024)
[3] https://www.unesco.org/sites/default/files/medias/fichiers/2022/10/6.MONDIACULT_EN_DRAFT%20FINAL%20DECLARATION_FINAL_1.pdf (Consulted 28 May 2024)
[4] https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387895 (Consulted 28 May 2024)
[5] https://whc.unesco.org/archive/2023/whc23-24ga-INF8-en.pdf (Consulted 28 May 2024)
[6] https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/18.COM/12 (Consulted 28 May 2024)
[7] https://www.irci.jp/news/0219-1/ (Consulted 28 May 2024)
[8] https://www.unesco.org/en/climate-change/culture (Consulted 28 May 2024)
[9] COP28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace adopted at the 28th UN Climate Change Conference (2023): https://www.cop28.com/en/cop28-declaration-on-climate-relief-recovery-and-peace (Consulted 28 May 2024)
[10] https://heritagetribune.eu/europe/cop28-takes-a-step-in-right-direction-to-recognise-the-role-of-culture-and-heritage-in-climate-action/ (Consulted 28 May 2024)

transmit ICH. The Forum's membership ranges from community-based organizations to larger NGOs which support national -- and international -- level implementation of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and engage in policy development. As such, the Forum brings to the Convention extensive and highly diverse safeguarding experiences and expertise from civil society which place it in a privileged position for providing the advisory services to the Intergovernmental Committee as set out in Article 9 of the Convention. The ICH NGO Forum, with its diverse and extensive network, plays an increasingly crucial role in the implementation and advancement of the Convention's objectives.

This Declaration follows measures and actions undertaken by the ICH NGO Forum over the course of the past six years to safeguard ICH in situations of rapid climate change and crises. Two members of the ICH NGO Forum were invited to participate in an expert meeting on safeguarding of ICH in emergency situations, including conflicts and disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards ('natural disasters'), organized by the Living Heritage Entity at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 21 and 22 May 2019. The recommendations of this expert meeting led to the endorsement of the *Operational Principles and Modalities for the Safeguarding of ICH in Emergencies* by the Intergovernmental Committee at its fourteenth session in Bogota, Colombia, December 2019 (Decision 14.COM 13) and adopted by the General Assembly at its eighth session in September 2020 (Resolution 8.GA 9). These principles and modalities provide a framework for safeguarding ICH in emergency situations, highlighting how intangible cultural heritage can itself be directly threatened and therefore must be safeguarded, and how it can also be leveraged and mobilized in an active manner to effectively help communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies. They emphasize the importance of community participation and of a holistic, intersectorial and interdisciplinary approach. The ICH NGO Forum has also followed with great interest further work on the topic undertaken by the Living Heritage Entity, notably the thematic initiative on ICH and climate change launched in 2022 and the desk-based study to review the normative framework and the literature on ICH and climate change carried out in 2023. The ensuing background document led the Intergovernmental Committee to decide to organize an expert meeting "to contribute with proposals for States Parties and other relevant stakeholders on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the context of climate change" (Decision 18.COM.12, 2023). To accompany and contribute to the endeavours of the Living Heritage Entity and the Intergovernmental Committee, more particularly from the perspective of NGOs and the communities, the ICH NGO Forum organized a symposium entitled "Living Heritage, Climate Change and the Environment" at the Seventeenth Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage held in Rabat (Morocco) on 27 November 2022. Based on various case studies, the authors of the ten papers presented at the symposium and the 120 participating members discussed the many ways in which ICH can be a source of resilience and recovery in mitigating the negative effects of emergencies in favour of rebuilding social cohesion, fostering reconciliation, and facilitating recovery for communities confronted with short-term and long-term impacts of climate change. The ICH NGO Forum also established a fund to assist accredited NGOs in emergency situations. Furthermore, a Working Group on ICH, Climate Change and The Environment was created in September of 2023 to pursue research and advocacy on the role that ICH can play in addressing climate change hazards, including the drafting of the current declaration.

In addition, we note the 2021 International Co-Sponsored Meeting on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change (ICSM CHC) cosponsored by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UNESCO and ICOMOS, which addressed extensively the intersections of ICH with the causes and responses of climate change. The Global Research and Action Agenda[11] produced

[11] Morel, Hana, Megarry, William, Potts, Andrew, Hosagrahar, Jyoti, Roberts, Debra, Arikan, Yunus, Brondizio, Eduardo, Cassar, May, Flato, Greg, Forgesson, Sarah, Masson-Delmotte, Valérie, Jigyasu, Rohit, Oumarou Ibrahim, Hindou, Pörtner, Hans-Otto, Sengupta, Sandeep, Sherpa, Pasang Dolma and Veillon, Richard (2022), Global research and action agenda on culture, heritage and climate change: scientific outcome of the International Co-Sponsored Meeting on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change. Project Report.

by the Meeting's Scientific Steering Committee synthesizes knowledge and identifies key gaps and action items. It highlights the need to recognize the role of ICH in climate action and to integrate ICH into climate policies and programs. It also emphasizes the importance of community-led initiatives and the need to build the capacity of communities to safeguard their ICH in the face of climate change. Also of note are three White Papers commissioned as "conversation starters" for the Meeting on "Intangible Cultural Heritage, Diverse Knowledge Systems and Climate Change,"[12] "Impacts, Vulnerability, and Understanding Risks of Climate Change to Culture and Heritage,"[13] and "The Role of Cultural and Natural Heritage for Climate Action."[14]

Preamble

Acknowledging our collective concern about the latest findings of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) that confirm the need for unprecedentedly ambitious and inclusive efforts within this decade to limit global warming to 1.5°C in order to mitigate the most catastrophic climate impacts, including irreversible losses to biodiversity and severe damages to culture and heritage;

Recognizing the profound and growing threat posed by climate change and climate-related hazards, including the thawing of the polar ice caps, permafrost and mountain glaciers, rising sea levels, coastal erosion and flooding, changing seasonality, avalanches, cyclones, mudslides, heatwaves, forest fires, and drought, to the rich mosaic of intangible cultural heritage practices worldwide and its bearers ;

Noting that the UN 2023 Climate Change Conference COP28 held in Dubai, UAE took important steps towards unlocking the potential of culture and heritage to support transformative climate action, including establishment within the new UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience[15] adopted at COP28 of a new global thematic for "protecting cultural heritage from the impacts of climate-related risks, by developing adaptive strategies for preserving cultural practices and heritage sites and by designing climate-resilient infrastructure guided by traditional knowledge, Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and local knowledge systems";

Noting also that COP28 saw the first-ever, multilateral High-Level Ministerial meeting on Culture-Based Climate Action at a COP which unanimously adopted the *Emirates Declaration on Culture-Based Climate Action*, as well as the launch of the national government advocacy group known as the Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action at the UNFCCC (GFCBCA) under the leadership of Brazil and UAE ;

Concerned by the prevailing inadequate understanding and documentation of, and lack of data on the impacts of climate change on intangible cultural heritage (as well as the consequences of these impacts for associated communities), the urgent need to establish indicators to measure them, in stark contrast to the better-documented impacts on tangible heritage, underscoring the

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ICOMOS & ISCM CHC, Charenton-le-Pont, France & Paris, France, 69 p. ISBN 978-2-918086-69-7 (PDF) - 978-2-918086-70-3 (print). [Book] https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/2716/. (Consulted 28 May 2024)

[12] Orlove, Ben, Dawson, Neil, Sherpa, Pasang, Adelekan, Ibidun, Alangui, Wilfredo, Carmona, Rosario, Coen, Deborah, Nelson, Melissa, Reyes-García, Victoria, Rubis, Jennifer, Sanago, Gideon and Wilson, Andrew (2022), ICSM CHC White Paper I: Intangible cultural heritage, diverse knowledge systems and climate change. Contribution of Knowledge Systems Group I to the International Co-Sponsored Meeting on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change. Discussion Paper. ICOMOS & ISCM CHC, Charenton-le-Pont, France & Paris, France, 103p. ISBN 978-2-918086-71-0. [Book] https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/2717/. (Consulted 28 May 2024)

[13] See supra note 5.

[14] Shepherd, Nick, Cohen, Joshua Benjamin, Carmen, William, Chundu, Moses, Ernsten, Christian, Guevara, Oscar, Haas, Franziska, Hussain, Shumon T., Riede, Felix, Siders, A. R., Singh, Chandni, Sithole, Pindai and Troi, Alexandra (2022), ICSM CHC White Paper III: The role of cultural and natural heritage for climate action: Contribution of Impacts Group III to the International Co-Sponsored Meeting on Culture, Heritage and Climate Change. Discussion Paper. ICOMOS & ISCM CHC, Charenton-le-Pont, France & Paris, France, 91p. ISBN 978-2-918086-73-4. [Book] https://openarchive.icomos.org/id/eprint/2719/. (Consulted 28 May 2024)

[15] https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cma2023_L18_adv.pdf (Consulted 28 May 2024)

urgent need for comprehensive research and documentation to help build the adaptative capacity and resilience of ICH communities ;

Affirming the urgency of decolonizing Western scientific knowledge by recognizing the existence of multiple and diverse ontologies of knowledge, notably traditional knowledge regarding nature and the universe, that could be mobilized to address climate change management, adaptation, and its impacts on ICH ;

Highlighting the importance of identifying integrating traditional knowledge of communities within climate change research and scientific discourse, as well as in climate change adaptation and mitigation planning and policy, as these communities possess invaluable insights and practices for environmental resilience ;

Affirming that Living Heritage has a fundamental role to play in helping people to imagine and to realize low carbon, just, climate resilient futures, noting in particular the unparalleled capacity of diverse ways of knowing to communicate urgency, mobilize action, and champion sustainable and justice-led ways of producing, consuming and living in order to create the systemic change needed to tackle the climate crisis ;

Identifying actions of safeguarding Living Heritage threatened by climate change appropriate to the four dimensions of the Iterative Adaptation Cycle recognized by the UNFCCC (impact, vulnerability and risk assessment; planning; implementation; and monitoring, evaluation and learning), as well as the three main phases in an emergency management cycle of preparedness, response, and recovery, acknowledging that each phase can vary in duration and may overlap with other phases ;

Acknowledging the deep connection between ritual practices of Indigenous Peoples and the concepts of bio-divinity, and other deep-rooted spiritual relationships to nature, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and respecting these profound relationships between humans and non-humans, culture and nature with equal importance and recognizing that these cosmovisions, knowledge systems and endogenous interpretations of Indigenous Peoples' and local communities offer counterpoints to unsustainable notions of development and progress that are among the root causes of anthropogenic (human related) climate change ;

Affirming that individuals, groups, and communities displaced by climate change are active agents who can mobilize their intangible cultural heritage elements to assert themselves, resettle, and integrate into receiving communities ;

Reaffirming the crucial role of embedding intangible cultural heritage into climate action policies to safeguard the material and immaterial values of vulnerable populations;

Recognizing that in traditional knowledge systems of many communities "climate" is itself considered as a Living Heritage that must be safeguarded, and the imperative for a global, collaborative, and interdisciplinary response driven by climate change that transcends borders and man-made divisions;

The ICH NGO Forum declares its intention to work collaboratively and expeditiously with State Parties and all relevant stakeholders to fulfill the following recommendations :

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Promote and support interdisciplinary and intersectoral research for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the context of climate change

We appeal to State Parties and other relevant stakeholders to actively promote and support comprehensive documentation and interdisciplinary research regarding the effects of climate change disasters on intangible cultural heritage. This effort should particularly acknowledge and amplify the contributions made by NGOs, communities, and groups closely involved in and/or affected by this research, so that they may benefit directly from it. Recognizing the imperative to advance understanding in this field, such endeavors should bring together traditional knowledge, natural sciences, engineering, humanities, and social sciences, in compliance with the "best available knowledge" approach (see glossary), while adhering to the ethical principles of the Convention.

Recommendation 2: Integrate traditional knowledge of communities with scientific knowledge

We advocate the support of State Parties and relevant stakeholders for active engagement with traditional ecological knowledge, including the knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and incorporating this knowledge in climate change research and scientific discourse, by identifying how they might be relevant, inclusive, and equitable during the decision-making process towards environmental resilience strategies (see glossary below). We recommend the need to acknowledge the importance of decolonizing scientific knowledge and recognizing the existence of multiple ontologies related to climate and climate change and the adaptation to it. It is therefore essential to provide financial and technical assistance to NGOs, communities, and groups, so that they may be active agents of the research agenda and findings, in the spirit of global partnership, inclusion and in solidarity with ICH communities which are often in the front lines of climate change impacts.

Recommendation 3: Enhance the role of intangible cultural heritage

Furthermore, we draw the attention of State Parties and relevant stakeholders towards the need to promote and enhance the role of intangible cultural heritage as a tool to strengthen the resilience of victims of climate change, as a leverage for biodiversity and mitigation of the effects of climate change and to achieve climate justice for these victims (see glossary).

Recommendation 4: Consider the role of bio-divinity, and other deep-rooted spiritual relationships to nature and the relationships between humans and non-humans

We feel confident that State Parties and relevant stakeholders will benefit by encouraging, acknowledging and respecting the role of bio-divinity and bio-cultural practices within Indigenous Peoples, recognizing their intrinsic value in preserving the environment (see glossary). It is necessary to recognize how humans and non-humans are united. The elements of ICH are inextricably linked to nature and must be considered as if they were one. Therefore, both environmental and cultural policies must recognize the critical role played by Indigenous Peoples and cultural rights defenders for protecting cultural rights and cultures from climate change, and for developing and advancing the use of cultural rights and cultural initiatives to combat it.[16]

Recommendation 5: Recognize and support the active agency of victims

We strongly encourage States Parties and relevant stakeholders to recognize and support the active agency of victims of climate change and climate-related disasters, enabling them to utilize their Indigenous Knowledge and local knowledge for self-empowerment, resettlement, and integration.

Recommendation 6: Enact cultural values in policies

We advocate the benefits of embedding intangible cultural heritage into national climate change policy, by State Parties, to safeguard the material and non-material values of vulnerable

[16] https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n20/207/39/pdf/n2020739.pdf?token=4J4IzKzcF7MlwMcC3s&fe=true. (Consulted 28 May 2024)

populations, and a more systemic inclusion of civil society organizations in the elaboration and enactment of cultural policies in national adaptation and action plans.
We welcome the launch at COP28 of the Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action at the UNFCCC (GFCBCA)[17] under the leadership of UAE and Brazil and encourage all State Parties to join the Group of Friends in advance of COP29 in Baku in November 2024.
We applaud the inclusion of a thematic target on protecting heritage sites and cultural practices in the new UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience (UAE FGRC) as well as its emphasis that adaptation action should be guided by traditional knowledge, Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, ecosystem-based adaptation, nature-based solutions, locally led and community-based adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and intersectional approaches. We encourage all State Parties to engage with the elaboration of the cultural heritage thematic in the UAE FGRC including in particular via the UNFCCC's UAE – Belém work programme on indicators. We encourage ICH NGO members to join the Heritage Adapts to Climate Alliance (HACA)[18] launched by the Climate Heritage Network/Preserving Legacies to advocate for cultural heritage in the UAE FGRC including the elaboration of the cultural heritage thematic target 9(g).

Recommendation 7: Acknowledge ontological and biocultural diversity
We draw the attention of State Parties and relevant stakeholders to the benefits of acknowledging the immense ontological diversity of the world and counsel the recognition of this diversity and biocultural diversity in general as a core element of global efforts towards climate action. The cultural and social values carried by land and seascapes are closely interlinked with their natural values (and affiliated bio-cultural practices). Integrated nature-culture approaches can improve both climate adaptation and conservation outcomes, while supporting the well- being of associated communities. We encourage State Parties to link their work in the 2003 Convention to the work of the UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and its "Joint Programme of Work on the links between biological and cultural diversity," and the CBD "Programme of work on Article 8(j) and other provisions of the CBD related to indigenous peoples and local communities."

Recommendation 8: Include climate change in the listing of ICH elements and in periodic reporting
We invite State Parties and relevant stakeholders to consider specifically mentioning the threats and/or possible impacts of climate change to the element proposed for inscription for the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding and the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices and, in the case that it were, to include measures in the safeguarding plan to deal with those threats/impacts as well as to monitor them in the periodic reports. This active practice would provide a repository of concrete examples and of tools to deal with the impacts of climate change on ICH.

Recommendation 9: Encourage inscription of traditional knowledge, practices and beliefs affected by climate change on the List of intangible cultural heritage in need of urgent safeguarding
We urge State Parties to consider prioritizing inscriptions of traditional knowledge, practices and beliefs affected by climate change on the List of intangible cultural heritage in need of urgent safeguarding as a means of preserving them and attracting attention to the urgency of maintaining climate stability and of robust climate action.

[17] https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62fbf293c4912c5514ac3b2a/t/65789ec6b4318b54f27afa6e/1702403782880/Emirates+Declaration+on+Culture+Based+Climate+Action__FINAL.pdf. (Consulted 28 May 2024)
[18] https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/SubmissionsStaging/Documents/202403300618---Cultural%20Heritage%20Submission%20UAE%20to%20Belem%20WP%20GGA.pdf

Recommendation 10: Conduct a world-wide survey to map the diversity of situations and develop indicators to better assess the role of ICH in the context of climate change
Because of the great diversity in climate change and the diverse impacts and reactions to it throughout the world, we recommend that the Living Heritage Entity undertake, in collaboration with the ICH NGO Forum, a survey to map these diverse situations and develop indicators in order to assess the state of ICH among communities, their efficiency in mitigating its impacts and their capacity to adapt to climate change. This project could provide an opportunity to develop innovative methods for assessing social and cultural vulnerability much-needed to measure and integrate the value of intangible cultural heritage in the assessments of climate change risk. It could also lead to the development of climate adaptation frameworks to reinforce the adaptative capacity and resilience of ICH communities.

Recommendation 11: Implementation and monitoring
We encourage State Parties and all relevant stakeholders to develop, in light of article 11 of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, various mechanisms for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the current context of climate change and of climate hazards. These mechanisms include maintaining national inventories, documenting and archiving heritage, raising awareness and educating the public, capacity building, conducting risk assessments, implementing early warning systems, creating emergency response plans, engaging communities, collaborating with Indigenous Knowledge, allocating resources, monitoring, and reporting on heritage status, establishing legal frameworks, and fostering international cooperation. These measures collectively provide a comprehensive approach to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage during climate-related disasters, and tools for capacity development of ICH communities.

Adoption

We, the members of the ICH NGO FORUM, declare the urgency and importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the context of climate change and climate-related disasters.

We, the members ICH NGO Forum also declare our intention to collaborate actively with State Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, national and local authorities and all institutions and specialists in a position to contribute through legislation, policies, planning processes and management to better safeguard intangible cultural heritage in the context of environmental disasters and climate change.

The ICH NGO Forum hereby adopts this Declaration following an Extraordinary General Assembly held 28 May 2024 and an ensuing online vote taken between 3 and 5 June 2024. The Declaration was adopted in English and French. All ANGOs are encouraged to translate it as soon as possible into their national official languages. The Declaration was presented at the tenth session of the General Assembly of the States Parties to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage held at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, from Tuesday 11 to Wednesday 12 June 2024.

Glossary

"Climate change",[19] as defined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), refers to a long-term alteration in the state of the climate. This change can be identified through statistical analysis by observing shifts in the average and variability of various climate properties. It can persist for decades or even longer and may result from natural processes or external factors like solar variations, volcanic eruptions, and human-induced alterations to the atmosphere or land use. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adds that climate change can be directly or indirectly attributed to human activities that modify the global atmospheric composition and goes beyond the natural variability in climate observed over similar time periods. This definition distinguishes between climate change caused by human actions and natural climate variability.

In keeping with the definition of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, **"intangible cultural heritage" or "living heritage",** for the purpose of this Declaration, refers to the "practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills -- as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts, cultural and natural spaces associated therewith -- that communities, groups, and individuals recognize as a fundamental part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and with history, and provides them a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purpose of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development."

"**Biodiversity",** short for biological diversity, is the variety of all living things and their interactions. Biodiversity changes over time as extinction occurs and new species evolve. Scientists often speak of three levels of diversity: species, genetic, and ecosystem diversity.

"Biocultural diversity" maintains the inseparable link between cultural diversity and biological diversity, based primarily on world maps representing the geographical overlap between areas of high biodiversity and areas of great linguistic diversity.

"Local and Indigenous Knowledge", as defined by the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), refers to the cumulative body of knowledge, practices, innovations, and cultural insights held and transmitted by local and indigenous communities over generations. This knowledge is deeply rooted in their traditional ways of life and is closely tied to their environments, ecosystems, and cultural heritage. To avoid making a distinction between "local" and "indigenous" knowledge (many indigenous communities do not consider their knowledge as local), we have avoided conflating the two and used them as two separate terms, local knowledge and indigenous knowledge, as suggested by IPPC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change).

"Traditional ecological knowledge" (TEK) describes indigenous and other traditional knowledge of local resources. TEK refers to "a cumulative body of knowledge, belief, and practice, evolving by accumulation and handed down generations through traditional songs, stories and beliefs. It is concerned with the relationship of living beings (including humans) with their traditional groups and with their environment.'' Indigenous knowledge is not a universal concept among various societies but refers to a system of knowledge traditions or practices that are heavily

[19] https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/chapter/glossary/

dependent on “place”. Such knowledge is used in natural resource management as a substitute for baseline environmental data in cases where there is little recorded scientific data or may complement non-traditional, mostly Western scientific methods of ecological management.

“Best available Knowledge” means that proposed actions should be based on, and guided by, the best available disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge, that is developed by researchers, practitioners and Indigenous Peoples and local communities, working together to address climate change as a persistent problem.

“Climate justice” connects the climate crisis to the social, racial and environmental issues in which it is deeply entangled. It recognizes the disproportionate impacts of climate change on low-income and BIPOC communities around the world, the people and places least responsible for the problem.

“Bio-divinity” refers to a cultural heritage, embedded in centuries old traditions of indigenous communities, which connects their lifestyles and spirituality with nature. This coexistence with nature manifests in architecture, food, dress, faith, rituals, and festivals, through indigenous knowledge and spiritual wisdom of bio-divinity. The concept of bio-divinity is based on the theoretical foundations of Spiritual Ecology and Cultural Ecology which have gained momentum in the academic discourse since the mid 1990s. These theories link religious heritage, cultural practices, and conservation of the environment establishing the integral relationship between 'sacredness' or 'divinity' and 'biodiversity conservation'. Bio-divinity is therefore an embodiment of all the cultural values, rituals and practices, and traditional knowledge of indigenous communities which protect rich biodiversity hotspots of the world. The concept is integral to the domain of 'knowledge of nature and the universe' of the 2003 ICH Convention. This concept is connected to the idea of “immaterial values” which though unembodied and incorporeal add a transcendental perspective to human existence much valued in indigenous cultures and cultures closely interacting with nature and natural phenomena. It represents one of the many ways in which humans and non-humans (objects, animals, plants, ancestors, forces, elements, etc.) demonstrate their connection.