



UNESCO Chairs Seminar Series Transforming Knowledge for Africa's Future

Fostering Cultural Heritage

Date and time: Thursday 2 November 2023, 14:00 - 15:30 (Paris time)

Languages: English and French

Format: Zoom – [Please click here to register](#)

Seminar Description

The multidimensional challenges affecting the preservation of Africa's rich and diverse cultural and natural heritage, both tangible and intangible, call for a coordinated response and immediate actions to ensure its safeguarding. In this context, this UNESCO Chairs Seminar aims to bring together researchers, scholars, experts, cultural actors, and government representatives under the theme "*Fostering Cultural Heritage*" in Africa. Its goal is to discuss the challenges and opportunities related to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in Africa within the framework of UNESCO's [Operational Strategy for Priority Africa \(2022-2029\)](#).

UNESCO is committed to continue working with the African continent to achieve this ambitious goal, in line with the African Union's Agenda 2063, which aspires to build shared prosperity through the social and economic transformation of the continent. This involves developing human and social capital to elevate the standard of living and achieve an "*Africa with a Strong Cultural Identity, Common Heritage, Shared Values, and Ethics*".

Building on this commitment, UNESCO's collaborative approach involves engaging with external, national, and local partners, as well as leveraging its UNESCO Chairs and Category 2 Centres in the context of the [2020 Evaluation of UNESCO's action to protect culture in emergencies](#), which emphasized the significance of partnerships for sustainable cultural protection in emergencies. This Seminar aims to engage UNESCO Chairs, renowned for their research and capacity-building skills, to support African Member States in emergency preparedness through research, the sharing of good practices and awareness-raising.

The goal of this Seminar is to create a platform to reinforce global exchange and collaboration. The panel discussion will take place in two distinct segments, each exploring crucial facets of the preservation and valorization of Africa's rich heritage.

Fostering African Cultural Heritage and Capacity Development

This first segment will focus on "Fostering Cultural Heritage and Capacity Development", which plays a central role in safeguarding African cultural heritage, particularly by empowering local communities, especially women, to actively participate in the preservation of Africa's cultural heritage and ensuring its transmission to future generations. Flagship Programme 3 of the Operational Strategy for Priority Africa supports Member States in strengthening their capacities to promote and safeguard World Heritage. This includes assistance in the development of nomination dossiers and the removal of sites from the List of World Heritage in Danger, a critical issue for the preservation of African heritage.

Additionally, speakers will highlight UNESCO's efforts to support African Member States in combating the illicit trafficking of cultural property in line with the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. The segment will showcase initiatives to facilitate the return and restitution of cultural property in collaboration with the Intergovernmental Committee for Promoting the Return of Cultural Property to its Countries of Origin or its Restitution in case of Illicit Appropriation (ICPRCP). Promoting museums as essential guardians of African cultural heritage will be another highlight of this segment.

Enhancing African Capacities in Cultural Heritage Preservation in the context of conflicts and disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards

In recent years, Africa has witnessed a marked increase in the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events and human-induced hazards, endangering its cultural heritage. Floods, droughts, sea-level rise, and wildfires have left many cultural sites ill-prepared and vulnerable. UNESCO has responded to this challenge by providing valuable assistance to African Member States, including capacity building measures, technical support, and the rehabilitation of cultural sites. It is worth noting that Africa is the first region to benefit from assistance from the Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF), representing 29% of beneficiary countries since its inception. Furthermore, with HEF's support, UNESCO has launched the initiative "*Strengthening Policies and Regional and National Capacities for Preparedness and Response to Climate-Induced Cultural Disasters in Small Island Developing States and Africa*" (2023-2028) to enhance the resilience of cultural heritage in the face of climate-related disasters. This second segment will hence focus on strengthening the capacities of Member States, through UNESCO's action and by encouraging a collective approach towards protecting Africa's rich cultural heritage.

Seminar Objectives:

- Raising further awareness among UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks of the importance of protecting cultural heritage in emergencies;
- Identifying the main challenges to the preservation of cultural heritage in Africa and its potential solutions;
- Highlighting initiatives aimed at strengthening regional and national capacities for risk management;
- Promoting the sharing of experiences and good practices among African countries and international experts;
- Encouraging collaboration between UNESCO Chairs, UNITWIN Networks, cultural institutions, and governments in promoting cultural heritage;
- Initiating the design of a common roadmap to enable a stronger and more concerted contribution of UNESCO Chairs and UNITWIN Networks to the joint interdisciplinary and inclusive effort for the protection of cultural heritage.

Expected Result:

The UNESCO Chairs Seminar on Fostering Cultural Heritage in Africa will serve as a platform for discussion and knowledge sharing to mobilize support and resources for strengthening regional and national capacities and ensuring the resilience of African cultural heritage in the face of conflicts and disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards.

Provisional Agenda

Fostering Cultural Heritage	
Thursday 2 November 2023, 14:00 - 15:30 (Paris time)	
14:00-14:15	<p>Opening remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Keith Holmes, Research Coordinator, UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, UNESCO • Ms Krista Pikkat, Director for Culture and Emergencies, UNESCO
14:15-14:45	<p>Fostering African Cultural Heritage and Capacity Development</p> <p>Moderator: Mr Muhammad Muhammad Juma, Head of the Africa World Heritage Unit, UNESCO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr James V Wakibara, Senior Lecturer, College of African Wildlife Management, Mweka, United Republic of Tanzania • Ms Sunna Altnoder, Head of the Movable Heritage and Museums Unit, UNESCO <p>Enhancing African Capacities in Cultural Heritage Preservation in the context of conflicts and disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards</p> <p>Moderator: Ms Fatma Twahir, Site Manager of Fort Jesus, Mombasa, Kenya</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Abdelhamid Salah Al-Sharief, Chairman of the Egyptian Heritage Rescue Foundation (EHRF) and Manager of the Risk Assessment Unit, Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Egypt • Mr Sylvain Tiegbe, Executive Secretary of the management programme for the historic town of Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire
14:45-15:20	<p>Comments and reflections</p> <p>All participants</p>
15:20-15:30	<p>Closing remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms Krista Pikkat, Director for Culture and Emergencies, UNESCO • Mr Keith Holmes, Research Coordinator, UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme, UNESCO